



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO RUSSIA

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EU-RUSSIA VISA FACILITATION AND READMISSION AGREEMENTS ENTER INTO FORCE TODAY

On the 1st of June, 2007 two agreements between the EU and the RF on visa facilitation and readmission of illegal immigrants enter into force. Concluded at the EU-Russia Summit in Sochi on the 25th of May, 2006, the agreements mark an important milestone in the EU's relations with Russia, opening the way for easier travel and people-to-people contact across Europe, while fighting illegal migration. The agreements are symmetrical, equally benefiting citizens of the EU and Russia.

The **agreement on facilitation of issuance of visas** to the citizens of the Russian Federation and the European Union eases the procedures for issuing short-stay visas. Visa fees applied by both parties have been aligned to 35 €. Visa fees are waived for some categories of persons such as close relatives, students, disabled people, participants of sports and cultural events, including exchange programmes, researchers, etc. The set of documents that need to be presented to justify the purpose of the journey has been simplified for certain categories of persons. The agreement also sets out simplified criteria for issuing multiple-entry visas for many categories of persons, such as students, journalists, people travelling on business, train crews and lorry drivers.

Moreover, a decision on whether or not to issue a visa will have to be taken as a rule within 10 days. Individuals holding Russian or EU Member State diplomatic passports will be exempt from the visa obligation under the agreement. Both parties have also agreed to undertake measures, as soon as possible, to simplify registration procedures.

The agreement on **readmission** sets out clear obligations and procedures for both the Russian and the respective EU Member State authorities as to when and how to take back people who are illegally resident. These include nationals from Russia, the EU and those from third countries and stateless people that used the EU or the RF as a transit country. The provisions on the readmission of third-country nationals and stateless people will only become applicable after a transition period of 3 years. A special accelerated procedure will apply to persons apprehended in common border regions who will be able to be returned within a few days. The agreement contains the necessary safeguards with regard to data protection and to the protection of fundamental human rights.

A joint committee will be set up under each agreement, which will monitor its implementation.

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