



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

The Commission proposes to open negotiations on Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with Armenia

Brussels, 19 September 2011 – Today the Commission proposed to open negotiations on agreements to facilitate the procedures for issuing short-stay visas as well as on the readmission of irregular migrants between the European Union and Armenia.

"Easier access to visas will improve cooperation and exchanges between the EU and Armenia. Visa facilitation and readmission agreements are very tangible results of the Eastern partnership and I know how much this means to the citizens of these countries", said Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs.

"The human dimension of the Eastern Partnership is one of its most important ones. Fostering mobility and people-to-people contacts through visa facilitation is fundamental in order to promote social and economic development and mutual understanding between the people. The proposals to open negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Armenia are an important step in this direction." said Štefan Füle Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy.

The Commission proposes to open negotiations on a visa facilitation agreement between the EU and Armenia. The agreements will be based on reciprocity and provide visa facilitations for Armenian citizens. The list of suggested visa facilitations include the simplification of documentary evidence to be submitted in support of the visa application, the possibility of issuing multiple-entry visas with a long period of validity, the waiving/reducing of the handling fees for specific categories of travellers, set deadlines for processing visa applications, as well as a possible exemption from the visa obligation for holders of diplomatic passports.

At the same time, the Commission proposes to combine the easing of visa requirements for travellers from Armenia with agreed mechanisms for the readmission of irregular migrants. The negotiation of readmission agreements will provide for the speedy return of nationals staying without authorisation on the territory of the EU or Armenia.

Background

The visa facilitation and readmission negotiations with Armenia follow the political commitment taken at the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit in May 2009 regarding the improvement of people-to people contacts. This approach was reaffirmed more recently by the Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers' conclusions in December 2010. Once negotiated, the agreements on visa facilitation and readmission can only enter into force simultaneously.

For more information

Homepage of Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/malmstrom

Homepage DG Home Affairs:

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

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