



15 September 2011

We, the undersigned members of the Coalition for the European Continent Undivided by Visa Barriers, call upon the leaders of the European Union and Eastern Partnership (EaP) states gathered at the EU-EaP summit in Warsaw on the 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> of September, 2011, to reiterate their pledge to establish visa-free travel between the EU and the EaP countries and to commit to do so as soon as the technical criteria are met.

Supporting mobility of citizens and people-to-people contacts as a means to promote mutual understanding, as well as business, civil society and cultural ties, the EU should take steps towards full visa liberalisation as soon as individual countries meet the agreed conditions for well-managed and secure mobility set out in relevant documents.

Visa liberalisation has a common win-win outcome. By introducing the reforms in border security, police co-operation and exchange of information, the EaP countries will be strengthening the security and mutual confidence between the EU and the EaP countries, e.g. in co-operation on fight against organised crime, human trafficking or illegal migration, while at the same time tearing down the barriers that continue two decades after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The introduction of visa-free travel for EaP countries opens huge economic opportunities for EU business and tourists industries. Visa-free regime will also be a greater motivator for the EaP countries for further reforms.

We call on the EU to remove the wording of “as a long-term goal” as concerns visa liberalisation from all the relevant documents to be signed soon including drafts of negotiated Association Agreements with Ukraine and Moldova, as well as Visa Facilitation Agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Prague Declaration accompanying the launch of the Eastern Partnership initiative stated that the EU “will also take gradual steps towards full visa liberalisation as a long term goal”. However, in the context of already agreed Action Plans for visa liberalisation with Ukraine and Moldova, which serve as models for other EaP countries, there is no justification for postponing visa liberalisation for an indefinite future once the technical conditions are met.

We call upon the Polish Presidency to take concrete steps towards accelerating the visa liberalisation process for the EaP countries. Ukraine and Moldova should move into the next phase of the Action Plan as soon as possible, Georgia's Action Plan should be launched, and Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements should be made a top priority with Belarus, Azerbaijan

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and Armenia. Moreover, efforts should be made to speed up the fulfilment of provisions and regulations set out in the existing Visa Facilitation Agreements (VFA) and the Visa Code. VFAs constitute the first step in the direction of abolishing visa restrictions, but so far have largely failed to compensate for negative outcomes following the last enlargement of the Schengen zone. Despite the expectations, the VFAs have not yet become an efficient instrument of simplification and have not yet made any significant impact on the visa procedure.

A renewed commitment to visa liberalisation with EaP countries would demonstrate that the EU is serious about its intention to establish “a more ambitious partnership between the European Union and the partner countries”, as stated in Prague Declaration. It would show that the EU treats its Eastern neighbours genuinely as partners. It would also give the Eastern neighbours, both their governments and societies, stronger motivation to fulfil burdensome and costly reforms that will help the EU to have secure borders. Such commitment should be reflected in the 2011 Summit Conclusions and Declaration.

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