

Joint Statement by the European Parliament and the Council

The European Union strongly supports the goal of the abolishment of the visa regime for all the countries of the Western Balkans.

The European Parliament and the Council recognise that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia fulfil all conditions for visa liberalisation. This has allowed for the adoption of the amendments to Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 in due time to allow those three countries to join the visa-free regime by 19 December 2009.

The European Parliament and the Council express the hope that Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina will also qualify for visa liberalisation soon. To that end, the European Parliament and the Council urge those two countries to make all efforts to comply with all the benchmarks set out in the Commission's roadmaps.

The European Parliament and the Council invite the Commission to present a legislative proposal for amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 as soon as it has assessed that each country meets the benchmarks set out in the Commission's roadmaps, with a view to achieving visa liberalisation for citizens of those countries as soon as possible.

The European Parliament and the Council will examine a proposal for amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 concerning Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina as a matter of urgency.