

Warsaw, 11 July, 2011

OPEN LETTER

On priorities of the Polish Presidency in the EU Council

The Coalition for the European Continent Undivided by Visa Barriers welcomes the fact that progress in visa liberalisation for the Eastern Partnership countries has been mentioned among the priorities of the Polish Presidency in the EU Council. We commend the Polish Presidency for emphasising the significance of achieving visa-free regime between the EU and the EaP states, notwithstanding the current adverse political climate in the EU.

Visible progress in facilitation and liberalisation of the EU visa regime will provide the Eastern Partnership initiative with tangible outcomes that will benefit all citizens of the six neighbouring countries as well as the EU states. Apart from facilitating contacts between people and boosting cultural exchange, visa liberalisation process is an important democratisation and modernization instrument of the Eastern Partnership initiative. It helps to ensure that the EU has secure borders and reliable, friendly and cooperative neighbours.

In order to achieve visa-free regime, the EaP countries are obliged to undergo profound reforms in order to meet a series of tough conditions in the areas of border control, travel document security, public order and security, and human rights. Thus far, important progress has been made by five EaP countries, with Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia being the front-runners. It is vital that the EU takes into account these achievements in its discussions on visa regime liberalisation with the EaP countries.

We call on the Polish Presidency to help ensure that the process is merit-based, guided by a set of objective benchmarks, strict but fair. We hope that concrete steps are taken during the Polish Presidency in order to accelerate visa liberalisation process for the EaP countries, such as closing the first phase of the Action Plans for Moldova and Ukraine; offering an Action Plan to Georgia; starting negotiations on visa facilitation agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan. Last but not least, the Polish Presidency should act to make it easier for ordinary citizens of Belarus to travel to the EU countries.

COALITION FOR THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT UNDIVIDED BY VISA BARRIERS

Sapieżyńska 10a, 00-215 Warsaw, Poland
contact@visa-free-europe.eu www.visa-free-europe.eu