



## **400,000 Ukrainians have already taken advantage of visa-free travel to Europe**

30 January 2018 – Ukrinform

About 400,000 Ukrainians have already taken advantage of the visa-free regime with the European Union since its introduction on 11 June 2017, the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) of Ukraine reports. "Most often Ukrainian citizens travelled to Europe through the Ukrainian-Polish border and least often through the checkpoints between Ukraine and Slovakia. Some 36% travelled by air," SBGS press service informed.

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## **Almost 4 mln biometric passports issued to Ukrainians in 2017**

10 January 2018 – Ukrinform

Last year, the State Migration Service of Ukraine issued almost four million biometric passports to Ukrainian citizens, the Press Secretary of the State Migration Service, Serhii Hunko, informed. He also added that in 2017 the State Migration Service issued more than 1.1 million ID-cards to Ukrainians.

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## **Ukraine starts collecting biometric data at border**

2 January 2018 – Planet Biometrics

Ukraine has started gathering biometric data from foreigners at the country's border control points. This process was recently introduced to ensure Ukraine's state security, strengthen control over the entry and the exit of foreigners and improve monitoring of their compliance under the rules of stay for Ukraine.

Ukrainian border guards will collect fingerprints from international travelers entering Ukraine and check their passports against several databases, including the database of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol). The checks will be compulsory for citizens from 71 countries on Ukraine's list of the states with a high overstay risk, but only selectively for other travelers. The leaders of foreign states, members of parliamentary and government delegations, children, cruise tourists, airline crews, diplomatic staff and officials of international organizations will be exempt from checks.

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## **1,500 foreigners banned from entering Ukraine after visiting Crimea**

13 January 2018 – UNIAN

Almost 1,500 foreigners, including over 100 musicians, were banned from entering Ukraine in 2017 due to visiting the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, according to the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine. The border service stresses that, in accordance with the Ukrainian law, if foreigners violate the rules of crossing the administrative border with Crimea, they are not allowed to enter Ukraine.

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## Ukrainian Parliaments adopts controversial Donbas reintegration law

18 January 2018 – KyivPost

A total of 280 lawmakers voted for the controversial law No. 7163, with only members of the Opposition Bloc and several independent lawmakers voting against it.

The law declares that Russia is an aggressor state, and that parts of the Donbas are illegally occupied by Russian-controlled regular and irregular troops. It also states that Russia is completely responsible for ensuring recognition of human rights and appropriate living standards for civilians living in the occupied territories.

The document allows for the movement of civilians and goods via the existing system of checkpoints at several locations along the contact line.

Furthermore, the new bill significantly alters the status of Ukraine's military in the war-torn eastern region, providing the legal basis for the presence of Ukraine's armed forces along the Donbas front line without the declaration of martial law.

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## Ukrainian Jewish leaders challenge report on rising anti-Semitism

29 January 2018 – KyivPost

Ukraine has joined the unenviable list of countries that saw a dramatic increase in anti-Semitism in 2017, according to the annual report on anti-Semitism in the world, presented on 22 January by Israel's Diaspora Affairs Minister, Naftali Bennett. Mr. Bennet said that according to statistics from Ukraine, the number of anti-Semitic incidents in the country doubled in 2017.

The Israeli report generated a backlash in Ukraine, a country with a Jewish population of up to 100,000. Some branded the report baseless. Josef Zisels, the chairman of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine VAAD, told the Kyiv Post that the authors of the report used information from the internet and had not conducted a proper study to make such serious accusations.

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## New railway tunnel linking Ukraine, EU to open in May

9 January 2018 – Xinhua

The Beskyd railway tunnel connecting Ukraine and the countries of the European Union will be operational starting in May of this year, Ukraine's government-run Ukrinform news agency reported, citing Ukraine's State Railway Company.

The tunnel, which is under construction in the Carpathian Mountains, will establish a new transport link between Ukraine's western city of Lviv and the Hungarian and Slovak borders. Once completed, the 1,822-meter-long rail is set to replace the old single-track tunnel, thus enhancing Ukraine's transit capacity and cross-border trade.

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## Belarus, Ukraine plan to develop cross-border routes for visa-free tourists

4 January 2018 – Belarus News Agency BelTA

There are plans to develop cross-border tourist routes to connect Belarusian territories eligible to the 10-day visa-free entry and Ukraine's Lviv, stated Yelena Likhimovich, Deputy Director of the National Tourism Agency for Belarus. "Travel companies, for example, are ready to organize bus tours from Lviv to Grodno or to Belovezhskaya Pushcha. Our companies are establishing contact with colleagues in Lviv to discuss the plans in great detail" Ms. Likhimovich said.

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## First grant contracts of Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme 2014-2020 signed

8 January 2018 – EU Neighbourhood Info Centre

The EU-funded Cross-border Cooperation Programme has announced the signing of the first six grant contracts to be implemented within the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme for 2014-2020.

All six projects that were awarded are under the thematic objective of heritage, and aim to preserve natural, historical and cultural heritage along the borders between Belarus, Poland and Ukraine.

For the period of 2014-2020, the programme focuses on the promotion of economic and social development and addresses common challenges in public health, safety, security and the environment. It also aims to promote conditions and modalities for better mobility of persons, goods and capital.

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