

Joint statement of
Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland

Countries bordering Russia are increasingly concerned about the substantial and growing influx of Russian citizens to the European Union and the Schengen area through our borders. We believe that this is becoming a serious threat to our public security and to the overall shared Schengen area.

Among the Russian citizens entering the EU/Schengen area, there are persons coming with the aim of undermining the security of our countries, insofar as three fourths of Russian citizens support Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. It takes tremendous resources for our border guard services to keep Europe safe and ensure the Russian citizens entering the Schengen area do not pose a threat to our common security and stability of our societies. It is also unacceptable that citizens of the aggressor-state are able to freely travel in the EU, whilst at the same time people in Ukraine are being tortured and murdered. The majority of visas have been issued to Russian citizens before Russia's full-scale aggression in Ukraine, under different geopolitical conditions and considerations. Travel to the European Union is a privilege, not a human right.

We welcome the decision to suspend the EU visa facilitation agreement with Russia as a necessary first step. However, further measures are needed both to drastically limit the number of visas issued (primarily tourist visas), and to decrease the flow of Russian citizens into the European Union and the Schengen area. At the recent Gymnich meeting in Prague, Member States acknowledged the increasingly challenging situation in those Member States bordering Russia which gives rise to taking relevant measures at the national level in order to restrict entry of Russian nationals into the European Union through their borders.

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have agreed on a common regional approach and hereby express their political will and firm intention to introduce national temporary measures for Russian citizens holding EU visas in order to address imminent public policy and security threats and restrict the entry into the Schengen area for the Russian citizens travelling for tourism, culture, sport and business purposes.

National temporary measures based on common approach should enter into force in each of our countries separately, by 19 September 2022. The measures are adopted on the common grounds of protecting the public policy and internal security, as well as the overall safety of our shared Schengen space. We continue to seek a common approach on the EU level and asked the European Commission to propose respective measures on visas and entry restrictions that could be implemented in a unified manner by all Member States of the European Union and Schengen Associated Countries.

We emphasise that this is not an outright entry ban and commonly agreed legitimate exceptions will remain in force for dissidents, humanitarian cases, family members, holders of residence permits, for the facilitation of freight and transportation services, diplomatic missions, Kaliningrad facilitated transit of persons, etc. We fully uphold the need to continue to support opponents of the Putin regime and provide them with opportunities to leave Russia.