

Kosovo appeal to EU parliamentarians and European leaders

20 July 2009

We, concerned Europeans living in Kosovo, welcome the recent European Commission proposal to allow citizens of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro to travel visa-free to the European Union from early 2010. We hope that citizens of Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina will receive the same rights very soon. This shows that the EU roadmap process leading to visa liberalisation works.

However, we are deeply disturbed by the prospect of Kosovo becoming a visa ghetto without any chance of escape. This would be the inevitable result of the incoherent and discriminatory policies towards the residents of Kosovo currently proposed by the European Commission.

We are aware that EU member states disagree over the status of Kosovo. Indeed, the signatories of this letter also have different views on this subject.

However, we can all agree that leaving Kosovo residents, whatever their ethnicity, trapped in a visa ghetto, when all other Balkan people from the Adriatic to the Black Sea are able to travel freely, would be a disastrous policy.

For this reason we call on all 27 EU member states – whatever their view on Kosovo's status - to consider the following change to the European Commission's Proposal.

The EU should offer a roadmap leading to visa liberalisation to Kosovo. After all, if Kosovo can be put on the Schengen Black List without agreement among EU states on its status, then surely it can also be put on the Schengen White List, provided it fulfils the necessary conditions.

To isolate Kosovo residents and to additionally put pressure on Kosovo Serbs, by describing all Kosovo residents as a unique 'security risk' is a baseless insult. The current European Commission proposal also undermines our efforts to build an open, multiethnic Kosovo. The European Union, which is our best hope for a democratic and prosperous future, must do better than that.

Signed:

- **Luan Shllaku**, Kosovo Foundation for Open Society
- **Veton Surroi**, Kosovo Foreign Policy Club
- **Venera Hajrullahu**, Kosovo Civil Society Foundation
- **Rada Trajkovic**, Gracanica Hospital
- **Shpend Ahmeti**, Instituti GAP
- **Jetmir Bakija**, Kosovo Democratic Institute
- **Nadira Avdic-Vllasi**, Bosniak Forum
- **Jeta Xharra**, BIRN
- **Engjellushe Morina**, Kosovar Stability Initiative
- **Leon Malazogu**, Project on Ethnic Relations
- **Migjen Kelmendi**, Rrokum TV & Java
- **Petrit Selimi**, Strip Depot
- **Besa Shahini**, IKS
- **Jeton Zulfaj**, Celnaja
- **Veton Mujaj**, Eye of Vision
- **Driton Tafallari**, Developing Together & ProPeace Platform
- **Petrit Zogaj**, Speak Out '08
- **Albulena Sadiku**, INPO
- **Valmir Ismaili**, Kosovo Democratic Institute