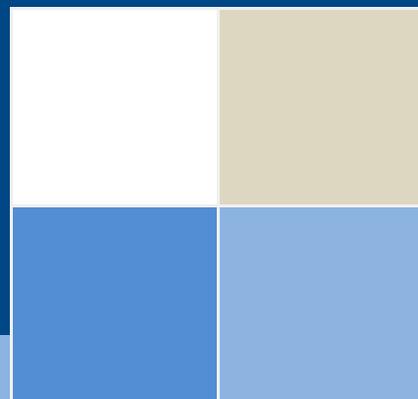


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Visa Liberalisation and the Way Forward: Suggestions for a Strategic Approach to the Political Dialogue with Brussels



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Visa Liberalisation Process and the Way Forward: Suggestions for a Strategic Approach to the Political Dialogue with Brussels

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May 2015

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VISA LIBERALISATION PROCESS AND THE WAY FORWARD: SUGGESTIONS FOR A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE POLITICAL DIALOGUE WITH BRUSSELS

Introduction

The issue of visa liberalisation has been a hot topic for Kosovo-EU relations for the past few months. The visa dialogue between the European Commission and Kosovo was launched in January 2012 and the Commission handed over a roadmap for visa liberalisation in June the same year, but Kosovo remains the only country in the Western Balkans to not yet have achieved visa liberalisation. Three years after the beginning of the visa dialogue with the European Union, and despite progress made by the government to implement the conditions in the roadmap, Kosovo remains the only country in the Balkans whose citizens are still required to obtain a visa before travelling to the Schengen area. The situation has created an increasing sentiment of isolation among Kosovo citizens, and a feeling that the European Union is not serious in its commitment of visa liberalisation and EU integration for Kosovo.

Visa liberalisation will not magically improve the situation in Kosovo, nor will it completely solve problems of irregular migration. It may however, as shown by a recent GLPS analysis, lower the willingness of Kosovar citizens to migrate. Therefore, it is in the interest of both the EU and the Kosovo government to achieve visa liberalisation as soon as possible; for the EU to show it is serious about its commitment of Kosovo EU integration, and for the government to be able to deliver on its long-standing promise to its citizens. The aim of this policy analysis is to investigate the issues particular to Kosovo's visa liberalisation process, and to make some recommendations for the Government of Kosovo on how to successfully gain support from EU Member States and to persuade the EU Council to vote in favour of lifting the visa requirement for Kosovo.

I. Kosovo's Road towards Visa Liberalisation

Visa liberalisation allows for visa-free travel to the Schengen area¹ for up to 90 days in any 180-day period² for citizens from countries listed in Annex II of EU Council Regulation 539/2001.³ Since December 2009, citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have been able, with biometric passports, to travel visa-free to EU Member States part of the Schengen area, in accordance with this regulation. Citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina have enjoyed the same visa-free travel status since December 2010. According to the European Commission „Visa-free travel remains one of

¹ Note that this does not include EU Member States Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Romania, and the United Kingdom, but does include non-EU Member States Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland.

² European Commission website, *Migration and Home Affairs, Visa policy*, accessed 21 April 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/index_en.htm. ³ Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 of 15 March 2001, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2001R0539:20110111:EN:PDF>.

the core achievements of these countries' European integration efforts.⁴ However, despite being considered as heading towards European integration,⁵ and despite its potential candidate status,⁶ Kosovo remains the only country in the region that has not yet reached visa liberalisation.

In 2009, the Commission stated in that „Kosovo citizens need to share further in the benefits of EU approximation, including the possibility to travel visa-free in the EU.“ However, the Commission emphasised, this would only be possible „if Kosovo can ensure that relevant reforms are implemented and rules and procedures are respected to as to minimise the associated risks for EU Member States.“⁷ On 19 January 2012, then European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, launched the visa liberalisation dialogue with Kosovo,⁸ and in June the same year the government received the roadmap⁹ on visa liberalisation from the European Commission.¹⁰ The roadmap addresses six sets of issues: readmission, reintegration, document security, border/boundary and migration management, public order and security, and fundamental rights related to the freedom of movement.¹¹ Kosovo is required to adopt or amend in line with the EU *acquis* the legislation set out in the roadmap, and then to fully implement that legislation and all other measures specified in the document.¹² Once all the requirements set out in the roadmap are met, the Commission will propose to the European Parliament and the Council to lift the visa obligation for Kosovo citizens via an amendment of Council Regulation 539/2001.¹³ Also, the Council has previously stated that this will happen without prejudice to Member States' position on status.¹⁴

⁴ European Commission, Fifth Report on the Post-Visa Liberalisation Monitoring for the Western Balkan Countries in accordance with the Commission Statement of 8 November 2010, COM(2015) 58 final, 25 February 2015, p.

2, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20150225_5th_post-visa_liberalisation_report_with_western_balkan_countries_en.pdf, [‘Post-Visa Liberalisation Monitoring Report’].

⁵ At the Thessaloniki Summit in June 2003, the European Commission affirmed its view that the future of the Western Balkans is in the European Union, which necessarily includes Kosovo. See EU-Western Balkans Summit Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003, C/03/163, 10229/03 (Presse 163), available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-03-163_en.htm.

⁶ European Commission website, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, accessed 22 April 2015,

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/check-current-status/index_en.htm.

⁷ European Commission, Kosovo* - Fulfilling its European Perspective, COM(2009) 5343, 14 October 2009, p.

5, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2009/kosovo_study_en.pdf.

⁸ European Commission Press Release, Commission launches dialogue with Kosovo on visa free travel, 19 January 2012, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-32_en.htm.

⁹ European Commission, Visa Liberalisation with Kosovo*

Roadmap, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/documents/eu_travel/visa_liberalisation_with_kosovo_roadmap.pdf

¹⁰ European Commission, Second report on progress by Kosovo* in fulfilling the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap, COM(2014) 488 final, 24 July 2014, p. 1, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/second_commission_assessment_en.pdf, [‘Second Progress Report’].

¹¹ Roadmap, p. 3, para. E.

¹² Ibid, p. 2, para C.

¹³ Ibid, p. 5, para. F.

¹⁴ Council conclusions on enlargement and stabilisation and association process, 5 December 2011, para.

58, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/genaff/126577.pdf.

In 2013, only a year after having received the roadmap from the European Commission, then Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, Edita Tahiri, declared the country was ready for visa-free travel.¹⁵ However, subsequent reports by the European Commission have claimed otherwise,¹⁶ and the European Union continues to insist that Kosovo do more to fight corruption and the current irregular migration crisis before visa liberalisation will become reality.¹⁷ In the beginning of 2015, the Minister for European Integration, Bekim Çollaku, said that Kosovo will meet the remaining criteria this year,¹⁸ which will include passing a number of laws.¹⁹ Çollaku later expressed hope that Kosovo will fulfil all remaining criteria by June 2015.²⁰ Prime Minister Isa Mustafa said in February that visa liberalisation is a priority for the government and seemingly remained optimistic that visa liberalisation will happen in 2015.²¹

2. Criticism of the Visa Liberalisation Process

When comparing the roadmap presented to Kosovo with those of other countries in the Western Balkans, there are several important differences, which may have made it more difficult for Kosovo to reach the requirements of the European Commission. First of all, Kosovo's roadmap contains a much higher number of benchmarks than those of other Western Balkan states.²² This may be interpreted as a way for the European Union to increase clarity in what is expected of Kosovo before it can reach the goal of visa-free travel. However, it may also be seen as the Commission imposing more strict conditions on Kosovo, in order to alleviate concerns by some Member States who have been reluctant to facilitate a process that may lead to increased migration.²³ It should be recalled that in the wake of allowing visa-free travel for citizens from Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Serbia,

¹⁵ Stanislava Gaydazhieva, „Kosovo has fulfilled all criteria for visa liberalisation, Deputy PM“, NewEurope, 19 March 2013, <http://www.neurope.eu/article/kosovo-has-fulfilled-all-criteria-visa-liberalisation-deputy-pm/>.

¹⁶ See European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on progress by Kosovo* in fulfilling the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap, COM(2013) 66 final, 8 February 2012, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/international-affairs/general/docs/report_on_progress_on_kosovo_visa_liberalisation_en.pdf, [‘First Progress Report’]; Second Progress Report.

¹⁷ See e.g. „Avramopoulos in Kosovo: Good news on visa liberalization very soon“, Albeu.com, 10 March 2015, <http://english.albeu.com/news/news/avramopoulos-in-kosovo-good-news-on-visa-liberalization-very-soon/191482/>.

¹⁸ „Çollaku optimistic on visa liberalization for Kosovo“, Gazeta Express, 17 February 2015, <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/collaku-optimistic-on-visa-liberalization-for-kosovo-81201/?archive=1>.

¹⁹ „Hopes for visa-free travel are shattering“, Gazeta Express, 15 February

2015, <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/hopes-for-visa-free-travel-87018/?archive=1>.

²⁰ „Still a lot of work for visa liberalization“, Gazeta Express, 14 April

2015, <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/still-a-lot-of-work-for-visa-liberalization-93862/>.

²¹ „PM: By the end of the year visa liberalization will happen“, Gazeta Express, 13 February

2015, <http://m.gazetaexpress.com/en/mobile/arkiva/ka-humbur-pesh235n-e-shtatz235nis235-80383/?archive=1>.

²² The Group for Legal and Political Studies counted some 50 additional benchmarks in the Kosovo roadmap – compared to other Western Balkan states. See „Kosovo and Visa-free travel regime: The increasing EU Member States“ scepticism and regional experiences“, Group for Legal and Political Studies, Policy Report 05/2012, November 2012, p. 20-23.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 18.

the European Union faced a surge in reportedly unfounded asylum claims from the region, which prompted the European Parliament and Council to amend Regulation 539/2001 and to introduce a visa suspension mechanism for temporarily suspending the visa-free status of third-country nationals.²⁴ The more rigorous conditions towards Kosovo may thus be interpreted as a reflection of these problems.

Furthermore, while the increase in benchmarks in the Kosovo roadmap can to a certain extent be explained by the splitting of some former benchmarks into several new ones, other difficulties remain that are particular to the Kosovo roadmap. The benchmarks imposed on Kosovo are arguably stricter than those imposed in the roadmaps of other Western Balkan states, and Kosovo is required to share statistics and intelligence with EU Member States, the Commission, and EULEX, in almost every area covered by the roadmap.²⁵

Another novelty and difficulty with the Kosovo roadmap is the fact that it remains open to amendments by the Commission, in „reinforced consultation“ with the Council and Member States.²⁶ Although additional conditions were imposed on Albania and Bosnia, their respective visa liberalisation roadmaps did not expressly stipulate the possibility of amendment or extension.²⁷ The European Commission appears to have used the fact that the Kosovo roadmap remains open to amendments to introduce what looks like new conditions through recommendations in its progress reports on visa liberalisation, adding these conditions to the already long list of requirements contained in the roadmap.²⁸ This may be explained by the fact that the EU has learned from experience with previous visa liberalisation processes, and now wants a process which allows the Commission to tailor the process to the particular situation of Kosovo and to adjust conditions as things progress in order to ensure proper alignment with the *acquis*. Nevertheless, it undoubtedly makes it more difficult for the Kosovo government to fulfil the requirements and reach the goal of visa-free travel for its citizens. The horizon might keep moving as the EU comes up with more conditions to be fulfilled in order to stall the process, due to some Member States' concerns.

Civil society organisations, including GLPS, have expressed disappointment at Kosovo's visa liberalisation process and has also criticised the Commission's reporting, pointing out that unlike those for the Western Balkans and Turkey, the progress reports for Kosovo do not contain any of the precise language to describe the progress made, or the lack thereof, in each area included in the roadmap. The vague language in the progress reports and the lack of precise description of progress makes it unclear what the priorities are.²⁹ This of course contributes to the difficulty for the government to evaluate what needs to be done in order to fulfil the benchmarks of the roadmap.

²⁴ Post-Visa Liberalisation Monitoring Report, p. 3.

²⁵ Policy Report 05/2012, p. 18-19.

²⁶ Roadmap, p. 3 and 15.

²⁷ Policy Report 05/2012, p. 19.

²⁸ See First Progress Report, Second Progress Report.

²⁹ Open Letter on Visa Liberalization from Kosovo Civil Society, 31 March 2015, <http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=581>.

3. The importance of Visa Liberalisation and the Remaining Challenges

Visa liberalisation is an issue of great importance to Kosovo, and one that frequently appears in the media. It is also an issue that is increasingly met with frustration from the Kosovo public, and which according to some has, at least partly, fuelled the recent waves of migration.³⁰

One might argue that it has „only“ been three years since Kosovo received the roadmap from the European Commission, and that with all the additional benchmarks imposed on Kosovo the process should perhaps have been expected to take longer than for the other Western Balkan states.³¹ Nevertheless, as time passes and the visa liberalisation process continues to stall, feelings are running high and patience is running low. Being excluded from visa liberalisation creates frustration among the population. Residents of Kosovo do not understand why they would be the only Western Balkan people requiring visas to enter the Schengen zone; they feel isolated and unfairly treated³² As one report noted: „It has become increasingly difficult to square the EU’s fear of visa liberalization for Kosovo [...] with its mantra of a ‘European perspective’ for Kosovo.“³³ Naturally, achieving visa liberalisation would show the Kosovo population that they are on the way to closer EU integration. It carries huge psychological importance for society, as it would show that the European Union is serious about its commitment for the European integration of the whole Western Balkans.

In recent months, the EU’s reluctance towards going forward with the visa liberalisation process has often been framed around the issue of the thousands of irregular migrants leaving Kosovo for the European Union. According to Frontex, the EU agency that monitors EU borders, in December 2014, „Kosovo nationals were, for the first time, the migrants most commonly detected illegally crossing the external border of the EU/Schengen area, accounting for a massive 40 per cent of total detections.“³⁴ Various EU Member States and other institutions have attempted to get the message out that the vast majority of such migrants will not be given asylum in EU countries.³⁵ At the same time the

³⁰ See quote from Kosovo Deputy Minister for European Integration Ramadan Ilazi in „Kosovo migrant wave raises security fears“, The Journal of Turkish Weekly, 23 February 2015, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/180633/kosovo-migrant-wave-raises-security-fears.html>.

³¹ For the other countries in the region, the process of visa liberalisation took around two years at the most. See Policy Report 05/2012, p. 26.

³² Odile Perrot, „EU Enlargement and State Building in the Balkans: A Comparative Analysis – What Future for Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo?“, 12 April 2011, p. 3, <http://od.perrot.free.fr/docs/2011-BBE-Event-PERROT-Odile-Kosovo.pdf>.

³³ „Aiming High: A European Vision for the Dialogue Between Kosovo and Serbia“, Kosovo Foundation for Open Society and Foreign Policy Club, March 2011, p. 10, http://kfos.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Aiming-High_A-European-Vision-for-Dialogue-Between-Kosovo-and-Serbia.pdf.

³⁴ „Kosovo migrant wave raises security fears“, The Journal of Turkish Weekly, 23 February 2015, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/180633/kosovo-migrant-wave-raises-security-fears.html>.

³⁵ See e.g. „Visa liberalization is not a paradise, says Belgian secretary for Asylum“, Gazeta Express, 12 March 2015, <http://static-ip-85-25-106-6.inaddr.intergenia.de/en/news/visa-liberalization-is-not-a-paradise-says-belgian-86359/?archive=1>.

new EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policies and Enlargement Negotiations and, Johannes Hahn, has warned that visa liberalisation is not the solution to the problems of those currently migrating from Kosovo to the EU,³⁶ and the EU Office in Prishtina has also pointed out that illegal migration cannot be stopped by visa liberalisation.³⁷

In the roadmap the government is required to „undertake continuous, targeted, information campaigns aiming to clarify the rights and obligations of visa-free travel, including information on rules regulating access to the EU labour market and liability for any abuse of rights under the visa-free regime.“³⁸ The government did previously launch an information campaign, „Rrugët e Çeluna“, but a survey shows that it is not widely known, and that only a third of the population has heard about it.³⁹ The survey also noted that while in general citizens have basic knowledge of the visa liberalisation process, only half clearly understand the concept of visa liberalisation;⁴⁰ many citizens believe that visa liberalisation refers to the facilitation of opportunities to migrate outside the country, including for work.⁴¹ Also, a recent GLPS policy analysis also shows that visa liberalisation remains an important factor that may convince individuals not to migrate.⁴² Clearly the government's efforts to inform the public about the rights and obligations of visa liberalisation require more work; the information needs to be easily accessible and to reach more people.

Furthermore, as seen above, the roadmap in its current form is subject to being modified. Although this has not yet been expressly done, the fact that the progress reports on visa liberalisation seem to impose new, or at least more detailed, conditions poses a problem of clarity for the government. In addition, the fact that the progress reports do not use clear and precise language when it comes to evaluation of Kosovo's progress is also a problem. It is only fair that the government of Kosovo receives clear instructions from the EU of what is expected from it, without the EU using this as a way to delay the process. Otherwise the horizon may keep moving at the will of EU Member States, and Kosovo's road to visa liberalisation may be infinitely long.

³⁶ Hahn: Visa liberalization does not resolve massive migration, *Gazeta Express*, 10 February 2015, <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/hahn-visa-liberalization-does-not-resolve-massive-migration-79494/?archive=1>.

³⁷ „Zbogar: Visa-free travel will not solve problems“, *Gazeta Express*, 12 March 2015, <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/zbogar-visa-free-tra-will-not-solve-problems-86364/?archive=1>. ³⁸ Roadmap, p. 15.

³⁹ „Assessment of the Knowledge of Republic of Kosovo Citizens About the Visa Liberalization Process“, Ministry for European Integration, October-November 2013, p. 48-53, http://www.visalib.info/sites/visalib.info/files/document/report_1.pdf.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 6, 52.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 19-20.

⁴² „Potential Migrant Profiles: Who are the Kosovars most Willing to Migrate“, Group for Legal and Political Studies, Policy Analysis 02/2015, May 2015, p. 5.

4. The Way Forward

As the government prepares to deliver to the European Commission its report on the fulfilment of the criteria for visa liberalisation,⁴³ fulfilment of roadmap criteria is not the only hurdle to overcome. In the end, it is up to the EU Council, i.e. individual Member States, and the European Parliament to decide whether to lift the visa requirement, after recommendation from the Commission. The process will therefore in the end be a political one, and the Government of Kosovo needs to have a clear strategy to successfully persuade EU Member States of its readiness to be included in the countries who benefit from visa-free travel in the Schengen area. Some important matters need to be taken into consideration by the government, in order to be successful in this task.

First, the European Commission, as the institution to make the decision of whether the government has fulfilled the roadmap criteria, is obviously the first concern in the visa liberalisation process. However, the Commission may be subject to the influence of EU Member States on whether Kosovo has fulfilled the criteria or not. Here the open character of the roadmap is of particular importance. Individual member states may therefore be able to influence the pace and dynamics of the EU Commission communication with Kosovo and the decision to recommend an end to the visa requirement.

Second, it is unclear whether the five EU Member States who do not recognise the independence of Kosovo⁴⁴ may create an obstacle to visa liberalisation. One could imagine that, from a technical standpoint, there could be an issue of recognition of passports. However, it is necessary to point out that Taiwan is currently on the list of countries whose citizens are allowed visa-free travel to the Schengen area, despite the fact that Taiwan is not recognised as a state by at least one EU Member State.⁴⁵ Therefore, the role of the non-recognisers may be more important when it comes to the final decision-making procedure, the vote in the EU Council and European Parliament.

Third, the Government of Kosovo has previously lacked a strategy of communication with the European Union about visa liberalisation. The government failed to react to the open ended character of the roadmap and to question, or even comment on, the additional criteria imposed on Kosovo in the visa liberalisation progress reports. It seems the government has also not had a strong level of communication, if any at all, regarding the issue Kosovo's progress towards visa liberalisation with the European Parliament and parliamentary groups, both which will be important partners in the process.

Considering the above, in order to be successful in gaining support from EU Member States and for the EU Council and European Parliament to vote in favour of removing the visa requirement for Kosovo citizens, the Government of Kosovo needs to make a concerted effort organise itself effectively; to streamline its advocacy approach and to have a clear strategy in place. To this effect, GLPS makes the following recommendations:

⁴³ UnaHajdari, „Kosovo Eyes Speedy End to EU Visa Requirement“, Balkan Insight, 5 May 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-hopes-for-quick-visa-liberalization>.

⁴⁴ Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain.

⁴⁵ Council Regulation No 539/2001, Annex II.

1. There needs to be a clear delineation and delegation of responsibility, to ensure that all ministers and ministries involved in the dialogue with the Commission and individual EU Member States speak with one voice and that the government appears united in its efforts and message. It would also be useful for the government to limit the number of players and ministries involved in this process, to avoid any confusion and mixed messages.
2. The government should establish bilateral discussions with the EU Member States whose viewpoints matter most in the visa liberalisation process. This will include establishing contacts with non-recognising EU members, who may be more inclined to vote against visa liberalisation for Kosovo in the EU Council. The Government of Kosovo, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, needs to be open to a dialogue on this matter, in order to get a clear understanding of the issues of concern to these countries, and to be able to respond accordingly. The government could look at the example of Taiwan, which is currently on the list of countries whose citizens are allowed visa-free travel to the Schengen area, despite the fact that Taiwan is not recognised as a state by at least one EU Member State.⁴⁶
3. Bilateral discussions, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also need to be held with individual EU Member States who have a positive standpoint towards the idea of visa liberalisation for Kosovo, and the Foreign Ministry should work to get a firm commitment from these countries to offer their assistance in persuading the Council that Kosovo is ready for visa liberalisation.
4. As the issue of irregular migration is clearly of great concern to the EU and is used as an argument to delay visa liberalisation,⁴⁷ the government should show the European Union that it takes this matter seriously. The government should come up with a clear strategy, to be implemented by the Ministry of European Integration in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other relevant institutions, to limit irregular migration and to educate the population about the asylum policies of EU Member States, explaining the extreme unlikelihood of Kosovo citizens gaining asylum or refugee status.
5. The government, through the Ministry of European Integration, should also do more to ensure that Kosovo citizens are adequately educated about the rights and responsibilities that come with visa-free travel to the Schengen area. More needs to be done to inform the population of the fact that that visa liberalisation is not a means for general migration, including for work or study, but only includes short-term visits. This information needs to be easily accessible and to have a wide reach across the country.

⁴⁶Council Regulation No 539/2001, Annex II.

⁴⁷ See e.g. „Meucci: Illegal migration delay the process of visas liberalization“, *Gazeta Express*, 17 February 2015, <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/meucci-illegal-migration-delay-the-process-of-visas-liberalization-81155/?archive=1>.

6. If the Commission, after the upcoming report from Kosovo, does not recommend the EU Council and European Parliament to approve visa liberalisation, the Government of Kosovo should require clarification from the Commission and Council on their positions on the requirements in the roadmap, and any new criteria imposed by the visa liberalisation progress reports.

Conclusion

When Kosovo started the visa dialogue with the European Commission in January 2012, many probably thought Kosovo would reach the goal of visa-free travel within a similar time frame as the other Western Balkan countries. However, three years later Kosovo is still waiting and remains one of the most isolated countries in the world. This has led to growing frustration among the population, and some argue the lack of visa liberalisation is a major contributing factor to the recent waves of irregular migration.

There are still some criteria to be fulfilled and the government also needs to do more to educate the population on visa liberalisation, and find a way to adequately address the issue of irregular migration, which is a serious concern for the European Union. However, the open character of the Kosovo roadmap, the lack of clarity regarding the language in the progress reports, as well the seemingly added criteria therein, may make it difficult for the government to know when the criteria in fact are met. The issue of status is also looming and may be used as a final tool for non-recognisers to delay the visa liberalisation process. The government therefore needs a clear approach and to actively engage with EU institutions and Member States on these issues. This policy analysis has therefore attempted to provide some recommendation for the government in how to approach the remaining part of the visa liberalisation dialogue with the European Union and its member states.

Visa liberalisation will not provide a magic solution to Kosovo's problems since it only allows for short-term tourist travel. However, it would have an important psychological effect on the citizens and would show that the European Union is committed to the EU integration of Kosovo.

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Policy Analysis

Policy Analysis in general is a policy advice paper which particularly aims to influence the key means through which policy decisions are made in both local and central levels of government. The purpose of Policy Analysis is to address, more in-depth, a particular problem, to examine the arguments related to a concerned policy, and to analyze the implementation of the policy. Through Policy Analysis, Group for Legal and Political studies seeks to stimulate wider comprehensive debate on the given issue via presenting informed policy-relevant choices and recommendations to the key stakeholders and parties of interest.