European Commission

Press release

Brussels, 4 May 2016

European Commission proposes visa-free travel for the people of Kosovo

The European Commission is today proposing to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to lift the visa requirements for the people of Kosovo by transferring Kosovo to the visa-free list for short-stays in the Schengen area. The proposal is presented together with the Commission's positive assessment confirming that Kosovo has fulfilled the requirements of its visa liberalisation roadmap.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Today we follow up on our commitment to propose visa-free travel to the EU for the people of Kosovo with biometric passports – facilitating people-to-people contacts and strengthening business, social and cultural ties between the EU and Kosovo. This is the result of the hard work and successful efforts of the Kosovo authorities in achieving far-reaching and difficult reforms in the Justice and Home Affairs area and beyond, impacting areas such as the rule of law and justice reform. I know how important visa-free travel is for the people of Kosovo and I am very satisfied with the progress achieved. I hope that the European Parliament and the Council will adopt our proposal very soon."*

In today's progress report, the Commission confirms that Kosovo has met all the requirements of its visa liberalisation roadmap, on the understanding that by the day of adoption of this proposal by the European Parliament and Council, Kosovo will have ratified the border/boundary agreement with Montenegro and strengthened its track record in the fight against organised crime and corruption.

The ongoing implementation by Kosovo of all requirements set out in the four blocks of the visa roadmap, as well as reintegration and readmission, will be monitored in the post-visa liberalisation monitoring mechanism, the Stabilisation and Association Process and, if necessary, through ad hoc follow-up mechanisms.

Once the proposal has been adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, the people of Kosovo with biometric passports will no longer require visas when travelling for short stays of up to 90 days to all EU Member States except for Ireland and the UK, as well as the four Schengen associated countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland). The exemption concerns only short-stay visas valid for up to 90 days of travel in any 180-day period for business, tourist or family purposes. EU citizens can already travel to Kosovo visa-free.

Other entry conditions for access to the Schengen area will continue to apply, including the need to be able to prove sufficient financial means and the purpose of travel. The visa exemption does not provide for the right to work in the EU.

As for all those listed in Annex II of the Visa Regulation and whose people can travel visa-free to Europe, the safeguard clause introduced in the beginning of 2014 will apply to visa-free travel for people of Kosovo. Taking into account recent discussions with Member States on the EU's visa policy as a whole, the Commission has today proposed to strengthen this suspension mechanism to make it easier for Member States to notify circumstances leading to a possible suspension and enabling the Commission to trigger the mechanism on its own initiative.

Background

The European Commission [launched](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-32_en.htm) a visa liberalisation dialogue with Kosovo on 19 January 2012. In June 2012, the Commission handed over a [roadmap on visa liberalisation to the Kosovo](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-605_en.htm) authorities, which identified the legislation and institutional measures that Kosovo needed to adopt and implement to advance towards visa liberalisation.

The roadmap sets out a comprehensive list of reforms that Kosovo has been requested to implement, in order to advance towards visa liberalisation, including reintegration and readmission, document security, border/boundary and migration management, asylum, the fight against organised crime and corruption and fundamental rights related to the freedom of movement.

The Commission has previously adopted three reports on progress by Kosovo in the visa dialogue: the [first](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-108_en.htm) one on 8 February 2013; the [second](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-871_en.htm) on 24 July 2014; the [third](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6369_en.htm) on 18 December 2015 and the [fourth](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160504/fourth_progress_report_on_kosovo_visa_liberalisation_roadmap_en.pdf) on 4 May 2016. These reports contained an assessment of the progress made by Kosovo, recommendations to the Kosovo authorities and data about the expected migratory and security impacts of the visa-free regime. The third report concluded that only eight outstanding requirements remained and that as soon as Kosovo fulfilled these last benchmarks and provided that effective measures remain in place to prevent new migratory flows to the EU, the Commission would propose lifting the visa obligation for the people of Kosovo.

In the Council, the decision on the Commission's proposals will be taken by qualified majority.

For More Information

[Proposal to transfer the people of Kosovo to the visa-free list for short stays in most EU Member States](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160504/kosovo_proposal_en.pdf)

[Fourth report on progress by Kosovo in fulfilling the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160504/fourth_progress_report_on_kosovo_visa_liberalisation_roadmap_en.pdf)

[Commission staff working document accompanying the fourth report on progress by Kosovo in fulfilling the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160504/fourth_progress_report_on_kosovo_visa_liberalisation_roadmap_swd_en.pdf)