

Vice President Franco Frattini

European Commissioner responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security

Vice President Frattini's speaking points on the launch of the Visa Free Dialogue with Serbia

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Vice President Frattini's visit to Belgrade

Belgrade, 30 January 2008

I appreciate the gravity of the political situation now in Serbia. I understand that the outcome of the Presidential elections may well decide the future political direction of your country.

I have great consideration for challenges that Serbia faces today and I believe that Serbia can come out of this as a stronger nation. We will do all we can to support you. Serbia's future is in the EU.

I came today personally to confirm this and to bring you a new positive message. For too long has the policy of the International Community and Europe been dominated by negative messages, sanctions, threats. This is not the image I want the Serbian citizens to have about Europe.

I am very proud of what we've built together on the European continent over the last 50 years. Many nations had to overcome its past and reconcile with its history and its neighbours but we succeeded! Now Europe is freedom, Europe is democracy, Europe is free movement. I want your citizens, your students, your teachers and professors to have access to Europe. I want them to spread European values when they come back home.

That is why I came here today to officially open the dialogue on visa liberalisation. I am opening the road we will need to walk together hand in hand, towards a common and shared goal of free movement. This is part of our common European future.

I am engaging in a sincere dialogue and I expect the same from you and your authorities.

I came here to assure you that doors and windows of Europe are open and it is fully in your hands, in the hands of Serbian citizens, to decide about the future of your country (so as we had to do many decades ago).

I want Serbia and Serbian citizens to become a part of our Union and embrace the European heritage and the European values, rights and obligations.

The Visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Serbia have entered into force on 1 January 2008. Effective implementation of this agreement remains of course a key priority.

You know my personal commitment on this issue, ever since December 2005, as the Vice President responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, I had the opportunity to restate the importance I attach to the promotion of people mobility between EU and the Western Balkan countries as a key element towards closer cooperation with the countries in the region.

On the 18th of January 2008, I announced that the Commission will launch a dialogue leading towards visa liberalization with Serbia.

It is clear that the speed of movement towards visa liberalisation will depend on Serbia's progress in fulfilling several conditions including the condition already agreed under the visa facilitation agreement of enhanced document security and fight against illegal migration.

For 2008 my priority indeed, is to open a structured dialogue on visa liberalisation with all countries in the region.

My services will provide you and the other the Western Balkan countries with detailed roadmaps setting up clear benchmarks to be met in the coming years in order to advance towards visa liberalisation. The process will be tailor-made in order to take into account the specific situations of each country.

In a couple of weeks I will also make extensive proposals for the future strategy of the EU with regard to border management. This will include the setting up of

registered travellers' programmes to facilitate the flows of bona fide third country nationals, who travel frequently to the EU.

In practice such travellers would, in the future, benefit from automated border checks, substantially facilitating and speeding up their border crossing, while appropriate security measures, such as enhanced security of travel documents including biometrics identifiers, will be adopted in parallel.

I am encouraging Member States to launch in the short term pilot projects to test automated border checks at major border crossing points such as airports. During such pilot testing access to automated gates could be given to travellers from selected third countries, which in my opinion should include Serbia. The Commission is ready to support any such pilot projects financially through the European Border Fund.

We want to continue working together with you. Serbia should stay on its path of coming closer to the EU.