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## EU VISA LIBERALISATON RECOMMENDED FOR KOSOVO

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The European Commission on Wednesday recommended to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament that Kosovo should be transferred to the visa-free list for short stays in the Schengen zone.

It said that Kosovo has fulfilled the requirements of its visa liberalisation roadmap.

This is the result of the hard work and successful efforts of the Kosovo authorities in achieving far-reaching and difficult reforms \* impacting areas such as the rule of law and justice reform, said the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos.

But the European Commission also said that Kosovo must step up its efforts to tackle organised crime and corruption and ratify a border demarcation agreement with Montenegro which the opposition rejects and which has fuelled street protests that ended in clashes with police in Pristina.

Senior Kosovo politicians hailed the recommendation as a historic step forward.

After decades of isolation, there will be no longer waiting lines in the embassies, no more refusals. We have not received a gift, but have deserved the liberalisation, said Kosovos President Hashim Thaci.

In December last year, when he was serving as foreign minister, Thaci bitterly criticised the EU when it failed to recommend Kosovo for the Schengen visa-free regime, calling it a direct insult to the citizens of Kosovo.

EU institutions have not said when ministers from the 28 member states are to vote on Kosovos visa liberalisation.

Kosovos citizens are the only ones in the Balkans who still need visas to travel in the Schengen area.

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