

Interview with Zenun Pajaziti, Minister of Internal Affairs in Kosovo

1. Minister Pajaziti, what do you make of yesterday's proposal by the European Commission?

We are surprised. We cannot understand why the EU - which is divided on Kosovo status as we all know - can agree to put Kosovo on the Black Schengen list, but cannot agree to offer us a roadmap of conditions to meet to get to the White List, like all other countries in the region. This looks like discrimination against the citizens of Kosovo.

2. What about the insistence that Serb passports held by people resident in Kosovo will not allow visa free travel?

According to our Constitution Serb citizens of Kosovo are entitled to have a Serbian passport, if they want. As a Minister of Interior I feel responsible for all citizens of the Republic of Kosovo and I believe in a multi-ethnic Kosovo. But I would really like to be able to tell all our citizens, Albanians, Serbs, Bosniaks, Roma, that as soon as we meet the conditions, we can all travel visa-free with our Kosovo passports. And that there will be no discrimination on ethnic grounds.

3. Why do you think the EU has decided in this way?

The Commission speaks of "security threats" coming from Kosovo residents and some countries are afraid of illegal migration. But the best way to address those security concerns is to offer us a concrete roadmap and help us improve on border security and migration management. We want to prove to EU member states that we can fulfill the same requirements like Macedonia and Montenegro. All we ask for is to be given a fair chance, and to be treated in the same way like the other countries in the region.

4. What can you do as Minister of Interior?

We know there is no consensus in the EU when it comes to Kosovo. And we understood that visa liberalisation can only be achieved once we meet a set of clear conditions. A few months ago we decided to prepare our own roadmap and we have started to implement the necessary reforms. We are negotiation with Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and Norway on Readmission Agreements and we are about to launch the tender for our new biometric passports. We are convinced that by early next year, we will have most of the laws in place, and we can start issuing biometric passports. For these reforms to continue, we need the support of the EU. These reforms are good for us, for the region and for Europe. But we need clarity about when we can expect to be included in the visa liberalisation process.