

High Representative assured of Germany's support for relaxing visa regime

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, used his meeting with German Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble this morning in Berlin to seek German support for changes to the European Union's visa regime towards citizens of BiH.

On the second day of a two-day visit to Germany, the High Representative argued that the European Union needed to relax visa requirements for specific target groups in BiH, including businesspeople, students and scientists. This would be a first step to reducing visa requirements for all BiH citizens.

"The EU must send a positive signal to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to encourage the momentum that has been created in this country's progress towards Euro-Atlantic structures," Dr Schwarz-Schilling said in the wake of his meeting.

The High Representative also highlighted progress that BiH has made in reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law, drawing special attention to the following areas:

- The State Border Service now covers all BiH border crossings, and figures show a significant rise in the prevention of illegal entry to the country;
- The State Investigation and Protection Agency is operational;
- Secure identity cards have been introduced for foreign citizens with permanent residence in BiH;
- A review of naturalised citizens is underway;
- A centralised information system for the control of visa

- issuance to foreign citizens has been established; and
- BiH's judiciary has undergone significant reform and political interference is being eliminated paving the way for successful, high-profile prosecutions.

Minister Schaeuble acknowledged BiH's progress in fighting organised crime and agreed to support early negotiations with BiH on a visa facilitation and readmission agreement with the EU.