



EU launches Mobility Partnership with Belarus

Luxembourg, 13 October 2016

Today, in the margins of the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg, the EU has formally launched a Mobility Partnership with the Republic of Belarus to ensure better management of migration flows.

A Joint Declaration establishing a framework for future cooperation in the field of migration and mobility has also been signed by Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Igor **Shunevich**, and the Ministers responsible for migration from the seven EU Member States participating in the Mobility Partnership (Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania).

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"The launch of this Mobility Partnership is an important step towards strengthening the cooperation between the European Union and Belarus in the area of migration, asylum and border management. If the EU wants to be successful in tackling the migration challenges, we also need to step up cooperation with important neighbouring countries such as Belarus"*.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Robert Kaliňák said: *"The Mobility Partnership will enhance cooperation among experts on migration, asylum and border management, further strengthening our relations in the area of home affairs. In addition, it constitutes a good step forward in our relations, as it will also bring the citizens of Belarus and the EU closer together."*

The EU-Belarus Mobility Partnership establishes a set of political objectives and identifies a number of areas in which further dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Belarus will be established in order to ensure that the migration flows are managed as effectively as possible.

The Republic of Belarus is demonstrating continued efforts to effective border management and to combating cross-border networks involved in trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants.

Under the Mobility Partnership, measures will be launched to increase cooperation in the areas of legal and labour migration; asylum and the protection of refugees; prevention and combating of irregular migration, including smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings; maximising the development impact of migration and mobility.

Background

Belarus and the EU concluded the negotiation on the text of the Mobility Partnership on 1 June 2015. So far Mobility Partnerships have been established with Moldova (2008), Cape Verde (2008), Georgia (2009), Armenia (2011), Azerbaijan (2013), Morocco (2013), Tunisia (2014) and Jordan (2014).

Mobility Partnerships provide a flexible and non-legally binding framework for ensuring that the movement of people between the EU and a third country can be managed effectively. Together with the Visa Facilitation and Readmission agreements which are still being negotiated, the Mobility Partnership will be key instrument in developing the cooperation between the EU and Belarus on migration and in enhancing the mobility of EU and Belarus citizens in a well-managed and secure environment.

In 2015, the number of Schengen visa applications in Belarus reached 752.782. The countries receiving most of the applications are Poland and Lithuania, and in a lesser extent Latvia, Germany, Italy and Estonia. Belarus is the country with the highest number of Schengen visas delivered per capita in the world and has one of the lowest visa refusal rates.

According to Eurostat data on residence permits, in 2015 there were 140.962 Belarus citizens residing in the EU. Most of them were residing in Poland (80.889), followed by Germany (18.140), Italy (9.094), Lithuania (6.188) and Czech Republic (4.964).

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Press contacts:

[Natasha BERTAUD](#) (+32 2 296 74 56)

[Tove ERNST](#) (+32 2 298 67 64)

[Markus LAMMERT](#) (+ 32 2 298 04 23)

[Kasia KOLANKO](#) (+ 32 2 296 34 44)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)