



**COUNCIL OF
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Visa liberalisation for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina possessing biometric passports will be able to travel to and throughout the Schengen area without a visa. That is the result of a unanimous vote by the Council which amends regulation No 539/2001 ([PE-CONS 50/10](#)). The European Parliament gave its green light to the amendments on 7 October 2010.

The visa free regime concerns stays of up to 90 days. Concerning the entry into force, article 2 of the adopted text reads: "on the day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union". This is expected to occur in mid-December.

With this decision Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina join the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro and Serbia who already joined the visa free regime on 19 December 2009.¹

The Commission entered a statement to the minutes of the Council meeting on the establishment of a follow-up mechanism to the visa liberalisation process for the Western Balkan countries. This follow-up mechanism concerns the monitoring of the reforms which these countries need to continue to carry out. It also introduces emergency consultation arrangements so that the European Union and its member states can, in cooperation with the authorities of the countries concerned, react in the best possible conditions to any specific difficulties which might arise with flows of persons from the countries of the Western Balkans and states that the Commission may if necessary propose the suspension of visa free travel. The Commission will report back regularly to the Council and the European Parliament.

Background

On 1 January 2008, Visa Facilitation Agreements entered into force with five Western Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of

¹ The amended regulation from late 2009 also makes a reference to Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99 with the result that persons residing in Kosovo require a visa when travelling to the EU ([15521/09](#)).

P R E S S

Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – , as a first concrete step towards visa exemption for their citizens. With each of these countries, a visa liberalisation dialogue was opened in 2008 and roadmaps for visa liberalisation were established. The decisions on visa free access to the Schengen area are based on the progress made by the countries concerned in implementing major reforms in areas such as the strengthening of the rule of law, combating organised crime, corruption and illegal migration and improving their administrative capacity in border control and security of documents.