



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Towards easier cross-border travel in the Kaliningrad area

Brussels, 29 July 2011 – The Commission proposed today to facilitate border crossing for people in the Kaliningrad area. The proposal amending EU rules on local border traffic (LBT) foresees that the entire Kaliningrad oblast as well as a specific border area on the Polish side would be considered as a border zone. Additional border zone residents could therefore travel more easily across the border and within the neighbouring area.

"The situation of the Kaliningrad enclave is a specific issue. The solution that the Commission now proposes will facilitate people-to-people contacts and enhance economic cooperation on both sides of the border, without affecting security" said Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs.

The Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation with a population of almost one million inhabitants became the only enclave within the EU as a consequence of the 2004 EU enlargement.

Treating the entire Kaliningrad area as a border area will prevent an artificial division of that region and will facilitate and enhance economic and cultural interchange.

This exceptional extension of the border zone in the Kaliningrad area does not affect the general definition of the border area as intended by the Local Border Traffic Regulation (the 30/50 km zone). Also, all provisions that guarantee for the security of the entire Schengen area remain valid.

Background

The Local Border Traffic Regulation adopted in 2006 ([Regulation No 1931/2006](#)), is an exception to the general rules on external border checks laid down in the Schengen Borders Code ([Regulation No 562/2006](#)). It allows Member States to negotiate bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries in order to facilitate cross border movements for social, economic and cultural exchange. Under such an agreement, a special permit can be granted to citizens living in the border areas, enabling them to cross the respective borders very regularly to stay for just a few hours or one or two days at a time.

To date, four local border traffic agreements have entered into force: Hungary-Ukraine in January 2008, Slovakia-Ukraine in September 2008, Poland-Ukraine in July 2009 and Romania-Moldova in October 2010.

Several agreements have been signed and are expected to soon enter into force: Poland-Belarus, Latvia-Belarus, Lithuania-Belarus, Norway-Russian Federation.

The Commission's [second report on the implementation of the LBT Regime](#) of February this year concluded that the local border traffic regime is a useful tool to facilitate trade, social and cultural exchange and regional cooperation with neighbouring countries.

The Local Border Traffic regime clearly makes life easier for people living in the border areas, with fewer systematic checks at crossing points (no stamping, special lanes for border residents, etc). It facilitates border crossing without creating loopholes or affecting security of the entire Schengen area.

Next steps

The proposal will now be discussed by the Council and the European Parliament.

For more information

Homepage of Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/malmstrom/welcome/default_en.htm

Homepage of DG Home Affairs:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/index_en.htm

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