

Brussels, 27 April 2010

The EU strengthens visa cooperation with Georgia

The European Commission today proposed the conclusion of visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Georgia. The draft agreements result from recent negotiations between the EU and Georgia. They aim at enhancing EU-Georgia relations by facilitating short-stay travel of Georgian citizens to the EU while jointly tackling risks of irregular migration.

"I strongly support visa facilitation for Georgia. To reduce visa barriers is a way of bringing people closer to one another and to enable citizens to travel, and connect all over Europe", said Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs. "I am pleased to see that enhanced EU-Georgia cooperation is paying off. With these agreements in place, Georgia will be more closely connected to the European Union."

Today's draft visa facilitation and readmission agreements are the result of recent negotiations between Georgia and the EU. Once in force, they will make it easier for Georgians to apply for visas, making procedures faster, reducing paperwork and lowering visa fees. At the same time, the readmission agreement will ensure the return of those who illegally stay in the EU.

The visa facilitation agreement provides for, among other things:

- simplification of documentary evidence to be submitted in support of the visa application,
- issuing multiple-entry visas with a long period of validity to certain categories of applicants needing to travel frequently to the EU such as businesspeople, journalists and family members of Georgian citizens residing in the EU,
- reducing visa fees to €35 for all citizens and waiving fees for specific categories such as children, family members of Georgian citizens residing in the EU, representatives of civil society organisations, etc.,
- setting deadlines for processing visa applications
- exemption from the visa obligation for holders of diplomatic passports.

The European Commission has today adopted the proposals for Council decisions on the signature and conclusion of the agreements. The Commission calls on the European Parliament and Council to endorse the visa facilitation and readmission agreements so that they can enter into force as soon as possible.

Background

In September 2008 the Extraordinary European Council called for visa facilitation measures . In November 2009 negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements were concluded ([IP/08/1406](#)) and the EU and Georgia signed a mobility partnership aiming at promoting a better framework for cooperation on all aspects of migration policy. ([IP/09/1853](#)).

Georgia is one of six countries within the European Partnership established by the EU in May 2009 ([Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit](#), 7 May 2009). The purpose of the Eastern Partnership is to deepen and strengthen relations between the EU and its neighbouring countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

Since 2006, the EU has concluded visa facilitation agreements with Russia, Ukraine, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and the Republic of Moldova. Negotiations are ongoing with Cape Verde.