Conclusions of the co-chairmanship
Thematic Meeting on visa facilitation

30 November - 1 December 2016
Cidade Velha, Cabo Verde
Chaired by the Republic of Cabo Verde, co-chaired by the Portuguese Republic

Dialogue and cooperation:

In light of the significant development issues related to Africa-EU and intra-African mobility, both for migrants themselves and their country of origin, transit and destination:

1. To encourage visa facilitation whilst ensuring a balanced approach which takes into account facilitation and security goals;
2. To continue the dialogue on visa facilitation, both within the framework of the various Africa-EU dialogues on mobility and migration and the intra-African context. To work towards a climate of trust, to promote exchanges of ideas and cooperation between regions and countries at all levels.

Short stay visas:

3. To provide adequate information on all aspects of the visa application procedure, including through information portals, for the purpose of reducing the number of visa refusals ;
4. To support the creation of local structures for the provision of information and support before departure, and upon return for reintegration purposes;
5. To facilitate the mobility of bona fide travellers; to better respond to constraints faced by consular services in particular in terms of limited geographical scope, and to reduce the duration of procedures:
    5.1 To promote the use of modern technology, databases and electronic systems for the management of the different stages of the visa issuing process (appointments, submission of applications, etc.);
    5.2 To explore the possibility of developing common structures for visa issuance representing several countries;
    5.3 To exploit the potential for issuing multiple-entry visas to bona fide travellers;
6. To accelerate efforts to guarantee the issuance and the security of documents, thereby improving the credibility of visa applicants and consequently facilitating visa issuance procedures;
7. To consider the importance of visa policies for development, and to ensure that these policies contribute to development objectives, in particular through better co-ordination between institutions and the harmonisation of different sectorial interests. In particular, to strengthen the coherence between tourism and travel policies which are based on facilitating movement and on visa policies and security concerns on the other hand;

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8. To ensure that the tourism and travel sectors achieve their full potential both in terms of travel between Africa and Europe and within Africa. For that purpose, to support the collection and analysis of reliable data from those sectors in order to facilitate the adoption and implementation of evidence-based policy.

9. To encourage the development of joint tourism and business visa policies, including through the adoption of regional visas;

10. To simplify the issuing of business visas whilst also taking into account the importance for speed-, ease and reliability of procedures for business communities, with the overall aim of facilitating economic exchange between the countries involved;

11. To promote the cooperation between States and business communities in order to make better use of relevant information for the benefit of bona fide business travellers; to strengthen the cooperation between consular services on the one hand, and chambers of commerce and business sector associations on the other hand, in particular in countries where trade registry systems do not function perfectly.

Specific measures regarding students and researchers:

12. To strengthen the inter-institutional cooperation between competent services in terms of entry and stay : between universities and agencies in charge of promoting cooperation and international mobility in higher education on the one hand and through the signing of agreements to facilitate the acquisition of visas for these categories of persons on the other hand;

13. To improve access to the employment market for students and researchers in destination countries, in particular by increasing work opportunities provided to students or to researchers for teaching;

14. To integrate visa facilitation into a general effort to make destination countries more appealing, including support measures and measures for the promotion of integration such as: scholarships, access to grants, social services providing housing support or health insurance and language support classes etc.

15. To continue programmes intended to support the mobility of students and researchers between Africa and the European Union such as the Erasmus and Marie Sklodowska Curie programmes; to strengthen intra-African mobility programmes for students and researchers, and to accelerate and improve the recognition of diplomas and intensify efforts for the harmonisation of educational curricula;

16. To support the higher education and research sectors in Africa in order to strengthen their appeal to other regions, but also to encourage the circulation and return home of students and researchers who emigrated. This should be part of a general policy aimed at creating the most favourable conditions possible for successful engagement with the diaspora.

Specific measures regarding cross-border movements:

17. To prioritise the ratification and implementation of protocols designed to promote the free movement of persons;

18. To promote specific regimes with the aim of facilitating cross-border movements whilst also respecting local specificities, in particular regarding types of movements (e.g. nomadism …) in some regions, and based on existing good practices in Europe and Africa;

19. To strengthen awareness-raising actions of trans-border populations and all the relevant stakeholders operating at the borders, in the context of global border management strategies promoting inter-institutional cooperation;

20. To encourage the development of policies relating to informal cross-border trade in order to respond to relevant opportunities and challenges whilst also ensuring coherence between the policies concerned (such as migration and trade policies or those linked to small and medium-sized enterprises) and taking into account the gender dimension.