

Moldovans Allowed Visa Free Travel to Europe

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The European Union has signed a deal to allow Moldovans to travel to the Schengen zone for short stays without visas from April 28 onward.

Moldova, one of Europe's poorest countries, met the EU's requirements by improving cooperation with international policing bodies and with Ukraine on border control operations, the European Commission said in a statement.

The European Parliament approved the visa deal in February with the European Council following suit last month. European Parliament President Martin Schulz and Greek Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitris Kourkoulas completed the process by signing the legislation on Thursday.

The new deal lets Moldovans with biometric passports visit Schengen countries for up to 90 days within a six-month period, Kommersant Moldova reported.

EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said that the step was a great achievement

and a good example for other countries in the region.

Moldova demonstrated its intention to edge away from Russia's sphere of influence when it initialed an association agreement with the EU last November. Both sides hope to finish the association agreement process by summer 2014.

Last month, Moldova's President Nicolae highlighted fears that Moscow could interfere in Chisinau's affairs when he warned Russia not to annex the country's self-proclaimed Transdnestr republic.

Timofti's comments came in the same week that President Vladimir Putin signed a treaty handing the Black Sea Crimea region from Ukraine to Russia.

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