



## **ESI recommends abolition of visa requirement for Macedonia as soon as possible**

2 June 2009

The European Stability Initiative (ESI) recommends to the European Commission and to the member states of the European Union to abolish the visa regime for the Republic of Macedonia as soon as possible, latest by January 2010

- The Commission assessments and expert reports leave no doubt that Macedonia has earned the right to visa-free travel as soon as possible, i.e. from January 2010 at the latest. Such a decision would send a powerful signal to the region that conditionality is taken seriously, and that reforms pay off. This is stated in the letter titled “The Balkans and the Schengen White List – proposal for the way forward“.

This well-respected think-tank organization urges the EU institutions to ensure that the amendment of Regulation 539/2001 is adopted fast, despite the elections of a new European Parliament and a new Commission that will take office in November. In order to make it possible for Macedonian citizens to travel without a visa from next January, the European Commission has to prepare the

relevant legal proposal in the next few weeks, and the European Parliament must then treat the dossier as a priority after the summer recess, so that the Council can vote on the proposal in the autumn.

According to ESI, the decision that the European Commission and the EU member countries, respectively, have to take in the next few weeks with regard to which Balkan countries qualify for the Schengen White List can help the Union regain its credibility and its soft power in the region. It can also balance the hopes of the people in the Balkans with the concerns of those responsible for protecting the Schengen area against illegal migration and organised crime.