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# Ukraine. Baseline study

## Draft 2

### The EU-Ukraine Relations

The EU is seeking an increasingly close relationship with Ukraine, going beyond cooperation, to gradual economic integration and deepening of political cooperation. Ukraine declared European integration and the EU membership as its strategic goal, however the EU have not provided the formal prospect of membership yet.

The first EU-Ukraine contractual relations were set by the *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement* signed in 1994, enforced in 1998.

Ukraine is said to be a priority partner within the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) launched in 2003. Since the very beginning of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) policy (2009) Ukraine is one of the key partners and the pilot project in the number of principal areas of the EaP.

A joint *EU-Ukraine Action Plan* was endorsed by the European Council on 21 February 2005. It was provided, according to the European Commission, a comprehensive and ambitious framework for joint of work with Ukraine in all key areas of reform. On June 16, 2009, a new practical instrument was adopted - the *EU-Ukraine Association Agenda*.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, 2007 the parties launched negotiations on the new enhanced contractual relations to replace existing PCA (which was designed for 10-years period). On 22 July 2008, it was announced that the new framework will be entitled *Association Agreement*. Talks on a *deep and comprehensive free trade area* (DCFTA) between Ukraine and the European Union which supposed to be an integral part of Association Agreement started on 18 February 2008. The both parties expect to finalize talks on the Association Agreement (including DCFTA) in 2011, however a number of sensitive trade and regulatory issues remaining unresolved as of March 2011.

On March, 1, 2010, newly elected President Victor Yanukovich made his first foreign visit to Brussels where he visited the EU institutions and met with the EU leaders: Barroso (the European Commission), Van Rompuy (the EU Council) and Buzek (the European Parliament). On May 19, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the 2010 Priority Action Plan for Ukraine's EU integration. On May 28, the European Integration Committee session chaired by the President of Ukraine, and on June 1, the meeting of the Ukrainian members of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council chaired by the Prime Minister of Ukraine were held. On the planning level, the Cabinet is generally responsive to the EU recommendations. The bulk of the Action Plan, approved on May 19, is based upon the Fule Matrix, i.e. the paper presented in Kyiv by the EU Commissioner Stefan Fule on April 22.

The 14th EU-Ukraine Summit took place in Brussels on 22 November, 2010. The European Union. was represented by Mr Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council and Mr Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission. Ukraine was represented by President Viktor Yanukovich.

According to joint release, the leaders recalled that EU-Ukraine relations are based on common values and a common history and that the EU has acknowledged Ukraine's European aspirations and welcomed its European choice.

At the same time, certain deterioration of Ukraine's democracy record in the year 2010 determined growing concerns by the EU institutions. Anxiety for the fate of Ukrainian democracy was vocally voiced by the MPs of the European Parliament. In the Resolution dated 25 November 2010, it is said that "following the presidential elections held in January 2010, there are increasingly worrying signs of a lessening of respect for democracy and pluralism... as well as increased and politically motivated activity by the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) and the misuse of administrative and judicial resources for political purposes".

### **Visa dialogue and the visa liberalisation process.**

**Visa dialogue** between the EU and Ukraine was launched in October 2008, according to the EU-Ukraine Paris Summit decision of September 9, 2008. Since that four rounds of negotiation took place (last one in May 2010). In October-November 2009 the EU experts conducted the first field study attending Ukraine's facilities and infrastructure dealing with border protection, migration management and document's security.

In April 2010 it was announced by the Commission that the EU-Ukraine visa dialogue is supposed to proceed from negotiation to operational phase under certain conditions to be fulfilled. Operational phase should be based on two-stage Action Plan (AP).

In June 2010 Ukraine received from the EU the questionnaire aimed to assess Ukraine's legislation and specific policies in related areas. In August the responses to that questionnaire were delivered to the EU.

On October 25 the EU Council of Foreign Ministers adopted a decision that stipulates "*With regard to Ukraine, the EU-Ukraine visa dialogue... should now enter a fully operational phase on the basis of an action plan setting out all technical conditions to be met by Ukraine before the possible establishment of a visa-free travel regime*"

On November 22, 2010, at the EU-Ukraine Summit **Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation** was presented to Ukraine (the first out of 6 EaP partner countries), structured in a way which Roadmaps given in 2008 to the Western Balkan countries were designed.

**Coordination.** Upon instruction of the President of Ukraine the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine by its Resolution of 7 February 2011 # 77 established the **Coordinating Centre for implementation of the EU – Ukraine Action Plan on visa liberalisation**. The Coordinating Centre is a permanently functioning body under the Government of Ukraine, the main task of which is to consolidate efforts and coordinate activities of the central executive authorities within the framework of implementation of the EU – Ukraine Action Plan on visa liberalisation.

The structure of the Centre is made by the ministers for Foreign Affairs, Justice, Internal Affairs, Finance, Health, Education and Science, Youth and Sport, as well as the heads of the State Border Guard Service, the State Migration Service, the State Service for Personal Data Protection, the State Customs Service, the State Service for Financial Monitoring, the State Service for Special Communication and Protection of Information, the State Service for Medicine and Drugs Control, the Security Service.

On May 19, 2010 Parliamentary hearings under the auspices of the Committee for European integration were conducted on the topic "Legal component of the progress towards visa free regime with the EU", with active participation of civil society actors.

### **State of play in core areas**

#### ***Document's security***

Ukraine is making certain progress, but the overall area is still constrained by the lack of transparency, competition between different state bodies and unaccountable corporate business interests (fighting and scandals in passport and ID's issuance system)

Ukraine has not been issuing **biometric passports** yet. Launch of their issuance is supposed to be preceded by introduction of data protection system (see below) and by the transparent tender for their production.

Ukrainian consortium EDAPS, consisting from 7 companies-founders, has a technical capacity to produce biometric passports of sufficient quality. Their biometric passport specimen was certified in full accordance of the ICAO standards (for 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of machine-readable biometric passports). The consortium, which recently won a tender to produce Interpol-related ID's, is vocally lobbying for introduction of biometric passports hoping to win a contract for their production. However, there were some concerns regarding transparency and reliability of EDAPS consortium (as of unclear ownership, overpricing, connection to the Ministry of Interior etc) expressed in the media.

In August 2010 government finally stopped issuance of non-ICAO compliant passports (with attached photo) which were still available for extraordinary reasons.

Currently Ukraine issues, through abovementioned EDAPS consortium, ICAO-compliant (but not biometric) machine-readable passports containing sufficient quality polycarbonate page with personal data (introduced in 2007).

**Data protection** system is in the process of formation. The most important positive change of the recent months was adoption on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, 2010, of the Law on Personal Data Protection. The same day CoE Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108) and Additional protocol to that Convention regarding supervisory authorities and transborder data flows (ETS No. 181) were ratified by the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament).

According to the Law on Personal Data Protection, scheduled to be implemented since January 1, 2010, a data protection body should be established. However an overall format of that body is still unclear, as well as relevant funds not committed in the state budget yet. Ministry of Justice is supposed to have oversight over it.

Data protection law adopted hadn't passed through any international screening or assessment (as Venice Commission). Human rights activists expressed some concerns regarding possible misuse of that law by possible limitation of collection and publishing of some personal information which would be of high importance for the society (such as corruption cases, ownership etc). Chapter of data protection body does not stipulate clearly its independence.

Passports and breeder documents' standards and issuance procedures are set by the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, while overall European practice stipulates adoption of the law. The Law on national register of citizens was elaborated but not adopted yet.

#### *Recommendations:*

- Submit the adopted Law on Personal Data Protection to the Venice Commission for its assessment. Then, if recommended, amend the law.
- Introduce the data protection body as an independent one with sufficient institutional capacity and budget funding.
- Adopt the Law on identity documents
- Adopt the Law on national register of citizens
- Launch issuance of biometric passport on the basis of transparent tender and selection of convenient company.

## ***Illegal Migration***

In this area Ukraine has deficiencies both in terms of legislation and proper institutional building

Migration legislation drafts (including the basic concept) are being debated in the government and in the Parliament. Ministry of Justice has published in October 2010 the draft of National Migration Policy Concept on its web-side for public debate.

Ukraine has implemented laws “On foreigners” and “On refugees” but they still need to be amended according with European standards. Ukraine does not have relevant legislation on asylum seekers.

Currently migration policy responsibilities are fragmented between different governmental bodies. Migration control issues are divided between three bodies:

- State Border Service, separated body, which is responsible for border security;
- State Department for Citizenship, Immigration and Personal Registration within the Ministry of Interior.;
- State Committee on Nationalities and Religions (refugees’ issue).

State Migration Service (SMS) has not been established yet. In June 2009 Cabinet of Ministers adopted a regulation aimed to establish SMS as separate body within the government, but that regulation was in fact blocked by President Yushchenko. In July 2010 the new government finally abandoned SMS and returned the overall situation to the past structure (above) which was considered by experts as a step in wrong direction. Once again, on the December 9, 2010 President Yanukovych issued a Degree stipulating re-establishment of the SMS under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior. It is likely to be founded in the first half of 2011.

On October 27, 2010 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a Strategy for Integrated Border Management according to the EU standards for the period 2011-2015.

On May 18, Ukraine and Russia signed an Agreement on demarcation of the land border. Issue of the sea border in the Kerch Strait remains unresolved. Ukraine and Moldova are getting closer to finalization of demarcation of the state border (including Transnistrian segment). Belarus parliament ratified the Agreement on the State Border with Ukraine in April 2010 (after 13 years of blockage by President Lukashenko) which opened the path to its demarcation. After the 2009 UN Hague court solution on the sea delimitation and exclusive economic zones division with Romania in the Black Sea, Ukraine has no border disputes or irregularities with any EU Member States.

Ukraine is not a part of Mobility Partnership project with the EU.

### ***Recommendations:***

- Adopt migration legislation necessary, including that on asylum policy, amendments to the laws on foreigners and on refugees;
- Establish State Migration Service;
- Start implementing a Strategy for Integrated Border Management;
- Pursue finalizing border demarcation with all the neighbours;
- Conclude Mobility Partnership agreement with the EU.

## ***Public order and security***

Ukraine has a variety of problems in this area, indicated in numerous studies on corruption, organized crime, human trafficking, smuggling and drag transportation etc. Obvious lack of confidence between law enforcement bodies of Ukraine and those of the

EU Member States is an important additional element contributing negatively to overall picture. During recent period Ukraine has done some steps ahead in terms of adopting legislation, signing international agreements and developing other regulations, all this steps need to be properly implemented.

Ministry of Interior is still underreformed, being an example of Soviet legacy of law enforcement institution. All law enforcement and security bodies are totally dependent on President, who (due to doubtful constitutional changes of October 2010) can fire Ministers, Prosecutor General, Security Service chief without even consultations with the Parliament (appointments need parliamentary approval, except Security Service chief).

Corruption remains pervasive in Ukrainian society. Transparency International's (TI) 2009 Corruption Perception Index ranks Ukraine 146 out of 180 countries, with 180 being the most corrupt. TI's 2009 Global Corruption Barometer named public officials and civil servants as the most affected by corruption, and that "fewer than 1 in 10 respondents considered government anticorruption efforts to be effective." In its latest Compliance Report on Ukraine, adopted in May 2009, the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) concluded that Ukraine did not sufficiently implement the recommendations made in previous evaluation reports<sup>1</sup>.

In June, 2009, Parliament passed a package of laws expanding the list of entities involved in corrupt activities, establishing anticorruption measures in the civil service, introducing checks on employment procedures for the civil service, banning the acceptance of gifts while carrying out official duties, requiring officials and their close relatives to publicly declare their assets, and introducing anticorruption expertise. However, the implementation of the laws was postponed first time from January 1 to April 1, 2010, then second time until January 2011. Finally, the entire anti-corruption package was abandoned by the Parliament in January 2011, while the new law (which provides obviously softer anti-corruption approach) was adopted in the first reading only.

On September 21, 2010 Verkhovna Rada ratified The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings which was adopted by the Council of Europe on 16 May 2005.

In December 2009 Ministry of Interior signed an "Agreement on Strategic Cooperation" with Europol (Framework agreement). Operational agreement is not in place yet, its signing was previously restrained by the absence of data protection legislation in Ukraine. On August 31, 2010 Ministry of Interior of Ukraine signed a cooperation agreement with the Interior Ministry of Germany.

Ukraine ratified a UN Convention against Trans-National Organized Crime in 2004, together with additional protocols a) against trade in human beings, b) against illegal transportation of migrants.

On September 13, 2010 Cabinet of Ministers adopted a Concept of anti-drug policy and fighting against illegal circulation of drugs and psychotropic substances for 2011-2015.

#### *Recommendations:*

- Adopt a laws required to implement fully the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, including establishing the agency or coordinator dealing with counter-trafficking.
- Build a confidence and productive cooperation in the counter-trafficking area between the government and relevant NGOs (La-Strada, etc);
- Promotion closer cooperation and confidence building with the EU MS law enforcement bodies and Europol

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<sup>1</sup> Ukraine in *Nations in Transit 2010*, Freedom House, New York, by Oleksandr Sushko and Olena Prystayko, p.567-568.

- Adopt sufficient anti-corruption legislation in accordance with GRECO recommendations

### ***External Relations and Fundamental Rights***

Human and minority rights in Ukraine are basically protected, however some substantial shortcomings are consistently indicated, including rights of detained and imprisoned people.

The government is rather open for dialogue with Council of Europe, OSCE and International organizations dealing with human rights and liberties (such as Reporters without Borders) however their recommendations are often ignored.

Presidential elections of January-February 2010 were recognized as free and fair. However local elections of 31 October 2011 indicated serious shortcomings including use of administrative resource, non-balanced formation of electoral commissions at all levels, pressure provided on opposition candidates, manipulation with ballots etc. If not changed, erosion of democratic process may seriously undermine international credibility of the government and pose in question all actual ambitions, including visa liberalization process.

Ukraine's media sector was considered mostly free, but during recent months media monitors indicated negative trends due to misbalanced coverage of government's activity (in favour of government) by the most of nation-wide TV channels. Pressure (through courts) was indicated aimed to withdraw licenses of those TV channels providing critical information on governmental policies (TVI, 5<sup>th</sup> Channel).

Government has adopted a Concept of Public TV, however media experts delivered concerns that under existing provisions Public TV, if introduced, may be used as another voice of ruling authorities.

In January 2011, the good quality Law on access to public information was finally adopted by the Parliament and signed by the President. This law stipulates substantial progress in terms of transparency of decision-making at all administrative levels, setting relevant procedures and obligations on behalf of the central government and local administration to submit information requested by media, NGOs and citizens.

#### ***Recommendations:***

- Develop in a transparent manner new legislation on elections, taking into account shortcomings of October 2010 local elections;
- Submit a Concept of Public TV for international expertise, involve independent media experts into the drafting process.
- Adopt a law draft on the access to public information, previously adopted in the first reading.

### **Public opinion trends**

There is no public opinion poll data available regarding public preferences on travel. However asymmetric travel regime (visas are needed to travel to the EU, not to Russia, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia etc) as well as historic legacy determine asymmetry of real travels: number of those traveled to CIS states is at least twice much more than those traveled to the EU.

At the same time, number of those traveling to the EU is consistently increasing which may be illustrated by the growing number of the EU visas issued (about 15% more in

2009 then in 2008 regardless economic crisis impact, in 2010 the growth estimated will probably be even larger - to 20%).

About 50-55% of population support full memberships in the EU, about 25-28% are against; the others (about 20%) are ambivalent or undecided.

Perception of the EU is rather positive, however recent years euro-skeptical attitudes are growing due to negative perception of the EU visa policy ("fortress of Europe") as well as the critical assessment of the EU institutions and MS policy (long-lasting constitutional crisis in the EU, institutional challenges, lack of coherent and friendly policy towards Ukraine).

## **Visa Facilitation Agreement implementation**

Visa Facilitation Agreement (VFA) which is in force since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2008, set a number arrangements for the citizens of Ukraine aimed to limit consular fee to Euro 35 (instead of Euro 60 standard fee) and to authorize:

- a) better access to long-term multiple entry visas for the certain categories of people (close relatives of the EU residents, officials, business people, journalists, participants of cultural, educational and scientific exchanges, drivers, sportsmen etc);
- b) wider issuance of free of charge visas;
- v) limitation of documents required to prove the purpose of visit for certain categories of applicants.

Generally VFA proved to be a step in right direction but insufficient one. Certain shortcomings were indicated in the comprehensive study published by the Europe without Barriers in 2009, namely:

- Significant complication of visa procedures and visa requirements in "New Schengen" States after their accession to the Schengen zone (longer lines, stronger requirements, more extensive procedure, more refusals)

A lot of applicants note paid extra fees to the outsourcing intermediaries (Visa centers). As a result, the entire visa procedure fees sometimes exceed 60 Euro instead of maximum of 35 Euro as defined in the VFA (it was before the EU Visa Code formalised the role of external service providers).

- Before the Schengen zone enlargement Ukrainian visitors to the CEE states didn't pay a visa fee. Now in the most of cases (about 70%) applicants of those states had to pay 35 Euro fee at least, about 30% only obtained visas free of charge.

- Validity of multiple entry visas in most cases did not exceed 1-3 months in the year 2008. Only 13-15% of multiple entry visas were valid for a period over 6 months. In 2009-2010 situation slightly improved.

- The survey did not define the decrease in the number of the documents required from the applicants by the Consulates. This fact questions the quality of implementation of Article 4 of the Agreement which stipulates an exhaustive list of documents for confirmation of the purpose of visit for certain categories of citizens.

Data presented allowed EWB experts to come to the conclusion, that VFA became the first step in the right direction but it has not managed to compensate all negative outcomes of significant migration changes in Eastern Europe over the last 8 years – primarily introduction of visa regime by new EU Member States and their accession to the Schengen Zone.



The major problems revealed are following:

- Complicated procedures which takes a lot of time and efforts
- Big number of documents required
- Long distances to consulates
- Neighboring countries in the East (CIS) are essentially easier available – travel disproportion not in favour of the EU

In May 2009 Ukrainian party (in the frames of the Joint Visa Committee) submitted the proposals to adopt amendment to FVA, for example, to extend the list of categories of people, authorized to get better access to long-term and multiple-entry visas, however, negotiations on this matter has not achieved any success yet.

## **Political will for/against greater engagement with EU**

### ***Political actors***

EU integration is declared to be top priority of Ukraine's both foreign and domestic policy. The new government under President Victor Yanukovich (in power since February 2010) reconfirmed country's aspiration to become one day member of the EU. This was repeatedly said in European capitals during the visits of top officials.

In July 2010, Yanukovich signed into law "On the Fundamentals of Domestic and Foreign Policy of Ukraine.", which stipulates EU membership as a "strategic goal".

However real practices of new government put sometime that declared priority under question. The overall trend in the spheres of democratic institution building, media freedom and rule of law is rather negative. Constitutional court abandoned important 2004 constitutional reforms and return to a Kuchma-like presidential political model with limited powers for parliament. Yanukovich and his entourage obviously sympathize with the Putin-like model of "managed democracy" and will test Ukraine for the acceptance/non-acceptance of such a model. The outcome of this test is not clear in the short-term, especially taking into account the weakness of the political opposition and the general demoralization of civil society.

On the other hand, the formal commitments of the new government remain stable and more "implementable" in comparison to the previous one.

All political actors declare their **preoccupation with the visa liberalization** with the EU. This is one of two major priorities as declared by the president and government (Cabinet of Ministers) in their relation with the EU (another one is Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area – DCFTA).

At the same time a lot of decision makers still believe that visa liberalization is first of all political decision which can be pushed an lobbied through pressure targeted on the EU institutions and Member States.

Restrictive visa regime is for sure the most negative component of the EU image and EU's public perception in Ukraine ("Fortress Europe"). It evidently contributes to growing Euro-skeptical attitudes within the Ukrainian political elites and society.

### ***NGOs***

NGOs are rather active in promoting visa liberalization and related reforms as well as raising public awareness. Since 2003 Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine (independent think-tank) conducted a number of consequent studies of visa

policies and practices of the EU Member States in Ukraine. Some of them, conducted in 2004 and 2006 were an integral part of multilateral international projects (Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and Moldova) coordinated by Stefan Batory Foundation (Poland).

In 2008 a group of Ukrainian NGOs from different regions and cities (Kyiv, Donetsk, Lviv, Kharkiv, Uzhgorod, Odessa, Lutsk) founded Public Initiative “Europe without Barriers” (EWB) with the purpose to provide independent policy expertise and public advocacy in favour of visa liberalisation. In the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 EWB conducted regular independent monitoring of the EU Member States policies and practices as well as developed a number of policy papers aimed at pushing related reforms and raising public awareness on the visa regime issue. In particular, Commented Ukrainian translation of the EU Visa Code was published in April 2010. EWB was also one of the key initiators and expertise provider for the May 19, 2010 Parliamentary hearings under the auspices of the Committee for European integration mentioned above. Outcomes of EWB activities are available at [www.novisa.org.ua](http://www.novisa.org.ua)

Among the donors, International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) was the most consistent supporters of the projects related to the visa regime monitoring, policy expertise and visa liberalization advocacy. During the period 2003-2010 IRF donated for the projects in these areas USD 323 thousand, supporting numerous NGO initiatives, in particular, EWB research and advocacy activity.

### ***Media coverage***

Visa regime with the EU is being widely debated in media. The most of publications touch mostly negative implications for Ukrainian citizens: refusals, restricted availability of visas, deportations etc. The most of media publication has been targeted rather against relevant EU policies and specific cases, then creating consistent pressure on Ukraine’s government to succeed in related reforms. Poor public awareness is combined with lack of competence within the political elites.

In the most cases while covering different aspects of visa relations between Ukraine and the European Union, media speakers and writers focus their attention on the most sensitive issues which are important for potential applicants, in particular: complications and burden of visa procedure; negative outcomes of Schengen Zone expansion; cases of violation the rights of the applicants and humiliation of their dignity by the Consular staff etc.

At the same time only a small number of publications contain a proper analysis concerning changes in EU visa policy and expected perspectives. The majority of printed media focuses attention on the negative experience of Ukrainian applicants, sharply criticizing the treatment on behalf of consular staff or peculiarities of visa procedure in consular establishments of EU Member States. The simplified coverage leaves out the difficulties which are typical for Ukrainian applicants and Ukrainian state as the whole. The list of reasons and factors which provide for the full and objective picture is also often left behind.

Most of the headings of visa-related materials reflected those negative tendencies in public perception which dominated during the recent times. The reader could in particular catch such titles as “The third race”, “Schengen Toll Bar”, “Derision of Ukrainians in Europe”, “People of non Schengen nationality”, “Insincere Europe”, “Facilitation on the Verge of Absurd”, “Rejection by Europe”, “Europe’s Ukrainephobia. How to Jump Over the Visa Fence”, “Europe’s Aversion”, “The Right to Humiliation”, “On the Other Side of Schengen Fence”, etc.

These publications pertained to numerous visa issues: complicated requirements, non-transparency of visa procedure, more complicated situation after the Schengen Zone expansion, etc.

VFA implementation is one of the most debated issues. In December 2008 the popular weekly magazine “Correspondent” awarded the Agreement with the title “Disappointment of the Year” when the magazine was summarizing the most outstanding events of the year. Overexpectations were the major reason of that.

At the moment of VFA conclusion journalists were too much optimistic in informing the citizens about the “victory” of Ukrainian diplomacy which adoption of VFA was supposed to be. Mass media messages concerning the VFA were focused on the advantages of visa procedure for certain categories of the citizens, but at the same time the deficiency of instruments and practical ambivalence of many vital clauses was not mentioned<sup>2</sup>.

Through making visa case a “personal” story mass media maintains high public interest in the practice of consulates. The case of Ukrainian well known novelist Taras Prokhasko became rather well known. Polish Consulate refused to issue him a visa and the staff requested the author to bring his books in order to prove that he was a writer<sup>3</sup>. Another example of broad media coverage of refusal cases was the story of “Children of Ukraine” ensemble, whose representatives had been dancing for three hours in front of the Consulate of France in order to demonstrate their professionalism and confirm by this their real purpose of their visit<sup>4</sup>.

There are other touchy issues of visa policy which may often turn into a certain competence test for mass media. For instance, the issues of symmetry/asymmetry of visa relations between Ukraine and the EU Member States. Mass media frequently publishes declarations made by certain politicians demanding introduction of symmetrical visa regime with EU Member States as a response to unsatisfactory visa practice of EU MS. (This trend is decreasing during 2010).

### **Draft recommendations on the project implementation**

- Multilateral approach is an important value of the project. Comparative studies (in brief) should be widely published drawing an attention to the best practices of any of 6 countries, if identified, encouraging the others to catch up.
- Comprehensive illustration (implementation chart) should be created, available to be downloaded from the web-site of the project. There should be all substantial elements of visa liberalisation process identified there with the indicators of implementation by all 6 countries.
- Lack of awareness problems should be addressed, first of all, on political decision-making level, but also for the wider society through the proper communication strategy.
- The following stakeholders may be identified that can act as pressure groups: NGOs, including translational ones; business, connected with the issues of regular travel needs; media, journalist communities; tourism associations and enterprises; youth, student associations; Europe-oriented political parties

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<sup>2</sup> Correspondent. – December 18, 2007 p. <http://www.korrespondent.net>

<sup>3</sup> Profile. №39(58) – October 11, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Ukrayinska pravda. 06.07.2007