



Obtaining a Schengen visa is a time-consuming, expensive and stressful procedure

Blic
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Six years after the European Union promised to begin discussions with the Western Balkan countries about the reforms necessary for visa liberalisation, the process of obtaining a Schengen visa is still cumbersome for the citizens of this region; only as of late it has become possible that the situation may change, the European Stability Initiative (ESI) announced.

“People throughout the region perceive the visa requirements as personal rejection, unable to reconcile it with the offer of a future in the EU, businesspeople despair over the limitations that the visa obligation imposes on their companies, and young people feel as if they were imprisoned,” stated ESI, a non-governmental institute based in Brussels.

ESI points out that it took the European Union five years to begin the promised talks about visa liberalisation and that only since last year a move onto the White Schengen List has become a concrete possibility for the citizens of the Western Balkans.

In 2008, the EU issued special “visa roadmaps”, that is specific conditions that each country needs to meet in order to get onto the White Schengen List.

In order to contribute to the abolition of the visa restrictions for the Western Balkan countries, ESI has launched the “White Schengen List Project”, which will focus on the transparency of the process.

“We want to make sure that the EU-led process is merit-based: strict but fair,” state the ESI experts.

“The citizens of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have to know what has been asked of their governments, and the European public deserves to know about the far-reaching reforms that the countries are undertaking in order to keep the EU safe and to prevent illegal migration, organised crime and terrorism,” ESI emphasises.

To this end, the institute has collected a series of relevant documents including the roadmaps for the different countries and made them available on its Internet site.