

24 June 2010

Kosovo appeal to European leaders and decision makers

We, the undersigned civil society organisations and citizens of Kosovo, have been waiting patiently for Kosovo to be given a visa roadmap.

A year has passed, since our last appeal; we have been given many promises but Kosovo remains the only country in the region still excluded from the visa liberalisation process. While all the other countries have advanced considerably, with Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro enjoying visa free travel and Bosnia Herzegovina and Albania expected to follow soon, we are as isolated today as we have been in summer 2009. All of us, regardless of ethnicity, feel trapped and forgotten.

We understand the security concerns of European member states and the European Commission. We are supportive of their demands on our government to combat crime and illegal migration, and to ensure that all returnees are received in dignity. We appreciate the efforts of our own government to unilaterally prepare a visa roadmap. But we do not understand why Kosovo has still not been given a visa roadmap and told what exactly is expected of our government in terms of concrete reforms.

Our hopes have been raised last October when the European Commission proposed to start a 'visa dialogue with the perspective of eventual visa liberalisation', a decision endorsed by the Council in December. We also had high expectations that the Sarajevo Summit in June would give a new impetus to the European integration process for all Western Balkan countries and would lead to the inclusion of Kosovo in the visa liberalisation process – a demand put forth in a joint appeal signed by 471 civil society organisations from across the region.

The time has come to turn promises into action. Europe cannot afford the risks associated with Kosovo's isolation and ghettoisation. The governments of the region have demonstrated that they can deliver on difficult reforms if the conditions are clearly defined and measurable as in the case of visa liberalisation. We strongly believe it is time for our government to be given the same fair chance to deliver on the reforms required for visa free travel.

We call on European leaders and decision makers to give Kosovo a roadmap and to formally include Kosovo in the visa dialogue now; Kosovo, like no other country in the region, needs the transformative power of the European integration process and we, like everyone else in the region, want to be part of Europe.

Signed by:

1. Kosovo Foundation for Open Society
2. Foreign Policy Club
3. European Stability Initiative
4. Riinvest Institute
5. KIPRED
6. Kosovar Civil Society Foundation
7. Youth Initiative for Human Rights
8. Center for Policy and Advocacy
9. Center for Contemporary Art – Stacion
10. European Movement in Kosovo
11. Movement FOL
12. Radio Urban FM
13. Friedrich Ebert Foundation
14. Research Group in Sociology and Philosophy
15. Humanitarian Law Centre
16. Balkan Policy Institute, IPOL
17. Kosovo Education Center
18. Institute for Culture and Sport
19. Center for European Politics and Policy
20. Initiative for Progress, INPO
21. NGO Çelnaja
22. Community Building Mitrovica
23. JEF Kosova
24. Kosovo Democratic Institute
25. Center for Integration of Ethnic Communities, Prizren
26. Uni Group Junior Enterprise
27. Center for Human Rights, University of Prishtina
28. Prishtina Institute for Policy Studies
29. GAP Institute
30. Kosovo Public Policy Center
31. NGO Durmish Aslano, Prizren
32. Media Center, Caglavica
33. NGO Kosovski Avaz