



Members of the European Parliament

Federal Chancellery
Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1
D - 10577 BERLIN

Federal Ministry of the Interior Building and Community
Federal Minister Horst Seehofer
Alt-Moabit 140
D - 10557 BERLIN

Brussels, 26 June 2020

German Council Presidency/Visa liberalisation for Kosovo

Dear Chancellor Dr. Merkel,

Dear Minister Seehofer,

we, members of the European Parliament are turning to you in order to ensure that the long-lasting issue of visa liberalisation for Kosovo will be put on the agenda of the Council during the German Council Presidency and a final decision will be made still in 2020.

At the moment, Kosovo is one of the very few remaining European countries, whose citizens cannot travel freely into the Schengen area without a visa. However, this does not depend on Kosovars anymore. The process to achieve visa liberalisation is supposed to be based on objective criteria, which, as announced by the European Commission, has been fulfilled in July 2018, exactly two years ago, and since then the country has been awaiting the final decision of the Council to grant visa freedom to its citizens. The past four Council Presidencies have not dealt with this issue, but we hope that your historic ties and commitment towards our neighbourhood and to the Western Balkans will be used to resolve this problem, which can have a significant impact on the lives of Kosovo's citizens.

There were some voices, which claimed that we shall not grant visa freedom to Kosovo because of the problems of organised crime or unfounded asylum applications from Kosovars. There are certainly problems in Kosovo, but the EU institutions made it clear several times that these shall not be an obstacle to visa waiver.

The benchmarks have been fulfilled by Kosovo. They have done their homework, now it is our turn not to break our promise. We are losing our credibility when a third country does what we demand from them but they do not get the advantages we promised them. How can we demand any other reforms from countries in our neighbourhood, when they cannot be sure that they can gain anything from their work? EU integration is not necessarily the only option for the countries in this region. Where will their path lead if not into the Union?

The European Parliament has raised its voice a number of times on the abovementioned topic: only last week the issue was included in our resolution and it has the overwhelming majority of the Members of the European Parliament. We know that free travel is one of the most tangible benefits of European integration and we believe that the citizens of Kosovo should get the opportunity to enter the Schengen area easily: not because they have any special rights, but because their state institutions did what we asked them to do. This is your chance to make improve their lives and bring Kosovo closer to the EU.

Sincerely,

Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, The Greens/EFA

Asim Ademov, EPP

Alametsä Alviina, The Greens/EFA

Rasmus Andresen, The Greens/EFA

Damian Boeselager, The Greens/EFA

Reinhard Bütikofer, The Greens/EFA

Anna Cavazzini, The Greens/EFA

Ciarán Cuffe, The Greens/EFA

Tanja Fajon, S&D

Romeo Franz, The Greens/EFA

Klemen Grošelj, Renew

Irena Joveva, Renew

Rasa Junknevičienė, EPP

Łukasz Kohut, S&D

Andrey Kovatchev, EPP

Andrius Kubilius, EPP

Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Renew

Norbert Lins, EPP

Lukas Mandl, EPP

Erik Marquardt, The Greens/EFA

Liudas Mažylis, EPP

Hannah Neumann, The Greens/EFA

Andrey Novakov, EPP

Grace O'Sullivan, The Greens/EFA

Tonino Picula, S&D

Carles Puigdemont, NI

Andreas Schieder, S&D

Sven Simon, EPP

Tineke Strik, The Greens/EFA

Lóránt Vincze, EPP

Bettina Vollath, S&D

Thomas Waitz, The Greens/EFA

Rainer Wieland, EPP