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Launch of the *Eastern Partnership Visa Liberalisation Index*

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The Eastern Partnership Visa Liberalisation Index was launched by the *Visa-free Europe Coalition*. The *Index* presents the results of independent assessment of progress made by the Eastern Partnership countries towards visa liberalisation. It is available at: monitoring.visa-free-europe.eu.

The *Eastern Partnership Visa Liberalisation Index* shows in an accessible and interactive way the independent assessment of the fulfilment of criteria for visa liberalization by the Eastern Partnership states. This interactive tool gives one an opportunity to check and compare the progress made by each EaP state in each required policy area. The *Index* has been created on the basis of data collected by independent experts in the EaP countries.

The *Eastern Partnership Visa Liberalisation Index* methodology is based on existing benchmarks and criteria set out by the European Union for countries interested in visa liberalisation. Thus, each EaP country needs to introduce a number of reforms to meet these criteria. The benchmarks are listed in Visa Liberalisation Action Plans prepared by the European Commission. The assessment of each country is done with the help of a questionnaire, generally based on these benchmarks, developed and filled out by experienced independent experts from every EaP state. In order to collect information, the experts use a variety of resources, including official data of relevant public institutions and authorities, reports by the European Commission and international organisations (UN, GRECO, etc), personal interviews with competent officials and experts. The assessed policy areas are divided into four policy blocks: 1. Documents security; 2. Irregular immigration, including readmission; 3. Public security and order; 4. External relations and fundamental rights. The results are subjected to peer-review.

“The ‘Eastern Partnership Visa Liberalisation Index’ is a helpful source of information for policy-makers and experts, journalists, as well as just all people wanting to know more about how soon and on what conditions the EU Eastern neighbours will be able to travel without visa requirement” – says Joanna Fomina (the Stefan Batory Foundation), the project leader. “The Index provides a nuanced and transparent cross-country and cross-sector picture and a comparative view. The six countries are assessed along the same comprehensive list of benchmarks and indicators. We wanted to present the Index on the eve of the Stockholm’s Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, because visa liberalisation issues are one of the key topics on the Forum” – she explains.

More information:

Eastern Partnership Visa Liberalisation Index: <http://monitoring.visa-free-europe.eu>

Visa-free Europe Coalition: <http://visa-free-europe.eu>



Up to now only three out of the six Eastern Partnership countries – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – have started visa liberalisation dialogue with the EU and two – Moldova and Ukraine – have been granted such Action Plans. However, all the six EaP countries are implementing reforms in the key policy areas, including Belarus, which does not have any official cooperation with the EU on visa policy. This is why the *Index* focuses on the progress made by all the six EaP countries. The *Index* will be updated every four months. Information on the updates will be regularly sent out to all the registered partners and stakeholders.

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Information about the *Visa-free Europe Coalition*:

Visa-free Europe Coalition, launched in 2010 on the initiative of the Stefan Batory Foundation, gathers more than 40 non-governmental organizations from different parts of Europe, working towards visa liberalisation between the EU and its eastern neighbours. The Coalition is the outcome of many years of collaboration between the member organizations. Jointly we have prepared reports and policy papers, recommendations and advocacy tools. The activities of the Coalition are coordinated by the Friendly EU Border project of the Stefan Batory Foundation. For more information see: visa-free-europe.eu

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