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**NOTE**

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Delegations will find in the Annex a non-paper from the Commission Services on the visa liberalisation for Kosovo\*.

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

**NON-PAPER OF THE COMMISSION SERVICES:**

**VISA LIBERALISATION FOR KOSOVO - FACTUAL UPDATE ON KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREAS  
OF MAIN INTEREST FOR MEMBER STATES**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The European Commission launched a visa liberalisation dialogue with Kosovo on 19 January 2012, and on 14 June 2012, presented a Visa Liberalisation Roadmap<sup>1</sup> identifying the legislative and other measures which Kosovo needed to adopt and implement. Since then, the Commission adopted four reports assessing Kosovo's progress<sup>2</sup>. On 4 May 2016, the Commission proposed to the Council and the European Parliament<sup>3</sup> to lift the visa requirements for Kosovo for short-stays in the EU. After Kosovo fulfilled the two previously outstanding requirements,<sup>4</sup> on 18 July 2018<sup>5</sup> the Commission confirmed that Kosovo fulfilled all 95 benchmarks as set out in the Roadmap and proposed visa liberalisation for Kosovo. Since then, the Commission has repeatedly confirmed its assessment that Kosovo has fulfilled all benchmark criteria, including in the annual reports for Kosovo under the Enlargement Package, most recently in the 2022 report.<sup>6</sup>

On 13 September 2018, the European Parliament approved its negotiating mandate. The European Parliament has repeatedly confirmed its support for the Commission's proposal and, in its latest resolution<sup>7</sup>, called on the Council to proceed urgently with the adoption of a visa free regime for Kosovo in respect of short stays. Since 2018 visa liberalisation for Kosovo was raised under the Austrian, German, and French Council Presidencies in formal and informal meetings of the Council's Visa Working Party and the Working Party on the Western Balkans.

Since completing the visa liberalisation roadmap in 2018, Kosovo has continued to adopt and implement legislation largely complying with EU and international standards, strengthening the legal, institutional, and judicial framework in the areas of the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organised crime, security, migration, and fundamental rights. The current Kosovo government continues to show clear commitment and determination in this regard.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_12\\_605](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_12_605)

<sup>2</sup> COM (2013) 66 final, COM(2014) 488 final, COM(2015) 906 final, accompanied by SWD(2015) 706 final, and COM(2016) 276 final.

<sup>3</sup> COM (2016) 277 final.

<sup>4</sup> Ratification of the Border Demarcation Agreement with Montenegro (21 March 2018) and the establishment and strengthening of a steady track record of investigations and final court rulings in organised crime and corruption cases.

<sup>5</sup> COM(2018) 543 final.

<sup>6</sup> COM (2018) 156 final; COM (2019) 216 final; COM(2020) 356 final; COM (2021) 292 final; COM(2022) XXX final.

<sup>7</sup> P9\_TA (2022)0285 of 6 July 2022

This non-paper includes a factual update on the key developments and the performance indicators in the areas of main interest for EU Member States. This update, which is intended to inform EU Member States, is not a report on the implementation of the Roadmap by Kosovo which was already concluded as positive by the Commission. The Commission's assessment in this regard as well as the proposal for the visa liberalisation are still valid as presented in 2018.

## II. BROADER RULE OF LAW CONTEXT

Since 2018, Kosovo has made significant efforts to further improve the functioning of the justice system, including its efficiency, professionalism, accountability, and integrity.

Most recently, Kosovo has initiated a comprehensive rule of law reform process with an aim to further intensify and improve the fight against organised crime and corruption. Kosovo adopted the Rule of Law Strategy and accompanying Action Plan to increase the integrity and performance of anti-corruption mechanisms, strengthen the judiciary and prosecution, improve access to justice for all, protect human rights and ensure gender equality as well as reform the Ministry of Justice to increase its capacities to implement the EU *acquis*. Steps were taken to start the implementation of this strategy and action plan, and to reform the legislative framework governing the prosecutorial system by amending the Law on the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council. The Special Prosecution Office, dealing with high-level cases, has been re-organised into four separate departments, including the Department for Corruption and Financial Crime and the Department for Organized Crime. In July 2022, the Assembly adopted key anti-corruption legislation, following recommendations from the EU annual reports, delivering on the European Reform Agenda and Rule of Law Strategy commitments.

Additional resources, including professional staff, have been allocated to judges and prosecutors, to make the processing of cases more efficient. Kosovo completed the roll-out of the electronic Case Management Information System (CMIS), including a connection with the police system for exchange of data in criminal cases. Work on a National Centralised Criminal Records Registry (NCCR) has progressed, with nearly all cases entered into the system. In addition, relevant justice system institutions improved strategic planning. Institutional reforms were introduced to ensure an increase of specialisation and professionalism in handling most serious organised crime and corruption cases.

The government has stated its commitment to fully implement the Venice Commission's Opinion on the concept document on vetting of judges and prosecutors, adopted during the plenary session of 17-18 June 2022, in close cooperation with the EU. In August 2022, the vetting file was handed over to the Assembly. Improving the implementation of existing tools to safeguard the independence, the integrity, and efficiency of the judicial system remains key to justice reform.

### III. KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Since 2018, Kosovo has also strengthened the legal, institutional, and judicial framework in the four areas of the Visa Liberalisation Roadmap (Document security; Border and Migration Management; Public Order and Security; Fundamental rights related to the Freedom of Movement), bringing them closer to EU standards.

#### Document Security

By improving its legal framework since 2018, Kosovo has continued to ensure a high level of integrity and security of personal data. The Ministry of Internal Affairs continues to issue machine-readable biometric personal travel documents in line with International Civil Aviation Organisation standards and EU standards for security features and biometrics in travel documents. Today, all valid passports are biometric. Kosovo is working on amending the Law on Citizenship and the Law on Dwelling and Emplacement.

#### Border Management

Kosovo has further aligned its borders legislative framework with the EU *acquis*. The 2020-2025 Strategy on Integrated Border Management (IBM) and related Action Plan 2020-2023, updated on 29 March 2022, are aligned with the EBCG regulation (2019/1896). The process of implementation is reviewed quarterly by the IBM National Executive Board. A new law on state border control and surveillance is ready for adoption by the Assembly, pending adoption of related higher order laws which need to be approved first. A revised National Centre for Border Management Development Plan (2020-2025) was approved in January 2021 and updated in March 2022. The Joint Intelligence, Risk and Threat Analysis Unit in the National Centre for Border Management continues to collect, analyse, and disseminate information on border-related risks and threats on a monthly basis, and highlights actions to be taken.

From the visa liberalisation perspective, the Kosovo Border Police and the other IBM-authorities continue to fulfil the applicable standards. The Border Police conducts systematic border/boundary checks at all border crossing points and cooperates with EU law enforcement agencies, states and other partners in exchanging information. Kosovo has mechanisms in place to ease border control (e.g. significant queues), regulated and agreed with all relevant counterparts. Several other development projects are ongoing or in the starting phase by the National Centre for Border Management (NCBM), and the National Coordination Centre for Border Control (NCC). Based on implemented needs assessments (2021-2022), the EU will support (through IPA III funding) the development of an electronic border surveillance system for Kosovo. The Border Police has appointed focal points in charge of international cooperation. Joint patrolling agreements with Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro are in force, and joint activities are conducted regularly. Based on police cooperation agreements in force, there are joint police cooperation centres with Albania and North Macedonia, and Kosovo participates in the Police Trilateral Centre with Albania and Montenegro.

Since 2016, Kosovo has a Working Arrangement on operational cooperation with Frontex. Two Joint Operations are ongoing: ‘Coordination Points Land 2022’ with five Frontex staff in the border sections with Albania and North Macedonia, and ‘Coordination Points Air 2022’ with four Frontex staff in the Pristina Airport.

Given the regional challenge of mixed migratory flows, Kosovo needs to further strengthen the protection-sensitive migration and border management through effective identification, biometric registration and referral processes for the most vulnerable. Kosovo recently received support from Switzerland with biometric registration equipment devices. The Border Police is planning the deployment of this equipment, including training 80 police officers, to use it.

## Migration Management

Kosovo has continued to make progress in managing both regular and mixed migration flows. Kosovo further increased its accommodation capacity and preparedness to manage a potential increase in influx of migrants. Following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Kosovo swiftly adopted decisions to respond to possible inflows from Ukraine, by suspending its visa regime for citizens of Ukraine and offering to host refugees and journalists. In addition, since August 2021 and until today, Kosovo has been hosting US-affiliated and NATO-contracted evacuees from Afghanistan. At present, there are still 285 Afghan evacuees in Kosovo. Kosovo has been hosting 1 730 Afghan evacuees in total, including 146 evacuees who arrived in August 2022. 1 443 evacuees left Kosovo, mostly to the US and Canada.

Kosovo has aligned its asylum and migration legislation with the EU *acquis*. Kosovo adopted the Migration Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025, taking into account obligations deriving from the Stabilisation and Association Agreement as well as recent European and global initiatives. More proactive monitoring and coordination of migration policy and mechanisms is needed. In September 2021, Kosovo adopted a revised Contingency Plan in December 2021 and Guidelines on assessing and determining the best interest of refugees and migrants' children. In 2018, Kosovo adopted a new Law on Asylum, and has since also adopted several sub-legal acts on asylum. It is planning to amend the Law on Foreigners, the Law on Citizenship, and the Law on Readmission, to align with EU *acquis*. Since 2021, foreigners can apply online for a residence permit, which further makes the application process more efficient and secure.

Kosovo has a Joint Roadmap with the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) to support the further development of the national asylum and reception system in line with EU standards.

Since 2022, Kosovo has been invited and actively participates in the regular Western Balkans route migration videoconference which is chaired by the Commission and includes all other Western Balkan partners, EU Member States along the route, the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies, IOM and UNHCR.

Kosovo has taken measures to ensure sustainable reintegration of repatriated persons, including via the National Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons in Kosovo 2018 - 2022 and its Action Plan, as well as the Regulation on the Reintegration of Repatriated Persons. Policies and measures are in place at central and local levels. According to data from the Government of Kosovo, the number of beneficiaries of the reintegration scheme has declined from 3 165 to 2 491 during the last four years (2018-2022).

Under the revised Visa Code<sup>8</sup>, the Commission annually assesses the level of readmission cooperation of non-EU countries, including cooperation on identification procedures, issuance of travel documents and return operations. Depending on the level of cooperation of third countries on readmitting their nationals who do not or no longer have the right to stay in the EU, restrictive or positive visa measures can be adopted. EU Member States have evaluated the cooperation on readmission with Kosovo as positive. Since 2019, a total of 4 780 persons have effectively returned to Kosovo, and 2 491 persons have benefited from the national reintegration scheme, which can be considered a satisfactory level of cooperation.

Kosovo has signed a total of 22 readmission agreements with 24 countries, out of which 18 are signed with 20 EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries. Kosovo is actively seeking to launch negotiations with remaining EU Member States and other countries. There is no readmission agreement with the EU.

Regarding the most relevant indicators relating to visa liberalisation, a decreasing trend continues to be observed in the visa refusal rate, the rate of refused entry in the Schengen area for Kosovo citizens, Kosovo nationals illegally staying in EU Member States, asylum applications by Kosovo nationals in EU Member States, and rejected readmission applications submitted by Member States to Kosovo concerning Kosovo citizens. A substantial decrease in these performance indicators is an important indicative reference in the assessments of the expected migratory and security impacts of the liberalisation of the visa regime.

Between 2017 and 2021, the visa refusal rate, which had been stable over the years at around 20% (20% in 2017, 22% in 2018, 19% in 2019, and 21% in 2020), declined to 11% in 2021. This trend has been confirmed by several EU Member States and Schengen participants in the last Local Schengen Cooperation meeting (LSC) in June 2022. Refusals of entry decreased from 1 520 in 2017 to 1 230 in 2020 but increased to 1 650 in 2021. Irregular stays decreased from 6 485 in 2017 (coming from 49 895 in 2015), to 3 965 in 2021. The number of asylum applications lodged (including repeat applications) continued to decrease from 7 375 in 2017 (coming from 72 450 in 2015), to 2 345 in 2021. The asylum recognition rate of Kosovo citizens in EU Member States has increased from 7% in 2017 (coming from 2% in 2015) to 13% in 2018, and then decreased to 12% in 2019 and 7% in 2020 and 2021.

The overall number of Kosovo citizens readmitted has dropped from 18 789 in 2015, to 2 621 in 2018, 1 536 in 2019, 625 in 2020, and 849 in 2021. According to data from the Government of Kosovo, in 2022 until July, there were 342 Kosovo citizens readmitted. Out of 942 readmission requests in 2020, 635 requests were accepted (67.5%), 263 rejected (28%) and 44 (4.7%) are still in process. **The return rate of Kosovo citizens** ordered to leave EU territory was 87% in 2017, 58% in 2018, 41% in 2019, 29% in 2020 and 38% in 2021. While statistics show a decreasing return rate, EU Member States have confirmed that Kosovo authorities continue to cooperate well on readmission.

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<sup>8</sup>REGULATION (EC) No 810/2009 as last amended by REGULATION (EU) 2019/115;  
Consolidated version: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:02009R0810-20200202>.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Kosovo Police have implemented several awareness raising campaigns aiming at preventing irregular migration, including discouraging citizens from lodging unjustified asylum applications in EU Member States, and preventing other border related crime. The National Centre for Border Management's ongoing campaign includes an online 24/7 phone service, available for all citizens to inform any irregularities they may detect.

The Kosovo Police has continued to intensify investigations into cases related to migrant smuggling networks. In 2017 the Kosovo Police investigated 23 cases of migrant smuggling, undertook 7 police operations in which 15 suspects were arrested. Since 2018, the Kosovo Police has initiated a total of 117 cases on this issue. Moreover, on prevention and detection of migrant smuggling, a total of 22 operational plans were executed by the Border Police since 2018. In 2020 a total of 85 cases have been initiated, involving 632 victims, 134 suspects, and leading to 116 arrests. In 2021 the police initiated 27 criminal offenses of smuggling of migrants that resulted with 57 suspected and 54 persons arrested and identified 326 victims.

Like other Western Balkan partners, Kosovo has yet to fully align its legislation with the EU visa policy. Citizens of the following 18 countries can enter Kosovo visa-free but are required to have a visa for short stays in the EU<sup>9</sup>: Bahrain, Botswana, Eswatini, Fiji, Guyana, Jordan, Kuwait, Lesotho, Malawi, Maldives, Namibia, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey.

### **Preventing and combating organised crime, corruption and terrorism**

Most of the legislation foreseen in the European Reform Agenda II on the fight against corruption was adopted and once fully implemented, should have a significant impact on the ground. The Criminal Code, which entered into force in 2019, increased the range of punishment for corruption-related offences and the period of statutory limitation. In July 2022, the Assembly adopted key anti-corruption legislation, following recommendations from the Rule of Law Strategy, namely the new Criminal Procedure Code, the Law on the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, the Law on Asset Declaration, and the Law on Financing Political Parties.

Kosovo has an advanced legal framework on confiscation, in the Criminal Procedure Code and in the Law on Extended Powers of Confiscation. The value of frozen and seized property evolved from around EUR 11 million in 2017<sup>10</sup> to over EUR 14 million in 2021. In 2021, the value of the frozen and seized property was EUR 14,238,163.89 while the value of the confiscated property was EUR 772,819.42. During the first quarter of 2022, the value of the frozen and seized property was EUR 5,879,012.40 while the value of the confiscated property was EUR 370,504.55.

Kosovo has delivered results under the track record of investigations and final court rulings in cases concerning organised crime and corruption. The progress on the targeted high-level cases in the track record offers a snapshot of the overall progress of the anti-corruption framework in Kosovo and offers insights on how the authorities tackle high-level organised crime and corruption. The authorities continued to maintain and strengthen the track record since 2018. High-profile cases were added to the track record and the number of convictions on organised crime has increased in 2022.

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<sup>9</sup> EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries

<sup>10</sup> Commission 2018 Report on Kosovo

The advanced IT tracking mechanism continued to function and enables co-ordination and monitoring of the selected corruption and organised crime cases at all stages of criminal proceedings.

Initially, in May 2016, the multidisciplinary team, including members from the prosecution, judiciary, police, customs, tax authorities, Financial Intelligence Unit, Agency for Administration of Sequestered and Confiscated Assets and correctional service, targeted 31 cases. Additional cases have been added to come to a total of 82 as of 2 August 2022. Kosovo has made progress on identifying, investigating, and prosecuting additional cases of high-level corruption and organised crime within the clear boundaries as set-out by the multidisciplinary team.

Since May 2016, out of 82 cases, indictments have been filed in 72 cases, investigations are ongoing in 6 cases and for 4 cases the investigation has been terminated while in 1 case the investigation is suspended. Out of the 72 cases, 41 cases target corruption (with 284 accused persons), and 31 cases tackle organised crime (with 292 accused persons). Overall, the targeted cases involve high-profile defendants. The total value of sequestered assets (i.e. assets that have been temporarily but not finally confiscated) is valued at EUR 22 916 452.72.

Out of these 82 cases, 33 have been finalised, out of which 17 cases ended in convictions/partial acquittals, 9 cases ended in acquittals, in 4 cases the investigation has been terminated, 2 cases reached statutory limitations and for 1 case, the investigation has been suspended.

In the 17 cases with final convictions, 61 persons have been convicted after all appeal procedures have been exhausted. Final confiscations amount to EUR 1 499 265.10.

As of August 2022, 47 cases targeting 562 defendants are ongoing at different stages: 6 are at the investigative phase, 30 cases are at trial stage, 11 cases have received a first instance decision.

The authorities issue indictments on average after 18.5 months of investigations for cases included in the track record. First instance verdicts are typically reached after 16 months, while second and third instance verdicts (where applicable) come after 7 and 10 months respectively. For closed cases, it takes on average 33.3 months to come to a final decision. Without prejudice to the complex build-up of the investigations and the need to respect the judicial safeguards, and while each case has its own complex merits, steady progress can be observed in terms of cases moving through the "chain of justice", although the pace and efficiency of the judicial system should further improve and measures should be taken to address the backlog of cases (*see Chapter 23, functioning of the judiciary, Commission annual report of 2022*).

Based on the work undertaken by the Kosovo authorities, both regarding the institutional and administrative set-up of the IT tracking mechanism and the multidisciplinary coordinating team, as well as regarding the progress of the various cases along the chain of justice, continuous steady progress can be observed.



While there remains room for continuous improvement, to which Kosovo has committed itself, the Commission can re-confirm that the authorities have continued to strengthen the track record of investigations and final court rulings in cases concerning organised crime and corruption. The necessary resources in particular to tackle high-level corruption, as well as efficiency of the judicial system will continue to be monitored by the Commission.

Kosovo's legal framework to combat organised crime, trafficking in human beings, drugs trafficking and countering terrorism, is further aligned with the EU *acquis*. Kosovo has appointed a National Coordinator for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Fight against Terrorism and is preparing a new strategy in this area. Kosovo overall continues to implement the bilateral Implementing Arrangement with the EU for the Joint Action Plan on counter-terrorism for the Western Balkans. Kosovo reports regularly about the implementation of the bilateral arrangement and a meeting with Commission services and the EEAS took place in May 2022 to take stock of progress and gaps, during which Kosovo reiterated its engagement for the full implementation of the arrangement.

In 2021, 10 indictments were filed in terrorism cases, 4 persons were convicted and 1 was acquitted. In 2020, 17 indictments were filed, 32 people were convicted and the indictment was rejected against one person. In 2019, 26 indictments were filed, 9 people were convicted and 3 acquitted. Prison sentences are on average 3,5 years, and detainees benefited in several cases from early release. The work on consistency of sentencing practices, for offences related to terrorism and violent extremism, will continue to be monitored. During the meeting with the Kosovo authorities in May 2022, the need for effective pre- and post-release de-radicalisation programmes and for strengthening probations services was identified.

Kosovo remains a country of origin, transit and destination of victims of trafficking in human beings, notably for sexual exploitation. Kosovo's institutional framework for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings includes a National Coordinator and the Secretariat against Trafficking in Human Beings comprising several institutions and stakeholders. The new Strategy and Action Plan against trafficking in human beings 2022-2026, drafted with the support of an EU project, international organisations, and the involvement of the Kosovo Prosecution Office, Kosovo Police, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and NGOs, was adopted in June 2022 and should be effectively implemented. Between July 2021-April 2022, the Kosovo Police has identified a total of 15 victims of trafficking (11 women and 4 men, with 11 victims under the age of 18). In 2019, 26 victims were identified (23 women and 3 men, with 15 were under the age of 18). In 2017, 32 victims of trafficking were identified, of which 25 were from Kosovo. Kosovo's efforts will be continuously monitored, especially regarding prevention, the pro-active identification of victims and assistance and support to victims.

For money laundering, in 2021, 5 persons were indicted and there were no court decisions. In 2020, 33 persons were indicted and there were three final court decisions. In 2019, nine persons were indicted and there were no final convictions. In 2018, three persons were indicted, one case terminated with an acquittal.

For arms trafficking, in 2021, one person was indicted and the court convicted 3 persons. In 2020, 23 persons were indicted and three convicted. In 2019, 10 were indicted and 4 convicted. In 2018, 6 people were indicted and 5 were found guilty.

## Law enforcement co-operation

Kosovo has signed 100 international police cooperation agreements, including with 10 EU Member States. International police cooperation has been extended with Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Sweden. The Kosovo Police mutually exchanges liaison officers with seven partner countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States).

Kosovo has working arrangements with Europol (2020), CEPOL (2017) and EMCDDA (2020), and cooperation with these bodies has improved over the past years. Kosovo's Working Arrangement on strategic cooperation with Europol is in place since July 2020 and was followed up by additional implementing agreements, allowing for access to the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA), the exchange of Liaison Officers and the exchange and protection of classified information. The Liaison Officer was recently appointed by the Kosovar authorities and will be deployed in the near future. There is also well-established cooperation with Interpol. Since December 2020, Kosovo and Eurojust have established cooperation through the appointment of two Contact Points.

Kosovo notes a cautiously positive trend of successful police operations targeting organised crime. According to data provided by the Kosovo Police, in 2022, successful anti-drugs operations were carried out in cooperation with EU Member States law enforcement agencies. In 2021, the police successfully targeted 49 organised crime groups, involving at least 317 suspects. In March 2021, the police carried out two operations "Nomada" and "Crystal Eagle", related to migrant smuggling and document forgery. In April 2021, in cooperation with the German authorities, the Kosovo Police carried out an operation resulting in the dismantling of an organised crime group suspected of being involved in defrauding German citizens through call centres based in Kosovo. In May 2021, the Kosovo Police seized over 400 kilograms of cocaine and arrested 7 persons suspected of drug trafficking as a result of a joint operation "Adriatiku" with Italian, US and Albanian authorities.

In 2019 and 2020, the police successfully investigated 37 and 28 organised criminal groups respectively. In 2019, in close cooperation with the Albanian authorities the Kosovo Police conducted four narcotic operations codenamed "Firm", resulting in the seizure of 118 kg of heroine, and the arrest of 9 suspects. In May 2019, Kosovo Police in close cooperation with North Macedonia conducted a weapon smuggling operation codenamed "Zoraki", which resulted in the seizure of 10 firearms and the arrest of two suspects.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Kosovo has put in place a robust legal and operational framework to combat corruption, organised crime and tackle migratory and security risks. This has been confirmed across the Commission's annual reports under the Enlargement Package.

Once visa liberalisation is granted, the continuous implementation by Kosovo of all requirements set out in the Roadmap will continue to be monitored, notably through the visa suspension mechanism monitoring and reporting framework, the Stabilisation and Association process, the European Reform Agenda Action Plan and the Commission's annual enlargement reports.

In light of the progress achieved by early 2018, the Commission recommended that the Council and the European Parliament move forward with the Commission proposal of 4 May 2016<sup>11</sup>. Since the Commission's 2018 report, Kosovo has continued to consolidate progress across key areas identified in the visa liberalisation roadmap. Consequently, the basis for the Commission's 2018 recommendation to exempt Kosovo nationals from visa requirements in respect of short stays remains fully valid.

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<sup>11</sup> COM (2016) 277