



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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EU-Armenia agreement on facilitating the issuing of visas

The EU and Armenia signed on 17 December 2012 a visa facilitation agreement ([16913/12](#)) at a ceremony that took place in Brussels. On behalf of the EU, the agreement was signed by Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, and by Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner with responsibility for Home Affairs. For Armenia, Edward NALBANDIAN, Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed the agreement.

The agreement will now be sent to the European Parliament with a view to obtaining its consent before it can be concluded. It will enter into force on the first day of the second month following the date on which the two parties notify each other that the internal procedures have been completed, but not before the entry into force of the EU-Armenia readmission agreement. The two agreements shall enter into force together.

The UK, Ireland and Denmark are not bound by the agreement.

Main provisions

The agreement makes it easier and cheaper for citizens of Armenia, in particular those who travel most, to acquire short-stay visas allowing them to travel to and freely throughout the EU. A short-stay visa is a visa for an intended stay of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days.

For some categories of frequent travellers and under certain conditions, member states are supposed to issue multiple-entry visas with a validity from one to up to five years. Holders of diplomatic are exempted from the visa obligation.

P R E S S

The agreement also provides that the visa handling fee will not be collected for certain categories of applicants, including members of official delegations, children below the age of twelve, pensioners, researchers and students.

Following the mandate given by the Council on 19 December 2011, the European Commission started the negotiations of the visa facilitation agreement with Armenia. After concluding the negotiations the agreement was initialled on 18 October 2012.

Context

Visa facilitation agreements go usually hand-in-hand with readmission agreements between the EU and third countries. The readmission agreement with Armenia is expected to be signed soon, after the three-month deadline for the opt-in of the United Kingdom and Ireland expires and the relevant Council decision is adopted. Both, the visa facilitation and the readmission agreements will enter into force on the same day, as mentioned above.

Readmission agreements set out clear obligations and procedures for the authorities of EU member states and the third countries concerned as to when and how to take back people who are illegally residing on the territories of the parties. They cover 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 readmission agreements.

So far, the EU has signed visa facilitation and readmission agreements with ten countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine, Georgia and Cape Verde¹. Negotiations are ongoing with Azerbaijan.

¹ The readmission agreement with Cape Verde is not signed yet. The signature is expected in early 2013.