

Visas: third countries whose nationals are subject to or exempt from a visa requirement

2010/0137(COD) - 24/11/2010 - Final act

PURPOSE: to transfer Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina from Annex I to Annex II, Part I of Regulation (EC) No 539/2001.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EU) No 1091/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement.

CONTENT: in accordance with the political commitment made by the EU on the liberalisation of the short- term visa requirement for citizens of the Western Balkan countries as part of the Thessaloniki Agenda and taking into consideration the progress made since December 2009 in the visa liberalisation dialogues with Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Commission considers that those two countries have met the benchmarks of their respective roadmaps. Accordingly, this Regulation provides that Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina will be transferred to Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 539/2001. Visa liberalisation will apply only to holders of biometric passports issued by each of those two countries. The Regulation was adopted unanimously in Council.

With this Regulation Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina join the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro and Serbia who already joined the visa free regime on 19 December 2009.

The Commission entered a statement to the minutes of the Council meeting on the establishment of a follow-up mechanism to the visa liberalisation process for the Western Balkan countries. This follow-up mechanism concerns the monitoring of the reforms which these countries need to continue to carry out. It also introduces emergency consultation arrangements so that the European Union and its Member States can, in cooperation with the authorities of the countries concerned, react in the best possible conditions to any specific difficulties which might arise with flows of persons from the countries of the Western Balkans and states that the Commission may if necessary propose the suspension of visa free travel. The Commission will report back regularly to the Council and the European Parliament.

ENTRY INTO FORCE : 15/12/2010