



**Press-Release**  
**18 June, 2010**

### **EU and Georgia signed a visa facilitation agreement**

The EU and Georgia signed on 17<sup>th</sup> of June, 2010 a visa facilitation agreement. Signing ceremony took place in Brussels. The EU was represented by current President of the Council of the European Union, **Miguel Ángel Moratinos**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain and **Cecilia Malmström**, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs. Georgia was represented by **Grigol Vashadze**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

The visa facilitation agreement applies to all EU-member states, except of the UK and Denmark, according to the Georgian Foreign Ministry.

The agreement will go into force together with readmission treaty, after these two agreements are ratified by the European Parliament and the Georgian Parliament.

The readmission agreement with Georgia is expected to be signed within the following weeks.

For more information see attached Press-Release of the Council of the European Union.

***Attachment: Press-Release of the Council of the European Union (2 pages).***



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 17 June 2010  
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PRESSE 185

### **EU-Georgia agreement on the facilitation of the issuance of visa**

The EU and Georgia signed today a visa facilitation agreement at a ceremony that took place in Brussels. The EU was represented by Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, and Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs. Georgia was represented by Grigol Vashadze, Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The agreement will now be sent to the European Parliament with a view to obtaining its consent.

The agreement makes it easier and cheaper for Georgian citizens, in particular those who travel most, to acquire short stay visas allowing them to travel to and freely throughout the EU. A short stay visa is a visa for an intended stay of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days. EU citizens are already exempt from the visa obligation when travelling to or transiting through Georgia since 1 June 2006.

The agreement substantially simplifies the necessary supporting documents for a visa application for certain categories of persons, e.g. close relatives who are visiting Georgian citizens residing in the EU, businessmen, scientists, students and journalists. For some categories of frequent travellers and under certain conditions, member states are supposed to issue multi-entry visas with long periods of validity. Holders of diplomatic passports are exempted from the visa obligation.

# **P R E S S**

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As a general rule, the agreement stipulates that a decision upon the request to issue a visa must be taken within 10 calendar days. The agreement also reduces the visa handling fee from €60 to €35 for all Georgian citizens and provide a total exemption from the visa fee for certain categories of applicants, e.g. close relatives who are visiting Georgian citizens residing in the EU, pensioners, children below the age of 12, disabled persons, scientists, students and journalists.

Following the mandate given by the Council on 28 November 2008, the European Commission started the negotiations of the visa facilitation agreement with Georgia and submitted its proposal for a decision on the signing of the agreement to the Council on 5 May 2010.

Visa facilitation agreements go usually hand-in-hand with readmission agreements between the EU and third countries. The readmission agreement with Georgia is expected to be signed within the following weeks. Both, the visa facilitation and the readmission agreements will enter into force on the same day.

Readmission agreements set out clear obligations and procedures for the authorities of EU member states and the third countries concerned as to when and how to take back people who are illegally residing on the territories of the parties. They cover not only the illegally staying nationals of both parties but also third country nationals and stateless persons being in an irregular situation provided they have a clear link with the requested party (e.g. visa or resident permit). Full respect of Human Rights as provided by the European Convention of Human Rights is guaranteed during the application of readmission agreements.

So far, the EU has signed visa facilitation and readmission agreements with eight countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine. Negotiations are ongoing with Cape Verde.