



## Highlights: Country News

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05/02/2016

### **Armenia fosters diaspora engagement**

On 3 February, a conference devoted to an innovative strategy on and approaches to Diaspora engagement in the sphere of child-related reforms was held through the combined efforts of the UNICEF, the Delegation of the European Union, the Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia and Mission East. The conference was part of the EU-funded programme, which is being carried out by the UNICEF. The participants of the conference discussed the innovative approaches to Diaspora engagement in the development of Armenia and the possible use of money transfers in child-related fields.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

22/02/2016

### **Training on asylum referral mechanism held in Azerbaijan**

Objective of the training in the frame of the *Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus* project was to contribute to increasing capacity, knowledge and practice of border officials and other law-enforcement bodies' representatives working at Heydar Aliyev International Airport and involved in asylum/migration issues. The event was supported by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan in cooperation with the UNHCR Office in Azerbaijan, the Ombudsman and the State Migration Service.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*



The Project is funded by the  
European Union



The project is implemented by the  
International Organization for Migration



The Swedish Migration Agency  
is a partner of the Project



02/02/2016

### **Azerbaijan can reduce time for issuance of tourist e-visas**

The time spent for issuance of electronic visas for the tourists coming to Azerbaijan can be reduced. It is planned to make amendments to the Migration Code of Azerbaijan in this regard. Currently, travel agencies' appeals for electronic visas are considered within 10 days. This timeframe is going to be reduced to five working days.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

27/03/2016

### **Slovenia supports easing EU visa requirements for Belarusians**

Slovenia supports the early signing of the agreement on easing the visa requirements between Belarus and the EU, Slovenia Vice Premier, Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Erjavec said following the talks with Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei on 25 March. According to Mr. Erjavec, the Slovenian side advocates freedom of movement.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

25/03/2016

### **Belarus hopes to sign the border agreement with Poland as soon as possible**

Belarus hopes to sign the state border agreement with Poland as soon as possible, Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei told media after the talks with his Polish counterpart. Vladimir Makei noted that the border verification has been completed; work on international legal formalization of the results of this work is in progress. He added that the previous agreement was signed back in the 1960s between Poland and the USSR.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

25/03/2016

### **Belarus may ease visa regulations for low migration risk countries**

The Belarusian Sports and Tourism Ministry suggests easing visa regulations for citizens of the countries unaffected by migration problems, Vadim Karmazin, Director of the Tourism Department of the Ministry, informed. According to the official, a lot has already been done in this regard. Tourists are allowed to stay in the country for three days without visas for the purpose of visiting the national park Belovezhskaya Pushcha. Certain measures have been taken to attract organized tourist groups from China. Visa-free travels are now allowed between Belarus and Israel and between Belarus and Turkey.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*



06/01/2016

## **Belarus' MFA prepares proposals to ease visa rules with other countries**

Belarus' Ministry of Foreign Affairs has prepared proposals for easing the visa requirements with other countries including the EU Member States, Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei said in an interview with the Belarus 1 TV channel. "We are now preparing relevant proposals, or rather have already prepared them. I hope that they will be agreed upon by all government bodies concerned, and we will report about them to the President. I think that this will help develop contacts, primarily in business and tourism," said Vladimir Makei.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

05/02/2016

## **CSTO countries to systematically share migration data**

Member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) intend to set up a system to share information about their migration situation, representatives of the Belarusian Interior Ministry informed. The matter has been discussed at a session of the coordinating council of heads of competent agencies of the CSTO member states in Minsk on 5 February. Representatives of the law enforcement agencies discussed the creation of a system to regularly share information about the migration situation in the CSTO member states. The system is supposed to offer more effective forecasts of threats and risks connected with the possible increase in the number of migrants from third countries, noted the source.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

15/02/2016

## **Coordination meeting on migration projects in Georgia**

Coordination meeting of the projects running in the field of migration was held in Tbilisi on 9 February 2016, organized by the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI). The meeting gathered the representatives of international, local non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders. Project Coordination Meetings are held twice a year organized by SCMI Secretariat in order to ensure concerted action in the field of migration

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

05/02/2016

## **The USA donates USD 10 million for the benefit of Georgian state border**

Approximately USD 10 million valued agreements were signed between the Border Police of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) of the USA for



modernization of protection of Georgian state border. According to the agreement, the section of Georgian-Armenian state border shall be equipped with observation, surveillance and monitoring technical means.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

02/02/2016

## **Pilot initiative to support Georgian workers' mobility to Poland and Estonia**

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Georgia is piloting a project to develop operational frameworks for facilitating worker mobility from Georgia to Poland and Estonia, which promote effective job-matching, migrant skill development and protection of their rights. The project sets precedent for state's involvement in the temporary labour migration management process in Georgia in an informed and prepared manner. All the activities planned within the project aim at developing the capacities of the main partner agencies in the government in managing temporary labour migration processes independently. IOM Georgia is implementing the project with financial support of the IOM Development Fund in cooperation with IOM offices in Poland and Estonia and in partnership with labour and migration authorities in the three countries.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

11/01/2016

## **Georgian migration profile 2015 adopted**

During the past year, the respective working group of the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) has been intensively working on the Migration Profile 2015, which should have been developed according to the commitments undertaken by Georgia under the Visa Liberalization Action Plan. The country migration profile is an analytical document, which contains the complex information on the migration-related statistical data and is periodically updated.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

11/01/2016

## **Moldovan human trafficking victims to have better protection**

The Moldovan acting government approved a regulation framework and minimum quality standards for assisting and protecting victims of human trafficking. According to the government's communication and press relations bureau, the document provides for the creation of the relevant state service, which is meant to provide victims and potential victims of human trafficking with a unique assistance and protection programme, in compliance with international requirements.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*



18/02/2016

## **Ukraine MFA tests new system for visa issuing**

The Directorate General for Consular Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in cooperation with foreign diplomatic missions of Ukraine launched test trials of the new information and telecommunication system for processing and issuing of visas to foreigners and stateless persons traveling to Ukraine and in transit (ITS "Visa"). After the testing of ITS "Visa", it will be activated and is expected to considerably simplify the visa procedures for foreign travelers.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

05/02/2016

## **Poland loans EUR 100 million to Ukraine to develop border infrastructure**

The Parliament of Ukraine has ratified an agreement with the Republic of Poland, in accordance to which the Government of Ukraine is provided with EUR 100 million loan to fund projects on the development of border road infrastructure, and on supplying equipment for Ukraine-Poland border checkpoints.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

05/02/2016

## **Parliament of Ukraine ratifies the agreement with Belarus on border plenipotentiaries**

The Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Belarus on activity of border plenipotentiaries, signed in Kyiv on 4 May 2015, aims to protect order at the Ukraine-Belarus border.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

14/01/2016

## **Government plans to narrow use of paper passports of Ukrainian citizens by late 2017**

The Government of Ukraine plans to narrow the use of old paper passports of Ukrainian citizens, replacing them by electronic ones, according to resolution No. 1428 of 23 December 2015. The Government approved the concept of the creation of the national identification system for Ukrainian citizens, foreigners and persons without citizenship.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*



## Highlights: EU Spotlight

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25/03/2016

### **Court of Auditors: EU migration spending “struggling to demonstrate effectiveness”**

The EU’s spending on external migration policy in neighbourhood countries has been scrutinized by the European Court of Auditors (ECA), which published a report on 17 March 2016, in which it concluded that this spending is “struggling to demonstrate its effectiveness”. The area covered focuses on countries in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood, specifically Algeria, Georgia, Libya, Moldova, Morocco and Ukraine. The auditors examined “23 projects altogether, representing a contract value of EUR 89 million out of a total amount of EUR 742 million”. Their main findings “highlight a number of inadequacies affecting the spending” that need to be corrected if financial management is to be improved, the Court suggests.

[Special report: EU external migration spending in Southern Mediterranean and Eastern Neighbourhood countries until 2014](#)

For further information, please follow [this link](#)

11/03/2015

### **European Commission increases emergency assistance for asylum and migration with EUR 275.5 million in 2016**

The European Commission has adopted modifications to the work programmes for 2016, increasing the financing for emergency assistance of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF) with an additional EUR 275.5 million. To finance the additional emergency funding, AMIF and ISF funds foreseen in the EU's budget for 2016, which had not yet been allocated, will be used. The increase of the emergency funding follows the conclusions of the European Council of 18-19 February 2016, calling for urgent action to address the humanitarian situation in Greece and along the Western Balkans, using all available EU and national means to alleviate it.

For further information, please follow [this link](#)

10/03/2016

### **European Commission proposes to lift visa requirements for citizens of Georgia**

On 9 March, the European Commission proposed to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to lift visa requirements for the citizens of Georgia by transferring Georgia to the list of countries whose citizens can travel to the Schengen area without a visa. The proposal comes after the



Commission gave a positive assessment last December, confirming that Georgia successfully met all benchmarks under the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

05/03/2016

## **European Commission proposes a roadmap for restoring fully functioning Schengen system**

The European Commission presented a detailed roadmap of the concrete steps needed to return order to the management of the EU's external and internal borders. The creation of the Schengen area without internal borders has brought important benefits to European citizens and business alike, yet in recent months the system has been severely tested by the refugee crisis. The European Council of 18-19 February set the clear mandate of restoring the normal functioning of the Schengen area, and to do so in a concerted manner, while giving full support to Member States facing difficult circumstances.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

22/02/2016

## **European Migrant Smuggling Centre launched**

Dimitris Avramopoulos, European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, launched Europol's new European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) in The Hague. The EMSC, as envisioned in the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015, and called for by the Council of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in November 2015, will proactively support EU Member States in dismantling criminal networks involved in organized migrant smuggling. The Centre will focus on areas with high levels of criminal activity, and will build a better capability across the European Union to fight people smuggling networks.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

21/01/2016

## **How can EU Action against migrant smuggling be more effective?**

The European Commission has launched a public consultation to gather views and on the functioning of the existing legislation aiming at preventing and countering migrant smuggling and on what could be done to further strengthen it. The improvement of the existing legislation is one of the priority actions identified by the European Agenda on Migration and the EU Action Plan countering migrant smuggling, two of the Commission's strategic initiatives adopted in May 2015.

The consultation is open until 6 April 2016.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*



19/02/2016

## European Council discussed migration issues

At their meeting in February, EU leaders discussed the number of issues, including migration and the situation in Syria and Libya.

[European Council Conclusions on migration \(18 February 2016\)](#)

For further information, please follow [this link](#)

16/02/2016

## High level dialogue between the EU and the International Organization for Migration

EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, opened a high-level dialogue with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to exchange views on the best ways to address current and future challenges in the field of migration. Ahead of the event, Commissioner Mimica said: "Migration and forced displacement worldwide have reached unprecedented levels since the Second World War. Helping partner countries find the right way to manage these unprecedented flows has become one of the most burning issues for all of us. In order to be successful, we need to tackle the root causes of the problem, in cooperation with partner countries and international organizations." William L. Swing, Director General of IOM, as well as several departments of the European Commission and the European External Action Service will take part in this yearly one-day event, in a further sign of how crucial this issue is on the current political agenda in Europe and neighbouring regions.

For further information, please follow [this link](#)

11/02/2016

## Implementing the European Agenda on Migration: Commission reports on progress on priority actions

The European Commission reported on the implementation of the priority actions under the European Agenda for Migration and highlighting key areas where immediate action is needed to restore control. The most severe refugee crisis since the Second World War, with over 60 million refugees and internally displaced people across the globe, requires a radical strengthening of the EU migration system and a coordinated European response. While a reduction in flows is highly desirable in view of often overwhelmed national and local authorities, there should be no illusions that the refugee crisis will end before its root causes – instability, war and terror in Europe's immediate neighbourhood, notably continued war and atrocities in Syria – are addressed in a definite manner.

For further information, please follow [this link](#)





02/02/2016

## **European Commission adopts Schengen Evaluation Report on Greece and proposes recommendations to address deficiencies in external border management**

Following a positive opinion by the Schengen evaluation committee, the College of Commissioners has adopted the Schengen Evaluation Report on Greece and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on addressing the serious deficiencies identified in the evaluation report on the application of Schengen rules in the field of management of the external borders by Greece. The recommendations will be submitted to the Council for adoption.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

01/02/2016

## **European dialogue on skills and migration**

On 27-28 January 2016, DG for Migration and Home Affairs organized the first European Dialogue on Skills and Migration. The event, which included high-level representatives of public and private employers as well as experts, featured speeches, workshops, and a keynote speech by Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos. The discussions and outcomes from the event will help the Commission to have a better understanding of the present and future challenges that economic actors are facing regarding skills and labour shortages and the role that skilled workers from third countries can play, while also involving them more proactively in facilitating labour market integration for third-country nationals.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*

## **Highlights: International Arena**

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29/102/20156

### **OSCE PA debates crisis of migrants and refugees, as special report released**

Lawmakers from across the 57-country OSCE area gathered on 26 February at the concluding session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 2016 Winter Meeting for a wide-ranging special debate on the crisis of migrants and refugees and ways to strengthen the collective response. The debate, featuring interventions by dozens of parliamentarians, including from countries of arrival, transit and destination, also featured a keynote address by Christos Stylianides, the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and former Head of the Delegation of Cyprus to the OSCE PA.

*For further information, please follow [this link](#)*



This information sheet is produced by the Support Project to the EaP Panel on Migration and Asylum, implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Mission in Ukraine and the Swedish Migration Board.

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