
9 STEPS REMAIN FOR KOSOVO VISA LIBERALIZATION AFTER COMMISSION'S POSITIVE RECOMMENDATION

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The European Commission has given a positive recommendation on visa liberalization for Kosovo citizens after more than 6 years since it had launched a visa liberalization dialogue with the last country that remains isolated in the region. Despite of the fact that Kosovo passports holders are closer than ever to being permitted to travel to Schengen zone visa-free, there is still a process that has to be completed, before such thing happens.

A Pristina-based think tank called the Balkans Policy Research Group assesses that Kosovo has 9 remaining steps to complete for visa liberalization even after it got the final green light from the European Commission, for fulfilling all of the visa liberalization benchmarks.

The EU Commission resumes the proposal for the visa liberalization for Kosovo.

- The first thing that has to be done towards the completion of the remaining process for visa liberalization for Kosovo is that the European Commission should send jointly the proposal to the EU parliament and the Council of Ministers.
- Upon the receiving the proposal, the European Parliaments Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affair – LIBE examines it, alongside with the report of the rapporteur Tanja Fajon.
- At the same time, the European Council will as well start the preparatory work after receiving the Commissions opinion. The working parties, which are the Visa Working Group and the Working Party on the Western Balkans Region – COWEB will discuss the proposal at first. If they come to a broad consent upon its reviewal, then the proposal advances to the Committee of the Permanent Representatives – COREPER.
- Next comes the LIBE Committee, which votes by a simple majority on the report of the rapporteur and approves the recommendation for visa liberalization for Kosovo passport holders. At the same time, the Committee approves to open inter-institutional negotiations.
- At the level of COREPER, the Council adopts the negotiation position for inter-institutional negotiations (trilogues). On behalf of the Justice and Home Affair Council – JHA, COREPER adapts the position by qualified majority, though in practice no formal voting happens.
- The three EU Institutions then will carry inter- institutional negotiations, with the purpose of reaching an agreement on a package acceptable for both, the Council and the Parliament.

- European Parliament votes on the proposal for the amendment of the regulation (No. 539/2001). Kosovo will move under the Annex of visa free entities and territorial authorities that are not recognized as states by at least one member state, since four more EU countries have not recognized Kosovo yet, which are Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Spain and Slovakia.

- After the approval of the proposal at the Parliament, the European Council then adapts the change of the regulation (539/2001), by a qualified majority, which is a common voting system within the Council.

- The European Parliament and the Council of Ministers will then have to sign the final legal act.

- The signed legal act is published in the official journal of the European Union just three weeks after it is agreed. 20 days later the act comes into force, and the Kosovo citizens will be able to travel visa-free towards the Schengen Area.

Kosovo visa liberalization process compared to Ukraine and Georgia

Kosovo had started its visa liberalization dialogue in January 2012, while Georgia started the process just months later in June 2012. On the other hand, Ukraine had begun its dialogue in 2008. The citizens of both countries have been able to travel visa-free to Schengen for more than a year now, while Kosovo was struggling to fulfill one of the last two benchmarks, which is ratification of demarcation with Montenegro.

Both countries received positive recommendations on fulfilling all visa liberalization benchmarks on March and April 2016. The conciliation between the European Union institutions took place in the winter, December and February respectively. Georgia signed visa liberalization with EU on March 2018, whereas Ukraine signed the agreement on June 2018.

If things go the same for Kosovo, its citizens may be able to travel visa free at the beginning of next summer.

<http://balkaneu.com/9-steps-remain-for-kosovo-visa-liberalization-after-commissions-positive-recommendation/>

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