



## Statement by Commissioner Avramopoulos on the Council adoption of visa liberalisation for Georgia

Brussels, 27 February 2017

*"I am very pleased with today's final endorsement by the Council of the Commission proposal to grant visa liberalisation to Georgia. Today is a historic day for Georgia and its citizens, who will soon be able to enjoy visa free travel to the Schengen area for short stays of up to 90 days.*

*Today's adoption recognises the tremendous efforts undertaken by the Georgian authorities and the Georgian people to carry out far-reaching and difficult reforms in the area of the rule of law and the justice system. These reforms also bring Georgia closer to the EU standards, facilitating cooperation with the European Union and bringing the country a step forward on its European path.*

*Since the launch of Visa Liberalisation Dialogue in June 2012, Georgia has been exemplary in fulfilling all the benchmarks of a demanding roadmap. The continuous monitoring and reporting carried out since then showed that Georgia has made the necessary progress allowing us, in March 2016, to propose to the European Parliament and the Council to lift the visa requirements for Georgian citizens. The Commission will continue to monitor Georgia's continuous compliance with the visa liberalisation criteria, in particular in the fight against organised crime, in order to ensure that these achievements continue to be sustained.*

*In a globalised world, where travel and communication is increasingly facilitated, we have to reap the benefits of such rapprochement. This visa liberalisation will be an essential element to facilitate people-to-people contacts and strengthen business, social and cultural ties between the citizens of Georgia and the EU.*

*Today is an important step in EU-Georgia relations - I look forward to soon welcoming Georgian citizens traveling visa free to the Schengen area."*

### Next Steps

The visa-free regime will enter into force 20 days after the publication in the Official Journal of the amendment to Regulation 539/2001. Once in force, Georgian citizens with biometric passports will no longer require visas when travelling for short stays of up to 90 days to all EU Member States except for Ireland and the UK, as well as the four Schengen associated countries.

### Background

In June 2012, the Commission started a dialogue on visa liberalisation with Georgia with an aim of examining all the relevant conditions necessary for EU visa-free travel. On 18 December 2015, the Commission adopted its fourth and final progress report on the implementation by Georgia of its [Visa Liberalisation Action Plan](#) (VLAP). The Report concluded that Georgia had implemented all the measures identified in the third progress report and that all the benchmarks of the VLAP had been met.

Following the positive assessment of the progress report and taking into account overall EU-Georgia relations, the Commission presented on 9 March 2016 a [legislative proposal to lift visa requirements for Georgian](#) citizens holding a biometric passport, by amending the Regulation on Visa requirements for nationals of Non-EU Member Countries.

On 13 December 2016, the European Parliament and the Council reached an agreement on the Commission's proposal, which was then approved in the Plenary on 2 February and the Council today.

### For More Information

[Press Release](#): Georgia's Fourth Progress Report on the implementation of the action plan on visa liberalisation Links

[Press Release](#): European Commission proposes to lift visa obligations for citizens of Georgia

[Press Release](#): Launch of the EU-Georgia Visa Liberalisation Dialogue

STATEMENT/17/363

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