



Reanimation Package of Reforms

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**To Martin Schulz,
President of the European Parliament**

Dear Mr. Schulz,

Ukrainian civil society highly appreciates long-lasting support of our country by the European Parliament. The EP members have defended the right of Ukrainians to a decent future during the most turbulent periods in our history.

Today, when Ukraine has finally turned to reforms and democratic development, we appeal to the EP to prevent a negative impact on both reforms and relations between Ukraine and the EU. This can happen if the decision of granting Ukraine visa-free regime with the EU is postponed.

Visa-free regime has a symbolic meaning for the Ukrainian society which considerably exceeds its practical benefits.

The public considers visa-waiver as an indicator of willingness of the EU to closely cooperate with Ukraine: 57% of Ukrainians said that visa-free regime is important for country ([DIF Survey](#), Feb-2016). Ukrainian and European officials have repeatedly claimed that visas can be abolished in summer or September at the latest, which has boosted up these expectations.

The civil society has done its best for reforms implementation, with the visa-waiver perspective being of great help to us. This paved a way for the adoption of the antidiscrimination legislation, establishment of independent anticorruption agencies, introduction of an electronic asset declaration for public officials, opening the access to the property rights registers, etc.

The European Commission confirmed that Ukraine has implemented all the VLAP requirements. This success proved that our country is able to implement comprehensive reforms. We are working towards making these changes sustainable. In such a situation, a delay in granting visa-free regime will be considered by the public as artificial and, unfortunately, might result in the decline of trust in the EU.

Criticism of the EU is already capturing the headlines in Ukraine due to the problems in this field.

Political consequences might be grave. Should there be a delay, **the image of the EU as a reliable partner who promptly fulfills its own obligations will be disrupted in the eyes of the Ukrainian political elite.**

It will make harder for the civil society to advocate further sensitive reforms, as their support by the EU will no longer be considered a substantial argument. There are fears that anti-reformist political forces might try to use public indignation as a pretext to roll back particular legislative initiatives.

We understand the reasons underlying the introduction of a new suspension mechanism, however, the new rules will also apply to those states that have been granted visa-free regime before. Thus, **there is no need to wait until it is adopted before abolishing visas for Ukrainians.**

The same with a post-monitoring mechanism. We welcome idea of monitoring the VLAP commitments. The promise of the EU to further introduce this mechanism is necessary to ensure

that reforms are irreversible. At the same time, delaying visa-waiver until the post-monitoring is developed will bear a negative impact on the willingness of Ukraine to implement reforms.

We would like to stress that **the Ukrainian civil society stands together on this issue**. All key civil society organizations involved in VLAP implementation, including all the organizations related to the anticorruption reform, favour this position.

Ukraine is not on the list of countries posing a migration threat to the EU. The percentage of Ukrainian citizens granted asylum in the European Union is extremely low. In 2015, this status was granted to 415 Ukrainians only, and visa-free regime will not change the dynamics. The Ukrainian civil society is already successful in holding a public awareness campaign on visa-free rules, informing the people that it does not grant a work or residence permit. We are committed to continue this campaign in cooperation with the regional media.

We would also like to stress that it is unreasonable to link the decision on Ukraine to those on other countries which are considered in an absolutely different migration and political context.

Therefore, we kindly ask you to:

- support swift endorsement of the visa-waiver legislative proposal in the European Parliament, having the Committee discussions finalised in July-2016;
- support bringing this proposal to the plenary debates and vote as soon as practicable;
- use your influence to the national governments to prevent the above-described negative development, i.e. delay in granting Ukraine a visa-free regime.

The list of organizations supporting the appeal:

1. Reanimation package of reforms: civic platform, which unites experts and **65 leading non-governmental organizations** from all over Ukraine
2. Ukrainian Think Tanks Liaison Office in Brussels: association of **22 leading Ukrainian think tanks** from all over Ukraine
3. Anti-Corruption Action Center
4. Transparency International – Ukraine
5. European Pravda
6. Institute of World Policy
7. NGO “Europe without barriers”
8. Institute of Euro-Atlantic Cooperation
9. Civic Organisation “Opora”
10. Center for Political Studies and Analysis "Eidos"
11. Center for Local Self-Governance
12. International Centre for Policy Studies
13. Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiative Foundation
14. Centre for Economic Strategy
15. Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"
16. Ukrainian Institute for International Politics
17. Centre UA
18. Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law
19. Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research
20. Centre for Regional Studies
21. Internews-Ukraine