

Brussels, 15 June 2010

European Commission launches visa dialogue with Moldova

The European Commission today launched a dialogue on visa-free travel with the Republic of Moldova. The aim of the dialogue is to examine the relevant conditions for visa-free travel of Moldovan citizens to the EU as a long-term goal.

"A future visa-free travel regime would further facilitate people-to-people contacts and strengthen economic, societal and cultural ties between the European Union and Moldova. Provided that the relevant conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are put in place, a visa-free regime can add a very tangible element to Moldova's closer relations with the EU", said Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs.

Ștefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, stated: *"This is a promise that we made last December to Moldova, and a sign of our commitment to the Moldovan people. I am happy to see that we are able to deliver it. This step towards visa-free regime with Moldova is the best proof that reforms at home can bring Moldovan citizens tangible benefits."*

The visa dialogue, opened at the EU-Republic of Moldova Cooperation Council in Luxembourg today, will allow the EU and the Moldovan authorities to examine the technical preconditions for the establishment of a visa-free regime for Moldovan citizens. The dialogue will focus on key areas such as security of travel documents, border and migration management, as well as relevant public order and security and external relations issues.

As a first step towards the longer-term goal of visa-free travel, Moldovan citizens enjoy the benefits of a visa facilitation agreement with the EU since 1 January 2008. The Republic of Moldova lifted the visa obligation on EU citizens on 1 January 2007.

Background

At the previous EU-Republic of Moldova Cooperation Council on 21 December 2009 the parties agreed to launch during 2010 a dialogue examining the conditions for visa-free travel of Moldovan citizens to the EU as a long-term goal.

On 1 January 2008, a visa facilitation and readmission agreement between the EU and Moldova entered into force. The visa facilitation agreement sets a lower visa fee (€35 instead of €60) for all applicants, and waives fees for broad categories of citizens such as children, pensioners, students, people visiting family members living in the EU, people in need of medical treatment, economic operators working with EU companies, sportsmen and women, participants in cultural exchanges, journalists, etc. In 2009, more than half of Schengen visas issued in Moldova were issued free of charge. The visa facilitation agreement also simplifies and accelerates procedures and provides for easier access to multiple-entry visas of longer duration.

For more information

Homepage of Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs:

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

Justice and Home Affairs Newsroom:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/intro/news_intro_en.htm