



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 7 January 2016  
(OR. en)

5036/16

VISA 1  
COWEB 2

#### COVER NOTE

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From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director
date of receipt:	18 December 2015
To:	Mr Jeppe TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union
No. Cion doc.:	COM(2015) 906 final
Subject:	REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Third report on progress by Kosovo* in fulfilling the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap

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Delegations will find attached document COM(2015) 906 final.

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Encl.: COM(2015) 906 final



Brussels, 18.12.2015  
COM(2015) 906 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND  
THE COUNCIL**

**Third report on progress by Kosovo\* in fulfilling the requirements of the visa  
liberalisation roadmap**

{SWD(2015) 706 final}

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The European Commission launched a visa liberalisation dialogue with Kosovo\* on 19 January 2012. On 14 June 2012, it handed over to the Kosovo government a roadmap on visa liberalisation. This document identified all the legislation and other measures that Kosovo needed to adopt and implement to advance towards visa liberalisation.

The Commission adopted two reports on progress by Kosovo in the visa dialogue: the first one on 8 February 2013;<sup>1</sup> the second, 24 July 2014.<sup>2</sup> These reports contained an assessment of progress made by Kosovo, recommendations to the Kosovo authorities and statistical data about the expected migratory and security impacts of the visa-free regime.

This is the third report setting out the Commission's assessment of Kosovo's progress in fulfilling the requirements of the visa roadmap. It summarises relevant developments concerning the implementation of legislation and formulates recommendations in areas where further steps are necessary for full compliance with the requirements of the visa roadmap. It is accompanied by a Commission Staff Working Document,<sup>3</sup> which addresses the expected security and migratory impacts of visa liberalisation.

The report and accompanying document draw upon reports submitted by the Kosovo government, reports drafted by EU Member States' experts participating in an assessment mission in July 2015, information received from the EU Office in Kosovo, EULEX and EU Agencies, as well as statistical data compiled by Eurostat and submitted by Member States.

The visa dialogue is conducted without prejudice to EU Member States' position on status.

## 2. REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO READMISSION AND REINTEGRATION

### 2.1. Readmission

Kosovo fulfils **all seven requirements** in the area of readmission.

Its legal framework on readmission is in place. It has concluded readmission agreements with 17 EU Member States, 3 Schengen Associated States and 2 Western Balkan countries.<sup>4</sup> It signed a readmission agreement with Turkey on 15 December 2015 and launched negotiations with other states.

The readmission of Kosovo citizens functions well, including that of vulnerable persons.<sup>5</sup> Kosovo has improved the processing of requests; pending cases are no longer a concern. There is no data about the readmission of third-country nationals and stateless persons.

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

<sup>1</sup> COM (2013) 66 final

<sup>2</sup> COM(2014) 488

<sup>3</sup> SWD(2015) 706

<sup>4</sup> Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Malta, Montenegro, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland plus a single agreement covering Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

<sup>5</sup> During the extraordinary migration crisis from Kosovo between September 2014 and April 2015, 87,495 Kosovo citizens sought asylum in EU Member States and Schengen Associated States. In the first ten months of 2015, Kosovo readmitted 9,182 of its citizens.

## **2.2. Reintegration**

Kosovo fulfils **two of the three requirements** in the area of reintegration.

The Kosovo budget allocated EUR 3.2 million to the Reintegration Fund in 2015, including EUR 1 million for the construction of accommodation for returnees. 20 % of this was spent in the first half of this year. A case management system has now been established, which facilitates returnees' access to reintegration services. The cut-off date for eligibility remains July 2010, but those who left Kosovo thereafter can also benefit, upon return, from a host of emergency services, such as transport, shelter and medical assistance. Vulnerable individuals benefit from the whole range of services financed by this fund, regardless of their date of departure from Kosovo.

In the first half of 2015, 1,542 of the 2,744 returnees registered in the case management system (56 %) received, upon return to Kosovo, immediate assistance, such as transport, shelter, food and medical assistance; 256 persons of those registered in the system (9 %) benefited from 'sustainable' reintegration services, such as jobseekers' allowance and support for business plans. Training programmes for skilled returnees and the reintegration of children into the school system, notably through linguistic training, should be further developed.

### **Recommendation No. 1:**

- To fully comply with requirements in the area of reintegration, the Reintegration Fund should be fully disbursed, with a focus on offering assistance with employment, the establishment of small businesses, vocational training and linguistic training for children.

## **3. BLOCK 1: DOCUMENT SECURITY**

Kosovo fulfils **eight of the nine requirements** in the area of document security.

The security features of personal travel documents, identity cards and breeder documents are satisfactory. These documents comply with International Civil Aviation Organisation and EU document security standards.

Kosovo's civil status registration system (CSRS) has greatly improved. Ongoing work aims at creating a single central database that merges data from existing databases while verifying the integrity and quality of the underlying data. With appropriate training, a new version of the CSRS was launched in July 2015, which requires robust verification each time a new civil status certificate is issued.

Citizens are issued a unique Personal Identification Number, linked to their biometric data, when requesting a civil status document. This method has allowed the Civil Registration Agency to verify the personal data of 1,602,453 citizens, or 86 % of the population.

In 2014, the Civil Registration Agency concluded memoranda of understanding with the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, the Kosovo Judicial Council, the Kosovo Police, the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Tax Administration and Kosovo Customs to ensure interoperability between their respective databases. Most of these databases have now been interlinked.

The changing of names and surnames is regulated by secondary legislation adopted in May 2015 and amended in November 2015. Subject to a criminal background check and establishing that the applicant is not under criminal investigation, requests must be approved by the police and the judiciary and can only be made once every five years. Amendments adopted in November 2015 established a special committee in the Civil Registration Agency to verify requests for name changes on the basis of extracts from the CSRS. In future, this

committee is expected to advise local municipalities whether to approve requests. This amended piece of legislation should now be fully implemented.

**Recommendation No. 2:**

- To fully comply with requirements in the area of document security, Kosovo should demonstrate that it has implemented its amended secondary legislation on name changes.

**4. BLOCK 2: BORDER/BOUNDARY AND MIGRATION MANAGEMENT**

**4.1. Border/boundary management**

Kosovo fulfils **fourteen of the fifteen requirements** in border/boundary management, including carriers' responsibility.

Kosovo's legislation is largely in line with the Schengen *acquis*, and checks are performed in line with EU standards. Border/boundary-crossing points are sufficiently equipped to complete first and second-line checks, with the exception of Merdare/Merdarë, where a common IBM crossing point is currently being established. In line with the recommendations of the expert mission in July 2015, Kosovo authorities reintroduced in mid-November 2015 exit checks at the main border/boundary-crossing point with Albania.

The relevant authorities have adequate personnel to control traffic flows and passenger movements. They are sufficiently equipped to complete border surveillance; risk analysis is used to monitor high-risk areas, but detections remain low. The Food and Veterinary Agency has internet access.

Kosovo's IBM centre is fully operational. It is composed of staff from all relevant authorities and is responsible for strategic and operational risk analyses at central level, information exchange and data protection. At the local level, risk analysis is carried out at crossing points.

Cooperation with neighbouring countries has improved. The border/boundary delineation agreement with Montenegro should be ratified by Kosovo before visa-free status is granted to Kosovo citizens.

Kosovo's cooperation with FRONTEX has considerably improved. All relevant authorities have situational awareness of border/boundary-related crimes, although the number of detected and investigated cases of facilitated irregular migration, trafficking in human beings and drug trafficking remains low.

**Recommendation No. 3:**

- To fully comply with requirements in the area of border/boundary management, Kosovo should ratify the border/boundary delineation agreement with Montenegro before visa-free status is granted to Kosovo citizens.

**4.2. Migration management**

Kosovo fulfils **all ten requirements** in migration management.

Kosovo's legislation in the area of migration management is in line with the EU *acquis*.

Kosovo's visa information system (KVIS) has been deployed at 15 of Kosovo's 30 diplomatic or consular missions abroad. The remaining 15 missions not linked to KVIS are typically located in EU Member States or Schengen Associated States where at least one consular post, typically the one in the capital, has already been linked to this system. Owing to Kosovo's limited diplomatic representation worldwide, KVIS is only available in a few American, African or Asian capitals. To make this system available to all third-country nationals who

require a visa to enter Kosovo,<sup>6</sup> Kosovo authorities have begun outsourcing the handling of visa applications to external service providers while retaining control over visa decisions. This process should continue.

In line with the Schengen Borders Code, visas are only issued at Kosovo's borders in exceptional circumstances.<sup>7</sup>

Kosovo's extended migration profile is well-developed. It could be further refined by incorporating information about Kosovo's diaspora.

In 2014, Kosovo delivered 77 residence permits to foreigners. As the integration of foreigners is still in its infancy, Kosovo should employ in this field the experience it has obtained in running its reintegration programme.

Kosovo operates its detention facilities—a temporary one at Pristina airport and a permanent one in Vranidoll—in line with the EU Return Directive. Returnees have appropriate procedural safeguards and access to services, as required by the Return Directive. A leaflet describing procedural safeguards for returnees should be made available at both facilities.

The various databases in law enforcement and migration are currently being interlinked.<sup>8</sup>

### **4.3. Asylum**

Kosovo fulfils **six of the seven requirements** in the area of asylum.

Kosovo's legislation is in line with the EU *acquis*, and it has the necessary institutional structure and resources in place to offer international protection to asylum-seekers.

According to UNHCR, 62 and 98 persons sought asylum in Kosovo respectively in 2013 and 2014—four applicants received subsidiary protection in 2013; one in 2014. While the Western Balkan migration route has so far bypassed it, Kosovo should make use of its facilities to grant international protection to those who merit it.

Kosovo stepped up its cooperation with UNHCR in 2015, notably in the field of remote interpretation. It has drawn up its own list of interpreters and has concluded an agreement with UNHCR to make use of its remote interpretation resource for languages that Kosovo's pool does not cover.

#### **Recommendation No. 4:**

- To fully comply with requirements in the area of asylum, Kosovo should monitor the reasons for its low recognition rate for asylum-seekers.

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<sup>6</sup> The citizens of 88 countries require a visa to enter Kosovo. Citizens of EU Member States and Schengen Associated States are exempted from the visa requirement. Third-country nationals who require a visa to enter Kosovo can do so for fifteen days if they hold a valid multiple-entry Schengen visa. These provisions also apply to persons holding travel documents for refugees and stateless persons.

<sup>7</sup> Between October 2014 and October 2015, only 8 visas were issued at Kosovo's border/boundary-crossing points.

<sup>8</sup> These systems include the following: the border management system (BMS), the Kosovo police information system (KPIS), the Kosovo visa information system (KVIS), the civil status registration system (CSRS) and case management system for returnees, as well as the database on asylum and migration.

## 5. BLOCK 3: PUBLIC ORDER AND SECURITY

### 5.1. Preventing and combating organised crime, corruption and terrorism

Kosovo fulfils **twelve of the fifteen requirements** in the area of combating organised crime, corruption and terrorism.

In June 2015, the Assembly adopted amendments to the four core laws<sup>9</sup> that underpin Kosovo's criminal justice system. These amendments harmonised the criteria for appointing judges and dismissing judges and prosecutors, reinforcing their independence by granting them the power to propose their own budgets. Vacancies are currently being filled at both the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC) and Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC).<sup>10</sup>

In October 2015, the KJC transferred three judges to the serious crime department of the Basic Court of Pristina, bringing the total number of judges to 14. This welcome development should be extended to all serious crime departments across courts in Kosovo. Further boosting the human resources of basic courts' serious crime departments, including qualified judges and support staff with an appropriate budget, should become a priority for Kosovo.

In 2014, the KJC adopted a strategy to reduce the backlog of court cases, which seeks to enforce, by the end of 2016, the majority of rulings in administrative disputes.<sup>11</sup> The KJC should now prioritise scarce resources in such a way that judges in serious crime departments, with appropriate support staff, may focus on adjudicating serious organised crime and corruption cases.

Kosovo's track record in adjudicating serious organised crime and corruption cases remains weak, owing partly to capacity problems affecting the judiciary.<sup>12</sup> To rectify this, the chief prosecutor appointed in October 2015 the acting head of the special prosecution as the central coordinator to select and target high-profile serious organised crime and corruption cases. Kosovo should now consider endowing the central coordinator's office with the mandate and resources to lead multidisciplinary teams, made up of special prosecutors, police officers, customs and tax officials, to conduct financial investigations and monitor the judicial follow-up of high-profile organised crime and corruption cases, including asset freezing and seizure, the enforcement of confiscation orders and returning illicitly gained assets to society.

Kosovo is working to develop an integrated case management system allowing the tracking of cases from the intelligence and investigative phase, through prosecution and final convictions to asset recovery. The central coordinator's office in charge of high-profile organised crime and corruption cases should take steps to reinforce the operational and IT links between law enforcement and the prosecution. Preparatory work is under way.

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<sup>9</sup> Law on courts, Law on Kosovo Judicial Council, Law on Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, Law on Prosecutor

<sup>10</sup> Of the 171 prosecutorial positions available, the KPC has filled 157 posts. A call to recruit 15 prosecutors from minorities is currently under way.

<sup>11</sup> Of the 102,009 cases that constituted a backlog in December 2011, Kosovo's courts managed to enforce some 25,275 old cases (or nearly 25 % of the backlog) in 2014. Most of these required the enforcement of verdicts concerning the payment of utility bills. The KJC plans to further reduce its backlog of enforcement by 2016, notably through alternative dispute resolution.

<sup>12</sup> The prosecution filed organised crime-related charges in 2 cases in 2013; 8 cases in 2014; and 3 cases in the first half of 2015. They filed charges in 314 corruption cases in 2013; 444 cases in 2014; and 128 cases in the first half of 2015. There are no data about final convictions in these cases.

The government's 2014 strategy to prevent money laundering and terrorism financing has been implemented, but convictions for money-laundering remain low.

Kosovo has made some progress in freezing and seizing illicitly obtained assets, but only a small fraction of such assets has been confiscated.<sup>13</sup> In the absence of a sufficient number of confiscation orders, the Agency for the Management of Sequestered and Confiscated Assets (AMSCA) is compelled to manage indefinitely the assets seized by law enforcement. The 2013 law on extended powers for confiscation of assets should be fully utilised.

Kosovo considerably strengthened intelligence-led policing in 2015, which should be sustained. The Kosovo police has access to a range of databases necessary for its work.

Work to establish an electronic criminal records database is under way, but data still need to be fully entered into the system.

Public procurement remains a major source of corruption in Kosovo. The Assembly adopted an amended law on public procurement on 14 December 2015, which among other issues created a platform for electronic procurement and sought to regularise the status of members of the Public Procurement Regulatory Commission, which manages public procurement in Kosovo, and the Public Procurement Review Body (PPRB), which reviews decisions made by the commission. These amendments are due to enter into force in January 2016. With allegations of collusion between the PPRB and the judiciary, as well as corruption allegations against the head of the PPRB, it is key that Kosovo puts in place appropriate safeguards to guarantee the operational independence of the PPRB. Strict integrity plans should be implemented to protect the independence of both bodies.

The Anti-Corruption Agency and National Anti-Corruption Council, led by the President of Kosovo, have stepped up their cooperation. The Anti-Corruption Agency is appropriately resourced and continues to review asset declarations and monitor conflicts of interest in the public sector.

Kosovo's law on financing of political parties was put to use in the 2014 electoral campaign. The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) is now appropriately staffed. During last year's campaign, all political parties submitted to CEC their financial reports, with some receiving fines for the late submission of their reports.

Kosovo's law on interception was adopted in May 2015. It makes a clear distinction, from a legal, procedural and technical point of view, between lawful interception for the purposes of criminal justice and protecting Kosovo's security. This piece of legislation also regulates data retention. The implementation of this core piece of legislation is under way.

Witness protection is now functional in Kosovo. The witness protection directorate of the police is sufficiently staffed, with an appropriate budget. A number of relocation agreements have been concluded with third countries.

Kosovo has made some progress in combatting drug trafficking. It seized increasing amounts of marijuana, heroin and cocaine in 2013 and 2014. Kosovo has concluded a set of memoranda of understanding with core partners and participates, through its international law enforcement cooperation unit (ILECU), in the Europol-led "Western Balkan route" and "Joint Investigation Team Balkans" against drug trafficking. Most organised crime cases

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<sup>13</sup> In 2014, assets worth EUR 30 million were frozen or seized, but only EUR 128,000 was confiscated. In the first half of 2015, EUR 27,000 was confiscated of assets worth EUR 16 million under freezing order or seizure.

investigated by the police concern drug trafficking, even if final convictions in cases related to drug trafficking remain low.

Kosovo's response to trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling is acceptable. The police has a sufficient number of staff to investigate crimes related to trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling. Following the extraordinary migration crisis from Kosovo in late 2014 and early 2015, Kosovo tightened control of bus companies that typically facilitated migrant smuggling. While the Western Balkan migration route has so far bypassed Kosovo, it has strengthened law enforcement cooperation with Serbia, Hungary and Austria.

The law on crime victim compensations is being implemented, and Kosovo has stepped up its efforts to rehabilitate victims and prevent trafficking in human beings.

Kosovo is addressing arms trafficking, but the rate of destruction of small arms remains low. To enhance the effectiveness of its efforts against firearms trafficking, Kosovo should give priority to implementing all actions agreed in the Action Plan on illicit trafficking in firearms between the EU and the South East Europe region.

Kosovo's counter-terrorist effort remains functional. Foreign fighters remain a concern, with Kosovo authorities having collected ample information about Kosovan fighters in Syria. A 2015 law on banning participation in armed conflicts is being implemented. The government has considerably stepped up its efforts to counter violent extremism and radicalisation in Kosovo, notably by enlisting the support of Islamic leaders.

#### **Recommendations No. 5, 6 & 7:**

To fully comply with requirements in the area of combating organised crime, corruption and terrorism, Kosovo should do the following:

- Transfer a sufficient number of judges, with appropriate support staff, to serious crime departments across courts in Kosovo;
- Build up a track record of investigations, final court rulings and confiscations in serious organised crime and corruption cases, notably by endowing the central coordinator for serious organised crime and corruption cases with the mandate and resources to lead multidisciplinary teams of financial investigations and to monitor the judicial follow-up of such cases;
- Ensure the operational independence of the Public Procurement Review Body. Strict integrity plans should be implemented to protect the independence of this body and the Public Procurement Regulatory Commission.

#### **5.2. Law enforcement cooperation**

Kosovo fulfils **all eleven requirements** in the area of law enforcement cooperation.

Kosovo has concluded 55 memoranda of understanding on law enforcement cooperation with 16 countries and EULEX. It has despatched 7 liaison officers to core partners, such as Turkey, Germany, Austria and France.

Law enforcement cooperation takes place either on a bilateral basis, or in connection to Europol via EULEX, or in connection to Interpol through the contact point embedded in the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The latter two also facilitate law enforcement information exchange with Serbia.

Relations with Europol through EULEX have considerably improved, and so has cooperation with Interpol through the contact point in UNMIK. In August 2015, Kosovo submitted its application to join Interpol.

The Kosovo police has access to seminars organised by the European Police College (CEPOL).

### **5.3. Judicial cooperation in criminal matters**

Kosovo fulfils **all seven requirements** in the area of judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

The appropriate organ is sufficiently staffed to handle incoming and outgoing requests for mutual legal assistance.

Kosovo has concluded mutual legal assistance agreements with Belgium, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Turkey. Negotiations are under way with Montenegro, Slovenia and the United States. Cooperation with Serbia, through the European Union Special Representative (EUSR), has considerably improved.

Judicial cooperation in criminal matters functions with EU Member States either through bilateral arrangements or the EUSR.

Kosovo has also explored modalities of cooperation with Eurojust.

### **5.4. Data protection**

Kosovo fulfils **all three requirements** in the area of data protection.

The law on protection of personal data is in line with the EU *acquis*, although upcoming amendments to the EU's data protection framework should be integrated into Kosovo's legal structure. The data protection agency has adopted secondary legislation on data security.

This agency is now systematically consulted on draft laws submitted to the Assembly—a power it has used to influence the content of several pieces of draft legislation.

The agency has also held a number of awareness-raising events, and data protection officers have now been appointed at the local level. The agency's budget should be maintained.

## **6. BLOCK 4: FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS RELATED TO THE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT**

Kosovo fulfils **seven of the eight requirements** in the area of fundamental rights related to the freedom of movement.

The fundamental rights framework remains sound and has been strengthened with the adoption in May 2015 of the law on protection from discrimination, the law on gender equality and the law on the ombudsperson. The laws were adopted as one legislative package (Human Rights Law Package) and entered into force in June 2015.

The law on protection from discrimination includes provisions to prevent and combat discrimination, to promote effective equality and to put into effect the principle of equal treatment of all persons before the law. The law on gender equality enshrined full respect for women's rights in accordance with international standards. The new ombudsperson law improved legislation on the ombudsperson institution, extending its mandate and boosting provisions for its independence and impartiality. Implementation of these laws will require the adoption of eight bylaws by end of 2015.

Implementation of the ombudsperson law in particular needs to increase the capacity and resources of the institution to deal with its broadened mandate. As the country's main equal treatment body and national preventive mechanism, it needs more staff, appropriate premises and the appropriate budget to fulfil its new role. Initial measures taken by the government go against the spirit of the new law. The government should allocate adequate premises for and ensure the full budgetary independence of the ombudsperson.

The regional ombudspersons' offices ensure that citizens have access to information on its mandate and tasks.

The government has also continued implementing the strategy and action plan for integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Further funding was allocated and spent at local level, to benefit different undertakings targeting the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian minorities.

A strict application of Article 147 of the criminal code would not cover all ethnically motivated incidents, as this article does not cover intentions behind a crime. The exclusive use of this article would mean that the registration of incidents may not take account of their potential ethnic motivation. This gap could be addressed by employing Article 74.2.12 of the criminal code, which takes account of whether a crime is ethnically motivated.

In 2014, Kosovo Police recorded 19 potentially ethnically-motivated cases. In the last quarter of 2014, 26 potentially ethnically-motivated cases were reported. A tracking mechanism has been operational since 2014. However, the number of potentially ethnically motivated crimes remains unclear, as statistics are not collected in a harmonised way by the Kosovo police.

There are now regulations in place that make it possible to avoid overlaps between the mandates of municipal community safety councils and municipal assemblies. A manual for the councils was published in January 2015.

### **Recommendation No. 8:**

- To fully comply with requirements in the area of fundamental rights related to the freedom of movement, Kosovo should provide appropriate premises for and ensure the full budgetary independence of the ombudsperson.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The Commission has assessed the implementation of the visa roadmap by Kosovo on the basis of information and relevant legislative and policy documents provided by Kosovo. This evaluation has been complemented with on-site evaluation missions carried out by the European Commission assisted by experts from EU Member States.

Since launching the visa liberalisation dialogue with Kosovo in January 2012 and handing over to Kosovo authorities a roadmap on visa liberalisation in June 2012, the Commission has regularly reported to the Council and Member States, as well as the European Parliament, on progress made by Kosovo in fulfilling the requirements of the roadmap.

The visa liberalisation dialogue, as part of the EU's overall policy towards the Western Balkans, has taken place within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process Dialogue. The Commission has organised four Senior Officials' Meetings since 2012 and convened several technical meetings at expert level. Progress on the issues covered by the visa liberalisation dialogue has been regularly discussed and reported within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process Dialogue.

The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX KOSOVO), in line with its mandate, has played an important role in monitoring, mentoring and advising Kosovo institutions on adopting and implementing the reforms and fulfilling the requirements set out in the visa roadmap. Kosovo authorities have also shown effective cooperation with EULEX, including in discharging its executive mandate.

The visa dialogue with Kosovo has proved to be an important and particularly effective tool in **advancing far-reaching and difficult reforms in the Justice and Home Affairs field** and beyond, impacting areas such as the rule of law and criminal justice reform. These issues are also monitored in other frameworks, such as the Justice, Freedom and Security sub-committee of the Stabilisation and Association Process Dialogue.

The progress achieved by Kosovo in all areas covered by the visa liberalisation roadmap is steady and effective. It demonstrates the long-standing commitment of Kosovo institutions to fulfil the requirements of the visa roadmap as a matter of overwhelming priority.

The Commission has already presented two comprehensive reports on Kosovo's progress in fulfilling the requirements of the visa roadmap. The first one, adopted in February 2013, focused on Kosovo's legislative compliance with the requirements of the roadmap. The second report, published in July 2014, focused on implementation. The latter formulated 52 recommendations across the four blocks of the visa roadmap, as well as readmission and reintegration. It noted that Kosovo had made good progress in implementing the requirements of the visa roadmap but further efforts in line with these recommendations were still required.

The current report has set out 8 recommendations corresponding to 8 outstanding requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap.

Progress in implementing reforms in the following areas remains a key priority:

- Transferring a sufficient number of judges, with appropriate support staff, to serious crime departments across courts in Kosovo;
- Building up a track record of investigations, final court rulings and confiscations in serious organised crime and corruption cases, notably by endowing the central coordinator for serious organised crime and corruption cases with the mandate and resources to lead multidisciplinary teams of financial investigations and to monitor the judicial follow-up of such cases;
- Ensuring the operational independence of the Public Procurement Review Body and the implementation of strict integrity plans to protect the independence of this body and the Public Procurement Regulatory Commission;
- Demonstrating that Kosovo has implemented its amended secondary legislation on name changes.

The Commission will continue to monitor progress in Kosovo's fulfilment of the other outstanding requirements and implementing ongoing reforms in the following areas: ratifying the border/boundary delineation agreement with Montenegro before visa-free status is granted to Kosovo citizens; disbursing the Reintegration Fund, with a focus on offering assistance with employment, the establishment of small businesses, vocational training and linguistic training for children; monitoring the reasons for Kosovo's low recognition rate for asylum-seekers; and providing appropriate premises for and ensuring the full budgetary independence of the ombudsperson.

The Commission will continue to actively monitor the ongoing implementation by Kosovo of the requirements set out in the four blocks of the visa roadmap, as well as reintegration and readmission, under the existing Stabilisation and Association Process Dialogue and, if necessary, through *ad hoc* follow-up mechanisms.

**Based on this assessment, and given the outcome of the continuous monitoring and reporting carried out since the launch of visa liberalisation dialogue with Kosovo in January 2012, the Commission considers this report as the final one.**

**The above recommendations remain; as soon as they are implemented, and provided that effective measures are and remain in place to prevent a new migration crisis, the Commission will proceed to issue a proposal amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001.**

**Kosovo should continue to organise targeted information campaigns aiming to clarify the rights and obligations of visa-free travel to the Schengen area and the rules regulating access to the EU labour market. The Commission will continue to monitor and do its utmost to support Kosovo in fulfilling the requirements of the visa roadmap.**