

To: HRVP Federica Mogherini
Commissioner Johannes Hahn
Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos

March 31, 2015

SUBJECT: Open Letter on Visa Liberalization from Kosovo Civil Society

Dear High Representative, Dear Commissioners,

The European Commission launched the visa dialogue with Kosovo in January 2012 and gave Kosovo a visa liberalization roadmap in June 2012. Based on the experience of the other five Western Balkans countries that embarked on the same journey, we all hoped that Kosovo would succeed in fulfilling the requirements within three years at most.

Today, Kosovo is the only country in the Western Balkans without visa-free travel. What is even more disturbing: Kosovo seems no closer to reaching this goal today than it was in 2012.

One of the most serious problems we have identified is that Kosovo is also not treated in the same way as the five Western Balkans countries and Turkey. The Kosovo roadmap lists all the reforms that Kosovo needs to complete in order to qualify for visa-free travel. I

In July 2014 the European Commission issued a report on Kosovo's progress. However, this report is strikingly and worryingly different from the visa progress reports that Kosovo's Balkan neighbours received 2008-2010. It is also very different from the report on Turkey issued in 2014.

In the case of the Western Balkans, the Commission had very precise formulations to describe progress or the lack of it for each point included in the roadmap.

In the October 2014 Turkey report the Commission used five precise formulations to describe progress under each benchmark: "Requirement fulfilled", "Almost fulfilled", "Fulfilled partially, but with good prospects for further progress", "Only partially fulfilled"; "Requirement not fulfilled."

In the Kosovo report there is no discussion of each benchmark. There is no precise description of progress. The language is vague. It is not clear what the priority areas are.

We appeal to you to ensure that the European Commission uses precise formulations to describe progress or the lack of it for each point included in the visa liberalization roadmap in your next report. When the European Union employs fair, clear, and transparent assessment criteria, we are in a position to pressure our government to work more. Lack of clear language serves as an impediment to the government for fulfilling the criteria, while preventing the civil society from holding the government under proper scrutiny.

The European Union has demonstrated that it can act as a catalyst to undertake difficult reforms. We appeal to you to be as fair when it comes to the issue of visa liberalization for Kosovo citizens as you have been in dealing with our neighbors' and Turkey today.

Yours sincerely,

Luan Shllaku, Kosovo Foundation for Open Society

Venera Hajrullahu, Kosovo Civil Society Foundation - KCSF

Lumir Abdixhiku, Riinvest Institute

Fisnik Korenica, Group for Legal and Political Studies - GLPS

Lulzim Peci, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development - KIPRED

Ismet Kryeziu, Kosovo Democratic Institute - KDI

Florian Qehaja, Kosovar Center for Security Studies - KCSS

Lorik Bajrami, NGO Cohu

Petrit Zogaj, FOL Movement

Alban Haliti, Initiative for Progress – INPO

Florent Mehmeti, ODA Theatre

Hajrullah Çeku, NGO EC Ma Ndryshe

Nora Ahmetaj, Center for Research, Documentation and Publication