

Excerpts from EU policy documents
European Neighbourhood Policy/Eastern Partnership countries
(including relations between the EU and Russia)

August 2011

[European Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and the Council amending Regulation \(EC\) No 1931/2006 as regards the inclusion of the Kaliningrad area and certain Polish administrative districts in the eligible border area](#)

Brussels, 27 July 2011

In order to avoid Kaliningrad's isolation from its immediate neighbours, there is a need to facilitate travel for its inhabitants.

Even though the EU-Russian Federation agreement on visa facilitation, in force since 2007 already, is a significant step forward to enhance opportunities for mobility, the local border traffic regime offers additional facilitations specifically for regular, even daily, needs for travel within the local area. For examples, applicants will not have to prove sufficient means of subsistence, the permit may be issued free of charge, or separate lanes and/or specific border crossing points could be reserved or set up for local border traffic. Also, all residents of the Kaliningrad area would enjoy these facilitations, whereas some of the facilitations in the EU-Russian Federation visa facilitation agreement apply to certain categories of persons only.

[Foreign Affairs Council](#)

Luxembourg, 20 June 2011

6. Well-managed mobility of people is crucial for mutual understanding, business links and economic growth both in the EU and in the partner countries. Recalling the European Council Declaration of 11 March 2011 and the Justice and Home Affairs Council Conclusions of 9 June 2011, the Council invites the Commission to pursue and intensify work with partners in this field on the basis of the Global Approach to Migration. The EU will prepare the launch of negotiations for Mobility Partnerships with Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, as a first group, as proposed by the Commission in its Communication of 25 May 2011. The EU will seek to fully utilise the potential of the EU Visa Code for bona fide travellers between the EU and all partners. In line with the JHA Council conclusions of 9 and 10 June, the EU will consider to launch, on a case by case basis, readmission and visa facilitation agreements with Southern partners and EU engagement will depend inter alia on effective cooperation against illegal migration including on readmission and border management.

Recalling its conclusions on the Eastern Partnership of 25 October 2010, the EU will seek to conclude negotiations for a Mobility Partnership with Armenia and will also seek to launch negotiations on visa facilitation agreements in parallel with readmission agreements with Belarus, for the benefit of the population at large, as well as with Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Council welcomes the entering into force of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Georgia. The Council welcomes the presentation of the progress reports on the implementation of the Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova Visa Liberalisation Action Plans, which could serve as useful models also for the other eastern partners bearing in mind the specificity and progress of each country, in line with the Prague declaration and subsequent Council Conclusions.

[...]

9. Recalling the importance it attaches to people to people contacts to the benefit of Belarusian population at large, the Council takes positive note of the ongoing work to fully use the existing flexibilities offered by the Visa Code, in particular the possibility for Member States to waive and reduce visa fees for certain categories of citizens. In the same spirit, the Council also welcomes the Commission's formal invitation to Belarus to start negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements, on the basis of negotiation directives adopted by the Council on 28 February, and calls on the Belarusian authorities to engage constructively.

[...]

Belarus – restrictive measures

The Council decided to strengthen its restrictive measures against Belarus in view of the deteriorating human rights, democracy and rule-of-law situation there. It imposed an arms embargo and an export ban on materials that might be used for internal repression.

The Council also decided to add further names to the list of individuals subject to the EU travel restrictions and assets freeze and to freeze the assets of three companies linked to the regime.

[EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee Meeting](#) Brussels, 15-16 June 2011

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee:

[...]

6. underlines the crucial importance of mobility of people and welcomes the launch of the EU-Moldova Visa Dialogue on 15 June 2010 and the European Commission Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation handed to the Republic of Moldova on 24 January 2011; welcomes the Programme for Action Plan implementation adopted by the government, calls on the Republic of Moldova to proceed to the speedy adoption and implementation of the necessary legislation and, in the meanwhile; calls on the Council and the Commission to make full use of the opportunities offered at present by the Visa Facilitation Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova in view of its effective implementation, which should be aimed at tangibly facilitating the mobility of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, including through a proper functioning of the Common Visa Application Centre;

7. urges the EU to make the visa liberalization offer addressed to the Republic of Moldova and so the other Eastern Partnership countries at least as generous, in terms of calendar and content, if not more, than what has been proposed to other further-bordering countries;

European Commission - Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2010
Eastern Partnership Report – Joint Staff Working Paper
Brussels, 25 May 2011

2. Bilateral Developments

[...]

Enhanced Mobility

The EU has been responding to the strong request of partners for enhanced mobility through visa facilitation and readmission agreements and through “gradual steps toward full visa liberalization as a long-term goal for individual partner countries on a case-by-case basis provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place”, as outlined in the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit of May 2009. There has been good progress on this agenda: the EU-Georgia visa facilitation agreement was signed in June 2010. The EU-Georgia readmission agreement was signed in November of the same year. Both entered into force in March 2011. The European Commission presented draft negotiating directives for Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with Belarus in November 2010 which were adopted by the Council in February 2011.

The implementation of the EU-Republic of Moldova Mobility Partnership (Joint Declaration signed in June 2008) and the EU-Georgia Mobility Partnership (Joint Declaration signed in November 2009) has continued to progress, providing the framework for the facilitating the movement of persons and legal migration as well as for the fight against irregular migration and trafficking of human beings. Preparations for developing a Mobility Partnership with Armenia have also started.

Progress has been made in the EU-Ukraine visa dialogue (launched in autumn 2008) which has entered into the operational phase in November 2010 on the basis of an action plan setting out all technical conditions to be met by Ukraine before the possible establishment of a visa free travel regime (visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Ukraine have been in force since 2008). As regards the Republic of Moldova, following the launch of the visa dialogue in June 2010 a similar draft action plan on visa liberalization with a view to the visa dialogue entering a fully operational phase was presented in January 2011 (Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with the Republic of Moldova have been in force since 2008).

Foreign Affairs Council
Brussels, 23-24 May 2011

Belarus

The Council adopted legislation to strengthen the restrictive measures imposed on the Belarus regime, following the recent sentences on the former presidential candidate Sannikaw and on a number of members of the political opposition and civil society.

It placed a further 13 individuals on the list of designated persons subject to travel restrictions and an assets freeze, The implementing decision and the regulation, together with the list of persons subject to the measures, will be published in the Official Journal of the EU on 24 May 2011.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Brussels, 12 May 2011

EU readmission agreements: Commission evaluation

The Council took note of the Commission presentation on its [evaluation of and future strategy for EU readmission agreements with third countries](#), published in February 2011 (7044/11). After this first exchange of views, the competent Council preparatory bodies were asked to continue to examine the communication and to work on Council conclusions to be adopted at the Council meeting in June.

In the context of the Stockholm Programme, the European Council asked the Commission:

- to evaluate the implementation of the agreements in force;
- to suggest means for better monitoring them;
- to assess the progress or lack of progress of ongoing negotiations; and
- to draw conclusions and provide recommendations for a comprehensive future readmission policy.

Readmission agreements with key third countries of origin or transit constitute a cornerstone for effective migration management and, in particular, for an efficient return policy for third-country nationals illegally present in the EU.

Since 2000 the Council has issued 19 negotiating directives for readmission agreements with third countries, 13 of which have already entered into force. The most recent agreement was concluded with Georgia. It entered into force on 1 March 2011. There are also ongoing negotiations with Turkey, Cape Verde and Morocco. In the cases of China and Algeria, formal negotiations have not yet started.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 11-12 April 2011

Visa facilitation agreements

The Council adopted three decisions authorising the Commission to open negotiations with the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova for the conclusion of agreements on the issuance of visas which amend the visa facilitation agreements currently in force between the European Union and these countries.

European Commission Communication Evaluation of EU Readmission Agreements

Brussels, 23 February 2011

The Commission issued 4 supplementary documents with statistical information which can be found [here](#)

According to this evaluation, since 1999 the Council had issued 18 negotiating mandates for the Commission to negotiate readmission agreements with third countries. In 11 cases, the negotiated readmission agreements had entered into force by February 2011. These 11 cases included Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. The readmission agreement with Georgia entered into force on 1 March 2011. (Unofficial text)

- [Link to Council Decision](#) 2007/826/EC of 22 November 2007 on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and Moldova on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation. Link to the EC-Moldova readmission agreement [here](#).
- [Link to Council Decision](#) 2007/839/EC of 29 November 2007 concerning the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and Ukraine on readmission of persons. Link to the EC-Ukraine readmission agreement [here](#).
- [Link to Council Decision](#) 2007/341/EC of 19 April 2007 on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on readmission. Link to the EC-Russian Federation readmission agreement [here](#).
- [Link to Council Decision](#) 2011/118/EU of 18 January 2011 **on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation**. Link to the EU-Georgia readmission agreement [here](#).

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council

Brussels, 28 February 2011

Negotiations with Belarus on short-stay visas and readmission

The Council adopted two decisions authorising the Commission to open negotiations with Belarus concerning the conclusion of agreements with the European Union

- on the [facilitation of the issuance of short-stay visas](#) (6354/11);
- on [readmission](#) (6424/11).

Foreign Affairs Council

Brussels, 31 January 2011

Belarus – Conclusions

The Council discussed Belarus and adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

5. In view of these recent events and developments, the Council has decided to impose travel restrictions and an asset freeze against persons responsible for the fraudulent Presidential elections of 19 December 2010 and the subsequent violent crackdown on democratic opposition, civil society and representatives of independent mass media. The Council has also decided to reinstate the travel restrictions imposed on certain persons in Belarus in relation to the elections in 2004 and 2006 and the crackdown on civil society and democratic opposition, which had been suspended since 13 October 2008 in order to encourage progress.

These restrictive measures and the list of persons targeted will be kept open and under constant review. The Council underlines that the release and rehabilitation of all people detained on political grounds would be an essential element in this regard. This, along with progress towards further reforms of the Electoral Code, the freedom of expression and of the media, the freedom of assembly and association, would pave the way for the lifting of the restrictive measures.

[...]

7. The Council recalls the importance it attaches to facilitating people-to-people contacts with Belarus to the benefit of the Belarusian population at large. It looks forward to the start of negotiations for visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Belarus, once the negotiating directives have been adopted. Pending the conclusion of such agreements, the EU will encourage the optimal use of the existing flexibilities offered by the Visa Code, in particular the possibilities for Member States to waive and reduce visa fees for certain categories of citizens.

[An Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation for the Republic of Moldova](#)
Chisinau, Moldova, 24 January 2011 (Press release)

On 24 January, Commissioner Cecilia Malmström presented the Action Plan on visa liberalisation to the Prime Minister of the Moldovan Republic, Vlad Filat. The Action Plan is a document that sets out all technical conditions to be met by the Republic of Moldova before the possible establishment of a visa-free travel regime.

[Link to the official document](#) of the Action Plan on visa liberalisation

Council of the European Union
[Conclusion of two EU agreements with Georgia on visa facilitation and readmission](#)
Brussels, 18 January 2011

The Council of the EU concluded today two agreements with Georgia: one on visa facilitation and one on readmission. Both agreements will enter into force on 1 March 2011.

[Link to Council Decision of 18 January 2011](#) (2011/117/EU) on the conclusion of the Agreement between the EU and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas

- **[Official document of the visa facilitation agreement](#)**

[Link to Council Decision of 18 January 2011](#) (2011/118/EU) on the conclusion of the Agreement between the EU and Georgia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation

- [Official document of the readmission agreement](#)

14th EU-Ukraine Summit

Brussels, 22 November 2010

7. The leaders warmly welcomed the Action Plan towards visa liberalisation for Ukraine. The Action Plan sets out all technical conditions to be met by Ukraine in order to progress towards the establishment of a visa free regime as a long term perspective for short stay travel for Ukrainian citizens. Its implementation will start now and will be systematically monitored by both sides.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Brussels, 8-9 November 2010

Agreements with Georgia

The Council requested the consent of the European Parliament (*15542/10*) in order to adopt the decision concluding the agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas (*10304/10*). In parallel, the Council also requested the consent of the European Parliament (*15201/10*) in order to adopt the decision concerning the signature of a readmission agreement between the European Union and Georgia (*14654/10*).

Foreign Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 25 October 2010

Belarus - Restrictive measures against certain officials - Council conclusions

The Council adopted a decision extending, until 31 October 2011, restrictive measures against certain officials of Belarus (laid down in common position 2006/276/CFSP), on account of the absence of tangible progress in areas identified by the Council ([14627/10](#)).

However, the suspension of travel restrictions imposed on certain leading figures in Belarus, with the exception of those involved in the disappearances which occurred in 1999 and 2000 and of the president of the central electoral commission, is also extended until 31 October 2011. At the end of that period, the Council will review the restrictive measures in the light of the situation in the country. The Council may decide to reapply or lift travel restrictions at any time, in the light of actions by the Belarusian authorities in the sphere of democracy and human rights.

The Council also adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

4. In the light of this situation, the Council is not able to lift the restrictive measures in place against certain officials of Belarus and therefore decides to extend them until 31 October

2011. However, in order to encourage progress in the areas identified by the EU, the Council decides at the same time to extend the suspension of the application of the travel restrictions until the same date. At the end of that period, the Council will review the restrictive measures in the light of the situation in Belarus. The Council may decide to reapply or lift travel restrictions at any time, in light of actions by the Belarusian authorities in the sphere of democracy and human rights.

[...]

Republic of Moldova - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

6. The Council reiterates the importance of people-to-people contacts and welcomes the opening in June 2010 of the visa dialogue examining the conditions for visa-free travel of citizens of the Republic of Moldova to the EU as a long-term goal. On the basis of the exploratory phase of the dialogue, the Council underlines the achievements made so far, the existing challenges and the importance of further reform efforts by the Republic of Moldova, and invites the Commission to prepare a draft action plan, in line with the approach set out in paragraphs eight and nine of the Council Conclusions on the Eastern Partnership of 25 October 2010, setting out all the conditions to be met by the Republic of Moldova before the possible establishment of a visa-free travel regime, with a view to the visa dialogue entering a fully operational phase as soon as appropriate. Through the Council, EU Member States will be fully associated in the different steps of the process, including by being consulted on the draft action plan and both sets of benchmarks. The effective implementation of the readmission agreement will remain important in this context.

Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on the Eastern Partnership **Luxembourg, 25 October 2010**

8. With regard to Ukraine, the EU-Ukraine visa dialogue examining the conditions for visa free travel as a long-term goal should now enter a fully operational phase on the basis of an action plan setting out all technical conditions to be met by Ukraine before the possible establishment of a visa-free travel regime. The action plan will be "two phased" and will be tailored to Ukraine's current progress. It will contain two tiers of benchmarks: preliminary benchmarks concerning the policy framework (legislation and planning), which in turn will pave the way for meeting more specific benchmarks, covering effective and sustainable implementation of relevant measures including concrete results on the ground. Moreover, the effective implementation of visa facilitation and readmission agreements will remain of particular importance.

Through the Council, EU Member States will be fully associated in the different steps of the process, including by being consulted on the draft action plan and both sets of benchmarks. The draft action plan will take into account the expert analysis produced during the exploratory phase of the visa dialogue and will be accompanied by an initial assessment of the impact of possible future visa liberalisation. The Council will also be kept informed through Commission reports on the fulfilment of the first set of benchmarks, in view of taking a decision to initiate an assessment of the second set of more specific benchmarks. Furthermore, Member State experts will participate in the monitoring missions conducted by the Commission services and in regular consultations in relevant Council Working Groups.

The Council underlines that there will be no automaticity in this process and progress in the fulfilment of benchmarks will be closely examined and decided upon by the Commission and the Council.

9. The Council notes that this approach could serve as a model for other Eastern Partnership countries bearing in mind the specificity and progress of each country.

10. The Council reiterates the importance of people-to-people contacts and welcomes the opening in June 2010 of the visa dialogue examining the conditions for visa-free travel of citizens of the Republic of Moldova to the EU as a long-term goal. On the basis of the exploratory phase of the dialogue, the Council underlines the achievements made so far, the existing challenges and the importance of further reform efforts by the Republic of Moldova, and invites the Commission to prepare a draft action plan, in line with the approach set out in paragraphs eight and nine of these Conclusions, setting out all the conditions to be met by the Republic of Moldova before the possible establishment of a visa-free travel regime, with a view to the visa dialogue entering a fully operational phase as soon as appropriate. Through the Council, EU Member States will be fully associated in the different steps of the process, including by being consulted on the draft action plan and both sets of benchmarks. The effective implementation of the readmission agreement will remain important in this context

11. In this way, in working towards a possible future visa free travel regime, the EU will seek to provide incentives for reforms in the JLS domain and promote conditions for secure and well managed mobility using a country-specific approach, while at the same time ensuring regional coherence in the approach adopted towards visa liberalisation with the Eastern Partnership countries and also Russia.

12. In this context, in accordance with the Stockholm Programme and the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, the Council has invited the Commission to develop before the end of 2010 a plan on how to take cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries forward in the area of Justice, Freedom and Security. This plan should also list the gradual steps towards visa liberalisation as a long-term goal for individual Eastern partner countries on a case-by-case basis, as well as describe the conditions for well-managed and secure mobility.

[EU-Georgia agreement on the facilitation of the issuance of visa](#) **Brussels, 17 June 2010**

The EU and Georgia signed today a visa facilitation agreement in Brussels.

Following the mandate given by the Council on 28 November 2008, the European Commission started the negotiations of the visa facilitation agreement with Georgia and submitted its proposal for a decision on the signing of the agreement to the Council on 5 May 2010.

[Link to the visa facilitation agreement](#)

[EU-Republic of Moldova Cooperation Council](#) **Luxembourg, 15 June 2010 (Press Release)**

The EU welcomed Republic of Moldova's European aspirations and determined commitment to the goals of political association and economic integration with the EU.

The EU reiterated its wish to move forward with concrete measures to ensure that reforms in Republic of Moldova can be sustained, with a particular focus on negotiations of the future Association Agreement, progress towards economic integration and visa dialogue which was launched in the margins of the Cooperation Council.

EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council

Brussels, 15 June 2010

The Cooperation Council noted the **Joint Conclusions of the EU-Ukraine JLS Ministerial of 9th June**. In particular it welcomed the decision to move the dialogue on the establishment of a visa free regime as a long term perspective, into an operational phase. This will involve the drawing up of a two phased Action Plan setting out the reforms that Ukraine should undertake in working towards this goal.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 3-4 June 2010

EU/Georgia agreement on short-stay visas

The Council adopted a decision approving the signing of an agreement with Georgia on the [facilitation of the issuance of visas](#), subject to its formal conclusion at a later stage (10304/10).

The agreement will allow the issuance of visas for an intended stay in the EU territory of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days to the citizens of Georgia.

In accordance with the EU provisions, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom do not take part in the adoption of the decision and therefore are not bound to the application of the agreement.

Foreign Affairs Council

Brussels, 22 February 2010

Republic of Moldova -Visa ban on the leadership of the Transnistrian region

The Council adopted a decision (5934/10) extending restrictive measures against the leadership of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova by twelve months until 27 February 2011. The decision, however, provides for the suspension of the visa ban until 30 September 2010 in order to encourage progress towards a political settlement to the Transnistrian conflict, to address remaining problems in Latin-script schools and to restore the free movement of persons; at the end of the suspension period, the Council will review the visa ban in the light of developments.

The decision includes also an amendment of the list of persons to whom the visa ban applies.

[...]

By the end of September 2010, the Council will review the suspension of the restrictive measures and the visa ban list in the light of the developments, notably in the areas mentioned above. The Council may decide to re-apply or lift the travel restrictions at any time.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Brussels, 30 November-1 December 2009

Joint declaration: EU- Georgia Mobility partnership

The Council took note of the joint declaration set out in document [16396/09 ADD1](#)

Excerpts from the [Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership](#) between the EU and Georgia

REMINDING that the Extraordinary European Council in its conclusions of 1 September 2008 underlined the need to "step up relations with Georgia, including visa facilitation measures";

[...]

REAFFIRMING the strong commitment of the Signatories to conclude the agreements concerning the facilitation of the issuance of visas and the readmission of persons residing without authorisation, of which the negotiating directives were adopted by the Council on 28 November 2008;

[...]

To this end, they will ENDEAVOUR to develop further their dialogue and cooperation on migration issues, and in particular along the following lines: Mobility, legal migration, integration and asylum

[...]

5. To deepen the dialogue on visa issues and to improve the consular capacities through stepping up cooperation between Member States' diplomatic missions in Georgia or ensuring their representation by other already present Member States' consular posts;

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Brussels, 30 November 2009

Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and Georgia

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

REAFFIRMING the strong commitment of the Signatories to conclude the agreements concerning the facilitation of the issuance of visas and the readmission of persons residing without authorisation, of which the negotiating directives were adopted by the Council on 28 November 2008;

HAVE DECIDED on a Mobility Partnership based on reciprocity. The Mobility Partnership will have the purpose of better managing legal migration including circular and temporary migration, in particular for development purposes, within the limits of the respective competences of the Signatories and taking into account their labour market and socio-economic situation, establishing cooperation on migration and development, and preventing and combating illegal immigration and trafficking in and smuggling of human beings, as well as promoting an effective readmission and return policy, while respecting human rights and the relevant international instruments for the protection of refugees and taking into account the situation of individual migrants and the socioeconomic development of the Signatories.

General Affairs Council
Luxembourg, 15 June 2009

Relations with the Republic of Moldova - Council conclusions

The Council adopted directives for the negotiation of a new agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova. It adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council recalls its strong commitment to further deepening the relationship between the EU and the Republic of Moldova, on the basis of shared values and principles. The Eastern Partnership, launched in Prague on 7 May as a specific Eastern dimension of the ENP, provides a new, ambitious framework for taking the EU-Republic of Moldova relationship to a new level. The Council is committed to enhancing EU support for further political and economic reforms in the Republic of Moldova, aimed in particular at strengthening democracy and good governance, the rule of law, freedom of the media and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Council welcomes in this context the Commission's intention to launch a comprehensive package for democracy support in the Republic of Moldova.

Against this background, the Council has adopted the EU's negotiating directives for a new, comprehensive EU-Republic of Moldova agreement which will go beyond the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The Council expresses its willingness to start negotiations as soon as circumstances allow.

In this context, and with a view to the start of the negotiations, the Council calls on the Republic of Moldova to ensure equal treatment to all EU citizens in its visa policy and underlines the importance of the principle of good-neighbourly relations. [...]"

EU-Ukraine Troika Meeting on Justice, Freedom and Security
Luxembourg, 3 June 2009

The Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs of Ukraine and the EU Troika met for the seventh time on 3 June 2009 in Luxembourg to discuss ways of further strengthening Ukraine-EU cooperation in the field of Justice, Freedom and Security.

[...]

Since the last meeting in May 2008, significant progress has been made in Ukraine-EU cooperation. Both Parties welcomed the opening in October 2008 of the EU-Ukraine visa dialogue to develop the relevant conditions for visa-free travel for Ukrainian citizens to the EU as a long term perspective.

A first series of expert meetings on 4 thematic blocks of relevant issues (document security; illegal migration and borders; public order and security; external relations) has taken place since, providing a useful opportunity to discuss legislation and administrative practice of Ukraine, EU Member States and the EU as a whole in these areas. The Parties endorsed the Senior Officials' report on the visa dialogue and agreed to continue work at an operational level through on site visits by experts conducting a detailed analysis and evaluation. This would lead to a clear assessment of the situation in each Block, allowing for recommendations to be made, in view of setting up the methodology for developing the relevant conditions for establishing visa free travel for Ukrainian citizens to the EU.

Both Parties also welcomed the progress in implementation of the Ukraine-EC visa facilitation and readmission agreements. These agreements promote people-to-people contacts and assist the Parties in combating illegal migration.

The parties welcomed the Joint Declaration agreed within the framework of the Ministerial Conference on "Building Migration Partnerships" held on 27 – 28 April 2009 in Prague and encouraged further implementation of agreed principles and elements for close partnership in migration management.

The parties underlined that EU and Ukraine share a common border and, as direct neighbours, face common challenges in the fight against organised crime, including trafficking in human beings, illegal immigration and other illegal activities which are of cross-border nature. Ukraine informed the EU side on the progress made in fighting these challenges. The EU encouraged Ukraine to put in place an appropriate legislative framework for migration management, stressing the need to create a civilian central authority as a State Migration Service with responsibility for dealing with all migration and asylum issues.

The EU Troika noted the need to take further measures to combat corruption and to reform the judicial system. In particular, it was stressed that a process of extensive constitutional reforms is urgently required in order to develop a balanced and operational system of public administration that provides clear checks and balances between the state power authorities.

The Parties discussed priorities for future common work in line with the revised Ukraine-EU Action Plan on Freedom, Security and Justice, and stressed that it would be important for the Parties to:

- Continue the EU-Ukraine visa dialogue to develop the relevant conditions for visa-free travel for Ukrainian citizens to EU as a long term perspective;
- Ensure full implementation of the EC-Ukraine visa facilitation and readmission agreements;
- Discuss, in the framework of the Joint Committee set up by both parties for management of the EC-Ukraine visa facilitation agreement, possibilities of amending the said agreement in

view of providing further facilitations to Ukrainian citizens and adapting the agreement to new EC legislation in the area of visas;

Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit

Prague, 7 May 2009

Deeper bilateral engagement

7. Supporting mobility of citizens and visa liberalisation in a secure environment is another important aspect of the Eastern Partnership. It will promote mobility of citizens of the partner countries through visa facilitation and readmission agreements; the EU, in line with its Global Approach to Migration, will also take gradual steps towards full visa liberalisation as a long term goal for individual partner countries on a case-by-case basis provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place.

Building Migration Partnerships Ministerial Conference – Joint Declaration

Prague, 27-28 April 2009

We, the Ministers responsible for migration and other representatives from: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo/UNSCR 1244/1999, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan and the European Commissioner responsible for Migration,

[...]

(...) **we agree** to strengthen co-operation in migration management, to explore and develop agreed principles and elements for close **migration partnerships** between our countries, following a comprehensive, balanced, pragmatic and operational approach, and respecting the rights and human dignity of migrants and their family members, as well as of refugees:

[...]

(f) These partnerships will address the issue of **preventing and fighting illegal migration**, in particular by:

(...)

7. improving consular and visa cooperation and cooperation with migration authorities in countries of origin, including cooperation and coordination between Immigration Liaison Officers and the host country,

(...)

10. addressing the issue of overstaying and other forms of visa and residence permit misuse and developing targeted and joint action to tackle this significant type of illegal migration,

(...)

11. placing particular emphasis on the further coherent implementation of already existing commitments and agreements between the partners, such as visa facilitation and readmission agreements.

European Council Conclusions

Brussels, 19-20 March 2009

III. European Neighbourhood Policy

Eastern Partnership

29. Promoting stability, good governance and economic development in its Eastern neighbourhood is of strategic importance for the European Union. In line with the Commission communication of 3 December 2008, the European Council welcomes the establishment of an ambitious Eastern Partnership and adopts the Declaration annexed to these conclusions. It calls for all necessary preparations to be made for the Eastern Partnership launching summit with the partner countries on 7 May 2009.

30. The Eastern Partnership will promote stability and prosperity among the EU's Eastern partners covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy. The European Council commits, on the terms set out in the declaration, to a deeper bilateral engagement and to a new multilateral framework involving the EU, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, aiming at accelerating reforms, legislative approximation and further economic integration.

31. The European Council further calls on the Commission as well as the current and incoming Presidencies to advance speedily with the practical implementation of the Partnership together with the partners and requests the Commission to submit in due course a report on the first year of implementation of the Eastern Partnership.

European Commission Communication on the Eastern Partnership

Brussels, 3 December 2008

[...]

3.3. Mobility and security

Partners emphasise that mobility is a key litmus test for engagement with the EU and promoting mobility in a secure environment⁸ should be a priority for the EaP. The EU should promote mobility of citizens with those partners that are willing to commit to ensure that the conditions for well managed and secure mobility are in place.

The EU should offer partners "**Mobility and Security**" pacts that would include both the mobility aspect and the conditions required to ensure the secure environment. Key policy areas that would be covered by such pacts would include fighting illegal migration, upgrading the asylum systems to EU standards, setting up integrated border management structures aligned to the EU *acquis*, as well as enhancing the abilities of police and judiciary in particular in the fight against corruption and organised crime. The pacts would improve the mobility of people, while contributing to the partners' own stability and security, as well as to the security of the EU borders. They will be tailor-made on a country-by-country-basis.

The **mobility** side of the pacts would reflect the recent Commission Communication on Strengthening the Global Approach to Migration and the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, endorsed by the European Council in October 2008. The main tool would be the Mobility Partnership, as identified in the framework of the Global Approach to Migration and currently tested with a number of countries, including the Republic of Moldova (hereafter referred to as "Moldova"). Developments in the area of visa policy will be an integral part of this wider concept. **Visa policy** would follow a phased approach, leading to visa liberalisation under specific conditions and with accompanying measures, including financial assistance for our partners.

In addition to proposals that have been tabled previously, in the framework of the pacts the EU should:

- As a first step, initiate talks on **visa facilitation** with partners without such agreements. Visa facilitation agreements would be accompanied by readmission agreements and, where necessary, by technical assistance under overall assistance budgets to help partners meet the obligations stemming from these agreements;
- As a second step, revise these agreements to introduce additional facilitations, e.g waiving the visa fee for all citizens.
- Develop a **coordinated plan to improve Member States' consular coverage** in the region by encouraging Member States to make wider use of representation and through financial support for the establishment of Common Visa Application Centres, based on the successful experience in Chisinau;
- Once visa facilitation and readmission agreements are effectively implemented, open dialogues on **visa-free travel** with all cooperating partners. Dialogues would establish roadmaps leading to visa waiver, dealing with four main blocks of issues: document security; fight against irregular migration, including readmission; public order issues; and external relation issues, including human rights of migrants and other vulnerable groups.
- The Commission will launch a study to quantify the costs and benefits for the EU and for partners with regard to **labour mobility** and possible labour-matching measures.

Depending on the results of the study, the EU would pursue a targeted opening of the EU labour market to citizens of partners, as well as measures to facilitate circular migration, within the framework of Mobility Partnerships.

- To ensure that mobility takes place in a **secure environment**, the EU should also help its partners implement the political and legislative commitments they have already undertaken in the ENP framework in the justice and law enforcement areas. This could be done through reinforced

technical cooperation and financial assistance, where the role of twinning projects and TAIEX should be substantially enhanced.

In particular, in the framework of the pacts the EU should:

- Help partners establish **high-standard border management** procedures at the external borders;
- Assist them in setting up an **effective data protection regime** which would allow them to share **operational information** with Europol and Eurojust in the context of bilateral agreements;
- Grant partners special status in relevant **EU agencies**, where feasible;
- Support them in adopting and effectively implementing national strategies in line with EU standards to **fight vigorously against organised crime, trafficking and high-level corruption**, and to prevent money laundering and financing of terrorism, which need to be tackled effectively at an early stage.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Brussels, 27-28 November 2008

EU/Georgia - Agreement on the facilitation of issuance of visas and readmission agreement

The Council adopted a Decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement between the European Community and Georgia on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas.

The Council also adopted a Decision authorising the Commission to negotiate with Georgia a readmission agreement between the European Community and Georgia.

Foreign Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 13 October 2008

Georgia/Russia – Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

3. The Council thanks the Commission for convening the high-level conference of donors in Brussels on 22 October, with the aim, in particular, of assisting displaced persons and restarting the Georgian economy. The European Union will contribute substantially via the contributions of the Community and those of the Member States, based on an overall needs assessment carried out by the World Bank in cooperation with the European Commission and other institutions. **To strengthen relations between the European Union and Georgia, the Council is preparing to begin negotiations with Georgia in the near future on visa facilitation and readmission, and invites the Commission to continue preparatory work on the possible establishment of a deep and comprehensive free trade area, as soon as conditions permit.**

General Affairs Council
Luxembourg, 13 October 2008

Relations with the Republic of Moldova - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The EU welcomes the recent increase in the pace of its relations with the Republic of Moldova. It is ready to have a deeper relationship in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and to negotiate a new and ambitious agreement with Moldova soon. This agreement will go beyond the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and will include the aim of a comprehensive and deep free-trade area, to be put in place when the Republic of Moldova is ready to sustain the effects of full liberalisation of its trade with the EU. The aim of the agreement will be gradually to bring the Republic of Moldova and the EU closer together. The Council recalls in this connection, the facilitation agreement on visas which lays down the introduction of a visa-free travel regime for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova as a long-term perspective.

EU-Ukraine Summit
Paris, 9 September 2008

Joint Declaration of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement

Presidents Yushchenko, Sarkozy and Barroso have met today and agreed on the following joint declaration:

[...]

The Presidents welcomed the fact that, since the adoption of the EU-Ukraine Action Plan in 2005, the partnership between the European Union and Ukraine has advanced considerably in all areas of common interest: cooperation on foreign policy and crisis management, economic and energy cooperation, cooperation in the field of justice, freedom and security including visa policy, and in many other sectors.

[...]

They also decided to launch a visa dialogue, developing the relevant conditions, with the long-term perspective of establishing a visa free regime between the EU and Ukraine.

Justice, Liberty and Security

The leaders of Ukraine and the EU discussed the implementation of agreements on facilitation of issuance of visas and readmission. The leaders underlined the need for full and effective implementation of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements by the authorities of EU Member States and Ukraine, acknowledging that Ukraine has exempted EU citizens from the visa obligation. Ukraine emphasised the importance of improving visa issuance procedures.

[...]

With a view to launching a dialogue on the establishment of a visa-free regime for short stay travel between the EU and Ukraine as a long-term perspective, the leaders encouraged the experts to start this dialogue as soon as possible this year.

Justice and Home Affairs Council
Luxembourg, 5-6 June 2008

Mobility partnerships with Cape Verde and with the Republic of Moldova

The Council took note of two joint declarations on mobility partnerships between the EU and Cape Verde (9460/08 ADD2) and between the EU and the Republic of Moldova (9460/08 ADD1+COR1).

The two joint declarations were signed in the margins of the Council.

In December 2007, the European Council welcomed, in the framework of the implementation of the a global approach to migration, the Commission communication on circular migration and mobility partnerships. The European Council stated that the mobility partnerships should be considered in those cases where they bring added value, both to the EU and the third country, on the management of migration flows and on the understanding that the willingness to contribute to this partnership and to cooperate actively is the basis for the opportunities offered by them.

[Link to the Joint Declaration with the Republic of Moldova](#)

Polish-Swedish Proposal
Eastern Partnership
June 2008

There is a need to strengthen the European offer in the Eastern direction and to develop an Eastern Partnership. Such a partnership should be based on, but go beyond the current ENP, confirming, on the one hand, the differentiation principle towards the neighbours, in line with the ENP, and, on the other hand, strengthening horizontal links between these neighbours and the EU. In this context, we propose:

- Deepening bilateral co-operation. An offer of more profound integration with the EU should be extended to all eastern partners. First and foremost Ukraine would benefit from this; others would follow according to ambition and performance.
- Creating a permanent formula for multilateral co-operation complementary to the existing regional co-operation schemes.

A deepened bilateral co-operation will include:

- Deepening cooperation on the broader migration agenda and moving towards a visa-free regime as a long-term goal, and, in a short-term perspective, making a further step in the visa facilitation process. A road map towards visa freedom, with clearly laid down steps and conditions, should be established.

- Creating a deep Free Trade Area, built upon the basis of series of deep and comprehensive free trade agreements to be negotiated individually between the EU and the partner countries.
- Enhancing EU support to sector reforms in accordance with European standards.
- Intensifying people-to-people contacts through enhanced student and scholar exchange programmes, civil society platforms and seminars, cooperation and exchanges of local and regional partners etc.
- Adjusting the methodology of the internal reforms and promoting the EU integration process. A new generation of Action Plans, agreed with each of the partner countries, with clear benchmarks and linkage to the alignment towards EU legislation, standards and norms. Reforms should increasingly be assessed against EU standards, with due monitoring by the Commission.
- Successor agreements going beyond present PCA's could be offered to all eastern neighbours in due time and depending on reform progress. The New Enhanced Agreement with Ukraine could serve as a reference, with necessary adaptations to each of the partner countries.
- Ensuring a distribution of EU assistance funds that reflects progress in implementing agreed reform objectives as well as absorption capacity.
- The principle of differentiation among the partner countries is a key element.

Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the EU and the Republic of Moldova
Brussels, 21 May 2008

[The Republic of Moldova, the European Community, and the participating Member States of the European Union]

HAVE DECIDED on a Mobility Partnership based on reciprocity. The Mobility Partnership will have the purpose of facilitating legal migration including circular and temporary migration, in particular for development purposes, within the limits of the respective competences of the Signatories and taking into account their labour market and socio-economic situation, establishing cooperation on migration and development, and preventing and combating illegal immigration and trafficking in and smuggling of human beings, as well as promoting an effective readmission and return policy, while respecting human rights and the relevant international instruments for the protection of refugees and taking into account the situation of individual migrants and the socioeconomic development of the Signatories.

To this end, they will ENDEAVOUR to develop further their dialogue and cooperation on migration issues, and in particular along the following lines:

[...]

5. To deepen their dialogue on visa issues, and to improve their consular capacities and cooperation, including through initiatives such as common visa application centres, considering the appointment of labour and migration attachés in the main destination countries, and consolidation of the Information Centres created for the Moldovan citizens abroad, within the diplomatic and consular missions of the Republic of Moldova;

[...]

9. Visa and readmission

Objective: Further strengthening the dialogue and cooperation on visa issues and readmission

i. Common Visa Application Centre - To promote the enlargement of the Common Visa Application Centre with interested Member States, whereby the Hungarian diplomatic mission in Chisinau would represent them in issuing uniform short-stay visas to those applicants who wish to travel through or stay in their country, in accordance with part II, 1.2 of the Common Consular Instructions. Proposal on further development of the Common Visa Application Centre by information activities (on issues such as legal ways to enter and stay in the European Union and Schengen area) and by developing working relations with the information centres in Balti and Cahul, as well as by taking part in the initiative proposed under point 3.i.

[The Joint Declaration [was signed in Luxembourg on 5 June 2008](#)]

External Relations Council **Brussels, 18 February 2008**

European Neighbourhood Policy – Council conclusions

The Council had an exchange of views on the basis of a presentation by the Commission and adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

4. The Council underlines the importance of people-to-people contacts and the role of civil society in the context of ENP, in particular in the fields of education, science, culture and business, for promoting shared principles, enhancing EU visibility in the ENP region and strengthening local civil societies. In order to increase mobility, legitimate short-term travel by nationals from ENP countries to the EU should be facilitated, on the basis of a country-by-country approach, by a more flexible use of existing possibilities to simplify visa procedures, as well as inter alia through the consideration of Common Application Centres and the rapid conclusion by Member States of bilateral agreements relating to local border traffic, particularly with those partner countries bordering the Schengen area. The implementation of the 2003 Council Conclusions concerning flexibility in issuing visas to participants in Euro-Mediterranean meetings should be extended to include all ENP partners when participating in ENP-related meetings.

Justice and Home Affairs Council **Brussels, 6-7 December 2007**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

A. Mobility Partnerships

[...]

10. The Council welcomes the results of the preliminary discussions held between the Commission and Member States on the added value, possible content and structures of mobility partnerships. On the basis of these discussions, the Council invites the Commission, in close liaison with Member States and/or the Presidency, in order to ensure a close involvement of the Council, to open dialogue with Cape Verde and Moldova, with a view to launching pilot mobility partnerships.

European Commission Communication on "A Strong European Neighbourhood Policy"
Brussels, 5 December 2007

3. Substantive issues – Key improvements proposed

[...]

3.2. Mobility

The ability of people to move and interact with each other is of the utmost importance for many aspects of the ENP, from trade and investment to cultural exchanges. Mobility is in itself a key foreign policy priority as this is the prism through which the citizens of partner countries perceive the EU.

The Commission proposes facilitation of legitimate short-term travel as well as more ambitious – longer-term – developments in the area of managed migration, potentially involving the opening of Member States' labour markets where this is to the mutual advantage of the sending and receiving countries.

Obviously, mobility can only develop in a secure environment, and security improvements will help to create the conditions for greater mobility. The promotion of mobility will go hand in hand with the commitment of our partners to increase security and justice and fight illegal migration, with efforts to strengthen our neighbours' capacity to deal with migratory flows to their countries, and with the security of documents.

The Commission urges the Council and the European Parliament to adopt its 2006 "package" on legislative proposals aiming at revising the European Visa policy, ensuring a high level of security within the common area and simplifying the procedures for visa applicants. These proposals will facilitate short-term travel by helping to solve the outstanding problems in the delivery of Schengen visas. It will in particular provide an easier proof that a traveller is *bona fide*, improve access of visa applicants to consulates, and ensure better consular presence and regional coverage, including the establishment of Common Application Centres where needed.

Existing opportunities to facilitate travel are not being fully used. The *Local Border Traffic Regulation* allows Member States to conclude bilateral agreements with neighbouring third countries to improve people-to-people contacts in border areas and this should be used to full advantage. Better use by Member States of the *flexibilities provided for under the present Schengen acquis* could contribute to smoother arrangements.

The implementation of the 2003 Council Conclusions on *flexibility in issuing visas to participants in Euro-Mediterranean meetings*⁷ should be extended to include all ENP partner countries. This

extension would mainly concern Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as visa facilitation agreements for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova are about to enter into force. Member States are requested to fast-track the processing of visa applications made by persons attending ENP events and, where the applicant has previously complied with visa requirements, to grant multi-entry visas more systematically. The Commission will play a more active role, by providing letters of support and encouraging applicants to start the procedure in due time.

General Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 15 October 2007

Relations with Moldova - Cooperation committee

The Council approved a position to be taken by the EU at the 8th EU-Moldova cooperation committee meeting, which will take place in Chisinau on 25 October 2007.

[...]

Immigration - readmission agreement with Moldova

The Council adopted by written procedure on 10 October 2007 a Decision concerning the signing of the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Moldova on readmission of persons residing without authorisation (12752/07) and decided to consult the European Parliament on the proposal for Council Decision on the conclusion of this agreement.

Agreements on visa facilitation and readmission between the EU and Moldova

Brussels, 10 October 2007 (Press release)

The visa facilitation and readmission agreements were signed today in a ceremony that took place in Brussels with the participation, from the EU side, of Vice President Franco Frattini (from the Commission) and the State Secretary for European Affairs Manuel Lobo Antunes (from the Portuguese Presidency) and, from Moldova, of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Andrei Stratan.

[...]

Following the mandate given by the Council on 19 December 2006, the European Commission started the negotiations of the two Community agreements on 9 February 2007 and succeeded in finalising the whole process and initialling the draft agreements on 25 April 2007.

- [Link to Council Decision of 22 November 2007](#) (2007/827/EC) on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Moldova on the facilitation of the issuance of visas. [Official document of the agreement](#).
- [Link to Council Decision of 22 November 2007](#) (2007/826/EC) on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Moldova on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation. [Official document of the agreement](#).

EU-Ukraine Summit – Joint Statement

Kiev, 14 September 2007

The Parties welcomed the important progress achieved in the implementation of the EU Ukraine Action Plan. They noted the launch of negotiations on a new enhanced agreement, the finalisation and signature of agreements on visa facilitation and readmission and positive co-operation with the EU Border Assistance Mission at the Ukrainian-Moldovan border (EUBAM). The EU leaders emphasised that Ukraine's success in stabilising her political system would be a major factor determining her capacity to move forward with political and economic reforms.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 12-13 June 2007

EU/Ukraine - Visa facilitation and readmission agreements

The Council adopted decisions approving the signing of an agreement between the EU and Ukraine on facilitating the issuance of visas to citizens of the EU and Ukraine, as well as an agreement on readmission (9323/07, 9312/07).

The purpose of the visa agreement is to facilitate, on the basis of reciprocity, the issuance of visas for an intended stay of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days to citizens of the EU and Ukraine. The agreement will not apply to the territory of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

The readmission agreement establishes, on the basis of reciprocity, rapid and effective procedures for the identification and return of persons who do not, or who no longer, fulfil the conditions for entry to and stay on the territory of Ukraine or of one of the Member States of the EU, and to facilitate the transit of such persons in a spirit of cooperation. The agreement will not apply to the territory of Denmark.

The Council took note that the Commission will inform the Ukrainian side of the following statement:

"Taking into consideration the importance of the equal treatment of all EU citizens by third countries on visa issues, the European Community declares its intention to wait for the adoption by the Ukrainian authorities of the unilateral decision granting Bulgarian and Romanian citizens the same treatment as all other EU citizens with regard to visa before ratifying the Agreement between European Community and Ukraine on the facilitation of the issuance of short-stay visas."

European Commission Communication "Applying the Global Approach to Migration to the Eastern and South-Eastern Regions Neighbouring the European Union"

Brussels, 16 May 2007

2.2. European Neighbourhood Policy partner countries in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus

[...]

2.2.2. Recommendations

Relations with individual countries of course differ, but short-term priorities should include the following:

[...]

- As the Commission explained in its December 2006 Communication, **mobility of persons** is of the utmost importance for ENP partners and also for the EU, in order to fully deliver on this foreign policy priority. The Commission therefore suggested that there should be a "very serious examination of how visa procedures can be made less of an obstacle to legitimate travel from neighbouring countries to the EU (and vice versa)...in the context of broader packages to address related (JLS) issues". Consequently, **mobility partnerships** for these countries must be considered, including in particular possibilities for **visa facilitation**, work permits and information related to seasonal labour market needs within the EU. The feasibility of such a partnership with Ukraine, amongst others, should be explored as a priority.

- In addition, **visa facilitation** should be provided for non-work purposes (i.e. business, educational and tourism purposes) and for officials attending relevant reform-related meetings, as is already possible within the existing Common Consular Instructions. The Commission now strongly recommends that this be applied, particularly by those Member States in which most relevant meetings take place (i.e. those hosting the EU institutions and those holding the rotating Presidency). In particular, the Commission would call for this to be done, with immediate effect, for people travelling on 'EU business' (which represents a very small proportion of visa applications), for which it will provide letters of recommendation to and continue to work with the relevant EU Member State Embassy or Consulate.

[...]

- Attention should be given to the conclusion of **readmission agreements**. A readmission agreement has already been initialled with Ukraine and negotiations have been completed with Moldova with the aim of having the agreement enter into force as soon as possible during 2007. Initiating negotiations with the other countries should also be considered in the future. For those that have such agreements with the EU, the focus should then be on their capacity to implement those agreements, as well as encouragement to reach similar agreements with their own Eastern and South-Eastern neighbours.

2.3. Russian Federation

[...]

- Implementation of the priorities set out by the **Road Map of the Common Space** should be intensified, namely the objectives of exchanging information on migration management policies and best practices including the assessment of statistics and to cooperate as appropriate in relation to third countries. In this context, cooperation between the relevant authorities in charge of implementation of the **readmission** and **visa facilitation** agreements should be encouraged, with close monitoring of the implementation process, contributing to a more effective fight against illegal immigration while easing people-to-people contacts. Moreover, as set up in the Common Space, dialogue to examine the conditions for visa-free travel as a long-term objective has

commenced. This newly established framework could be used to explore ways to intensify relations in other areas related to migration.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 19-20 April 2007

EU/Russia - Visa facilitation and readmission agreements

The Council adopted decisions approving the conclusion of an agreement between the EU and Russia on facilitating the issue of visas to citizens of the EU and Russia, as well as an agreement on readmission (6971/07, 6972/07).

Both agreements were signed in Sochi (Russia) on 25 May 2006.

The purpose of the visa agreement is to facilitate, on the basis of reciprocity, the issuance of visas for an intended stay of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days to citizens of the EU and Russia. The agreement will not apply to the territory of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom. The readmission agreement establishes, on the basis of reciprocity, rapid and effective procedures for the identification and return of persons who do not, or no longer, fulfil the conditions for entry to, presence in, or residence on the territories of Russia or one of the Member States of the EU, and to facilitate the transit of such persons in a spirit of cooperation. The agreement will not apply to the territory of Denmark.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Brussels, 15 February 2007

Moldova

Commission Vice-President, Franco Frattini drew attention to a number of developments in Moldova arising from the most recent enlargement of the Community, including its **impact on the number of Moldavians applying for Romanian passports and proposals for the establishment of a common visa centre.**

The Council mandated its preparatory bodies to further examine this question.

European Commission Communication on circular migration and mobility partnerships between the European Union and third countries

Brussels, 16 May 2007

B. Contents of mobility partnerships

[...]

(2) Commitments to be given by the EC and Member States participating

[...]

(d) Improvement and/or easing of the procedures for issuing short stay visas to nationals of the third country

In the process of negotiating a mobility partnership it might prove appropriate to include country-specific improvements in the area of short stay visa policy, in addition to across-the-board improvements already proposed by the Commission (cf. Annex I). Such improvements could be considered at two different levels:

(i) Better organisation of the consular services of EU Member States in the country in question

Applicants for short stay visas to the EU in third countries often encounter practical difficulties, ranging from the lack of local Member States' consulates to very long queues, or extremely long waits – up to several months – between requesting an appointment to lodge the visa application and the appointment itself. In extreme cases, applicants may need to travel to a neighbouring country to lodge an application and may need to obtain a short stay visa from the state in which the consulate is located before they can apply for a visa for their planned trip.

Several possible responses to this type of difficulties could be envisaged in the framework of a mobility partnership:

- Member States participating in the mobility partnership could give a commitment to the relevant third country to bring about practical improvements in the application procedures such as longer opening hours, a reinforcement of human resources, etc.;
- In parallel, they could also agree to improve consular cooperation locally. Commission Delegations in third countries party to a mobility partnership could play a useful role in fostering such cooperation;
- Member States could also make fuller use of the flexibility in the existing Community acquis (amended common consular instructions), which provides for instance that multiple entry visa valid for a long period (up to five years) can be issued to bona fide persons who need to travel frequently. Member States can also exempt visa applicants from the visa fee in individual cases; etc. Fuller use of this flexibility could be part of the offer of Member States interested in contributing to a given mobility partnership;
- Such enhanced cooperation could result in several Member States opening a common visa application centre in a given third country, as envisaged in the Commission proposal to amend the common consular instructions (currently under examination by the European Parliament and the Council). Priority could even be given to setting up common application centres – eligible for financing under the External Border Fund – in third countries party to mobility partnerships.

(ii) Visa facilitation agreements for specific categories of people

More systematic improvements to the visa issuing procedures can also be offered in the form of **visa facilitation agreements** for specific categories of people to be negotiated between the EC and a third country willing to engage in a mobility partnership. The advantage of such agreements is that they establish clear rights and obligations for visa applicants. When defining a mobility partnership, the "Common approach on visa facilitation" agreed at Coreper level should be taken into account and might even need to be reviewed in the light of the potential offered by development of mobility partnerships.

European Commission Communication
Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy
Brussels, 4 December 2006

3.2. Facilitating mobility and managing migration

Even from the earliest days of the European Community, the ability of the citizens of our Member States to travel within the Community, on business, for educational purposes, or on holiday, has been vital in promoting internal trade and investment, in building mutual awareness and encouraging economic, social and cultural contacts. Mobility of persons is of the utmost importance also for all ENP partners. The Union cannot fully deliver on many aspects of the European Neighbourhood Policy if the ability to undertake legitimate short term travel is as constrained as it is currently. Yet our existing visa policies and practices often impose real difficulties and obstacles to legitimate travel. Long queues in front of EU consulates are a highly visible sign of the barriers to entry into the Union. Whether for business purposes, for purposes of education or tourism, science and research, for civil society conferences or even for official meetings at national or local government level, the ability to obtain short-term visas in reasonable time at reasonable cost will be an indicator of the strength of our European Neighbourhood Policy.

An enhanced ENP will therefore require a very serious examination of how visa procedures can be made less of an obstacle to legitimate travel from neighbouring countries to the EU (and vice versa). Of course this can only be addressed in the context of broader packages to address related issues such as cooperation on illegal immigration, in particular by sea, combating trafficking and smuggling in human beings, efficient border management, readmissions agreements and effective return of illegal migrants, and adequate processing of requests for international protection and asylum. But with a solid commitment from our partners to work on these prerequisites, it should be possible to offer very substantial improvements on the visa side – providing simpler and faster visa procedures for certain specific categories of travel, particularly for business, official and educational purposes– at the same time as we strengthen our joint efforts against illegal immigration.

As an illustration of what can be achieved, visa facilitation and readmission agreements were initialled with Ukraine in October 2006, while discussions with Moldova on such agreements are expected to be launched shortly. Negotiations with Morocco on a readmission agreement are almost concluded.. Visa facilitation agreements are negotiated back-to-back with readmission agreements and are “tailor-made”, responding to the specific needs of the third country concerned and provide simplification of the short-term visa issuing procedures for certain categories of persons.

Wider developments in visa policy in the EU are also relevant here, for example with negotiations between Member States on the creation of the Visa Information System which would include biometrics for visa applicants and which would enable the exchange of visa data between Member States. Moreover, the Commission has proposed several types of cooperation between Member States, including the creation of common visa-application centres, which could greatly facilitate the reception of visa applications in ENP countries.

Taking account of the need for a balanced approach and building on the dialogue on migration and visa issues foreseen in the ENP Action Plans, the Union should be willing to enter negotiations on readmission and visa facilitation with each neighbouring country with an Action Plan in force, once the proper preconditions have been met.

Action points: Mobility and migration

- visa facilitation, removing obstacles to legitimate travel, e.g. for business, educational, tourism, official purposes
- as part of a package approach ensuring well-managed mobility and migration, addressing readmission, cooperation in fighting illegal immigration, and effective and efficient border management

European Council's action oriented paper on implementing with Russia the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice

Brussels, 28 November 2006

[...] Negotiations for a Visa Facilitation Agreement and a Readmission Agreement were concluded in October 2005 and both agreements were signed on 25 May 2006. The dialogue on visa matters will continue with the aim of defining the procedure for examination of the conditions for a mutual visa-free travel regime as a long-term perspective.

[...]

II. Cooperation between EU and Russia in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice

[...]

Work on the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice has already made a big step forward with the conclusion of negotiations on the Visa Facilitation and the Readmission Agreements. The agreements were signed at the EU-Russia Summit on May 25 2006 in Sochi, Russia. Both the EU and Russia are in the process of preparing the ratification of these agreements. The visa dialogue will continue with a view to define the procedure for examining the conditions for a mutual visa free travel regime as a long-term perspective. Cooperation on combating terrorism, and other forms of trans-national illegal activities such as money laundering, fight against drugs, economic crime such as double invoicing and trafficking in human beings will continue as well as on document security through the introduction of biometric features in a range of identification documents. The EU support to border management and reform of the Russian judiciary system are among the highlights of this space. With a view to contributing to the concrete implementation of the road map, the Justice and Home Affairs Permanent Partnership Council (PPC) met on 13 October 2005 and on 22 March 2006 and agreed to organise clusters of conferences and seminars, bringing together experts and practitioners on counter-terrorism, cyber-crime, document security and judicial cooperation.

[...]

III. Summary of current action

[...]

1. Freedom

1.1. To facilitate the movement of persons/readmission

The EU-Russia agreements on visa facilitation and readmission were signed during Austria's Presidency.

Actions to be taken:

- To conclude between some EU Member States (FR, PT and ES) and Russia of bilateral protocols on the implementation of the EU-Russia readmission agreement (France, Portugal and Spain need to agree separately by protocol, due to their national legislation, on the deadline for replying to a request for readmission. As regards other Member States, it should be made sure that they follow the provisions laid down of the EU-Russia agreement.)
- To intensify the visa dialogue at expert and political level aimed at defining the procedure for examining the conditions for a mutual visa-free travel regime as a long-term perspective, as set out in the Common Space.
- To discuss with Russia of the EU's serious concerns regarding the issue of other travel obstacles applied in a non-reciprocal manner, such as the Russian registration procedures and establishment of extensive border zones.

EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council

Brussels, 14 November 2006

On the occasion of the Cooperation Council, the two Parties signed a formal document launching the implementation of the previously agreed European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan. Both sides reaffirmed their willingness to work together to fully exploit the new opportunities presented by the ENP Action Plan.

[Link to the Action Plan](#)

EU-Armenia Cooperation Council

Brussels, 14 November 2006

On the occasion of the Cooperation Council, the two Parties signed a formal document launching the implementation of the previously agreed European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan. Both sides reaffirmed their willingness to work together to fully exploit the new opportunities presented by the ENP Action Plan.

[Link to the Action Plan](#)

EU-Georgia Cooperation Council

Brussels, 14 November 2006

On the occasion of the Cooperation Council, the two Parties signed a formal document launching the implementation of the previously agreed European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan. Both sides reaffirmed their willingness to work together to fully exploit the new opportunities presented by the ENP Action Plan.

[Link to the Action Plan](#)

General Affairs Council

Brussels, 13 November 2006

European neighbourhood policy - Joint action plans with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

The Council approved draft action plans under the European neighbourhood policy to be forwarded for adoption by the EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia cooperation councils on 14 November.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 5-6 October 2006

Moldova: Initiating negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements

The Council was briefed on the outcome of the consultations on the question of initiating negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Moldova.

In the light of these consultations, the Council welcomed the Commission's intention to submit negotiating mandates on visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Moldova.

In July 2006, the "Justice and Home Affairs" Council requested the Commission to undertake consultations with the Member States on the possible initiation of negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Moldova. The Commission evaluation report was to be submitted in September 2006.

The "Justice and Home Affairs" Council had previously decided, on 27 and 28 April, in conjunction with agreement on a Decision to increase the fee to be charged for the processing of visa applications, to invite the Commission to bring forward recommendations for mandates initiating negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements beginning with the countries with a European perspective as referred to in the European Council conclusions of June 2003 and June 2005. The Commission has subsequently brought forward the necessary mandates in respect of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. Adoption of those mandates by the Council - as would be the case in respect of any mandate for Moldova - before the end of this year would have the effect of freezing the fee charged at €35 instead of the €60 fee until the end of 2007.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Brussels, 24 July 2006

Moldova: Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements

The Council invited the Commission to undertake consultations with Member States within the relevant Council preparatory bodies provided for in paragraph 11 of the common approach to visa facilitation on the possibility of initiating negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Moldova.

The Commission is invited to submit an evaluation report in advance of the October Council.

[EU-Russia Summit](#)

Sotchi, 25 May 2006 (Press release)

In the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice the leaders welcomed the signature of agreements on visa facilitation and on readmission, which took place in the margins of the summit. The two agreements will open the way for easier contacts across the European continent, while creating conditions for effectively fighting illegal immigration. The particular importance of the ongoing cooperation to tackle common challenges for both the EU and Russia, like terrorism, drugs and organised crime, and the need to improve border management and migration control was underscored. The leaders also noted the results of the third round of EU-Russia Human Rights Consultations held in Vienna on 3 March 2006, and looked forward to the next regular round during the Finnish EU Presidency.

- [Link to Council Decision of 19 April 2007](#) (2007/340/EC) on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russia Federation on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas. [Official document of the Visa Facilitation Agreement](#).
- [Link to Council Decision Council Decision](#) of 19 April 2007 (2007/341/EC) on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on readmission. [Official document of the Readmission Agreement](#).

[Both agreements entered into force on 1 June 2007]

[General Affairs Council](#)

Brussels, 7 November 2005

Ukraine - Visa facilitation agreement

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to negotiate a visa facilitation agreement between the EU and Ukraine.

[External Relations Council](#)

Brussels, 21 February 2005

Ukraine

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

3. In order to further strengthen and enrich the Action Plan, the Council agreed on the following measures in support of a democratic and reform-oriented Ukraine:

[...]

• To study, with a view to the negotiations to be held between the EU and Ukraine before the next EU-Ukraine Summit options concerning the question of how, and in what framework, the granting of visas could be facilitated whilst complying rigorously with security requirements. In this context, progress in the ongoing negotiations on an EC-Ukraine readmission agreement will remain essential. The EU will continue to assist Ukraine in implementing the JHA Action Plan and the scoreboard.

External Relations Council

Brussels, 22-23 November 2004

Belarus - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

6. Against the background of these developments and building on previously established EU policy, the Council has decided the following actions:

[...]

– The EU will introduce a visa-ban against the officials directly responsible for the fraudulent elections and referendum and against those responsible for severe human rights violations in the repression of peaceful demonstrators;

General Affairs Council

Brussels, 12-13 July 2004

Visas - Russia

The Council decided to authorise the Commission to begin negotiations with the Russian Federation on facilitation of the issuance of short-stay visas to EU and Russian citizens.

General Affairs Council

Luxembourg, 14 June 2004

European Neighbourhood Policy - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

[...]

12. Concerning the Southern Caucasus, the Council recalled its conclusions of 16 June 2003 and of 26 January 2004 and its continuing interest in promoting stability, democracy and prosperity in this region. The Council noted the recommendations of the European Parliament, the Commission,

SG/HR and the EU Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus and decided to include Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the ENP. This marks a significant step forward in the Union's engagement with this region. Each country will be given the same possibility to develop its links with the EU, including through action plans, and will be treated on its individual merits in line with the general policy of the ENP. The Council also invited the Commission, and the SG/HR for issues related to political cooperation and the CFSP, to report on progress made by each country with regard to political and economic reforms.

Justice and Home Affairs

Luxembourg, 25 and 26 October 2004

Europol - Moldova and Ukraine - Fight against organised crime

The Council adopted a Decision adding Moldova and Ukraine to the list of third States that the Director of Europol can start negotiating agreements with, in order to more efficiently be able to fight organised crime (12371/1/04).

European Commission Communication

European Neighbourhood Policy - Strategy Paper

Brussels, 12 May 2004

Justice and Home Affairs

[...]

Moreover, a Commission proposal for Regulations on the establishment of a local border traffic regime is currently under consideration by the Council and will, if adopted, make it possible for border area populations to maintain traditional contacts without encountering excessive administrative obstacles. The European Union may also consider possibilities for visa facilitation. Facilitation by one side will need to be matched by effective actions by the other.

European Commission Communication

Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours

Brussels, 11 March 2003

PERSPECTIVES FOR LAWFUL MIGRATION AND MOVEMENT OF PERSONS: The EU and the partner countries have a common interest in ensuring the new external border is not a barrier to trade, social and cultural interchange or regional cooperation. The impact of ageing and demographic decline, globalisation and specialization means the EU and its neighbours can profit from putting in place mechanisms that allow workers to move from one territory to another where skills are needed most – although the free movement of people and labour remains the long-term objective. Significant additional opportunities for cultural and technical interchange could be facilitated by a long-stay visa policy on the part of the EU member states. An efficient and user-friendly system for small border traffic is an essential part of any regional development policy. The EU is currently looking at ways of facilitating the crossing of external borders for *bona fide* third-country nationals living in the border areas that have legitimate and valid grounds for regularly crossing the border and do not

pose any security threat. The EU could also consider the possibilities for facilitating the movement of citizens of neighbouring countries participating in EU programmes and activities. EU member states should also consider using the possibilities for granting visa-free access to holders of diplomatic and service passports. Beyond this, provided the necessary conditions are in place, the EU should be open to examine wider application of visa free regimes. The EU should develop a common approach to ensure the integration of third country nationals, with special emphasis on citizens of the neighbouring countries lawfully resident in the Union. The EU should assist in reinforcing the neighbouring countries' efforts to combat illegal migration and to establish efficient mechanisms for returns, especially illegal transit migration. Concluding readmission agreement with all the neighbours, starting with Morocco, Russia, Algeria, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, will be an essential element in joint efforts to curb illegal migration.
