



The EU and Tunisia start negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission

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The Commission and Tunisia today began parallel negotiations in Tunis on an agreement to facilitate the process of issuing short-stay visas and an agreement to establish procedures for the readmission of irregular migrants.

Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, stated: *'This marks a key phase in relations between the European Union and Tunisia. By facilitating the issuing of visas, contacts between people and economic, cultural and scientific links will be strengthened. Tunisia could be the first country in North Africa to benefit from an ambitious visa facilitation agreement. At the same time, the conclusion of a readmission agreement will help to avert the risk of irregular immigration from Tunisia, and manage its consequences'*.

The visa facilitation agreement could, for example, see the relaxation or elimination of certain of the requirements laid down by the Visa Code, at least for some groups of people, while the agreement on the readmission of irregular migrants should lay down the procedures to be followed by both sides in order to clarify, simplify and speed up cooperation in this area.

The EU communication on '[Strengthening EU support to Tunisia](#)' published on 29 September 2016 underlines the importance of stepping up cooperation with Tunisia in the area of migration. An integrated and comprehensive approach will be developed to boost resilience in a fragile socio-economic and security context marked by high unemployment, especially among young Tunisians.

The EU wishes to continue helping the Tunisian authorities to manage migration flows responsibly and humanely and to implement the economic and political reforms needed. The launch of negotiations on the two agreements is a positive step forward in this direction.

Background

In 2015, the consulates of the Schengen area Member States in Tunisia issued 155 000 short-stay visas. According to Eurostat data on residence permits, there were 370 000 Tunisian nationals residing legally in the EU at the end of 2015. In the same year, 23 361 new residence permits were issued for Tunisian nationals. The main country of residence is France, followed by Italy and Germany.

The launch of parallel negotiations on these two agreements was one of the common objectives on which the European Union and Tunisia had agreed at the conclusion of their Mobility Partnership in 2014. It marks a decisive step in the implementation of this Partnership. The Mobility Partnership between the EU, 10 Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom) and Tunisia was signed in March 2014. The Mobility Partnership takes account of the interests and objectives of all parties concerned: the Union, its Member States, Tunisia and the migrants themselves. It establishes a set of objectives and provides for a number of initiatives aimed at ensuring that the movement of people is managed as efficiently as possible. It addresses all aspects of migration: the ways of exploiting the potential of immigration for development, mobility, legal migration and integration, irregular migration and border management, trafficking in human beings and asylum.

The main project under way at bilateral level is 'Lemma - together for mobility' (EU funding of €5 million). This is a support project for the Mobility Partnership and it assists Tunisian institutions dealing with migration and mobility by means of enhanced cooperation between European and Tunisian public authorities.

The measures under way at bilateral and regional level will soon be supplemented by major support for Tunisia in the form of the Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa. The operational methods for this Fund are under discussion with the Tunisian authorities.

For more information:

[A European Agenda on Migration](#)

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](#)