



EUROPEAN UNION Joint press release

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EU- Moldova agreements on the facilitation of the issuance of visa and on readmission

Joint press release

Signature of the agreements on visa facilitation and readmission between the European Community and Moldova by Vice President Franco Frattini and by the Portuguese State Secretary for European Affairs, Manuel Lobo Antunes

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.

Vice-President Frattini stated that: *"The signature of the agreements demonstrates the European Union's commitment to facilitating the mobility of persons between Moldova and the European Union while striving at the same time to a better management of illegal migration flows"*.

Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, responsible for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy stated that: *"Visa facilitation is an important step in establishing closer people-to-people contacts between the citizens of Moldova and the European Union - now travelling to the EU will be quicker, faster, easier for the people in Moldova. This will further strengthen our relations in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy"*.

Secretary of State Lobo Antunes, on behalf of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU, stated: *"this ceremony marked another important step in the strengthening of relations and cooperation in an area of significant importance to Moldova and the European Union: the movement of people and immigration."*

Secretary of State Lobo Antunes underlined that *"these agreements will bring significant benefits to the system of issuance of visas, which will become simpler and faster. It will also have an important repercussion on costs, enabling us to maintain the present issuance fees. Thus, I am sure, it*

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will contribute to facilitate and increase people to people contacts".

Deputy Prime-minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, Andrei Stratan pointed out "the significant added value of the signed agreements which bring our citizens closer to the European Union and consolidate the development of the EU-Moldova relations even more ".

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.

Overall the agreements aim at making it easier for Moldovan citizens, in particular those who travel most, to acquire short-stay visas for the EU¹, whilst simultaneously combating illegal immigration. The Visa Facilitation agreement makes it possible to maintain the visa handling fee at €35 instead of €60 for all Moldovan citizens and provide a total exemption from the visa fee for certain categories of applicants. Furthermore, for certain categories of persons, e.g. businessmen, students and journalists, the necessary supporting documents for a visa application are simplified. For certain categories of frequent travellers it is possible to issue multi-entry visas with long periods of validity. Finally, holders of diplomatic passports are exempted from the visa obligation.

The readmission agreement sets out clear obligations and procedures for the authorities of both Moldova and of EU Member States as to when and how to take back people who are illegally residing on the territories covered by the agreement. In this respect, the agreement covers not only the illegally staying nationals of both parties but also third country nationals and stateless persons being in an irregular situation provided they have a clear link with the requested Party (e.g. visa or resident permit). Full respect of Human Rights as provided by the European Convention of Human Rights is guaranteed during the application of the Readmission agreement.

EU citizens are already exempt from the visa obligation by Moldova.

Pending the opinion of the European Parliament, the conclusion of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements should be achieved by November 2007. The entry into force of the agreements at the latest on 1 January 2008 would avoid any discontinuance in the application of the €35 handling fee for all Moldovan citizens.

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¹ The visa facilitation does not apply to UK and Ireland, which do not participate in the Schengen cooperation.