

In about a hundred words on Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania's entry to the Schengen area.

The decision by the European Commission to approve Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania joining the visa-free Schengen area has not been unanimously endorsed throughout the continent. Despite fulfilling the necessary requirements, these countries remain under scrutiny by some Schengen member states.

In the midst of increased migration pressure and external security threats, GLOBSEC asks three experts from the respective countries: is now the right time for the EU to admit these three countries into the Schengen area?



Antun Dujmović

Senior Associate, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO)

The time is right to admit Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen area as they have met all criteria and can better tackle the current challenges as members of Schengen. In fact, in some way, the migration inflows are furthered through the countries of the Western Balkans which have been granted visa-free regimes by the EU. Some citizens take advantage to also reside illegally in Western Europe. Simultaneously, some of the WB6, like Serbia, have introduced visa waiver programs with countries like Bangladesh, Burundi, Cuba, India and Tunisia, easing legal and illegal arrivals into Europe. Instead of stalling Schengen admittance, the EU should consider the visa-free regime as a leverage upon the WB6 to limit illegal migration inflows.



Ionela Maria Ciolan

European Foreign Policy Expert and Director, Transatlantic Alumni Network

The European Union of today was forged through crises and difficult historical moments. Romania has successfully completed the technical requirements for Schengen since 2011 and received the European Commission's endorsement. Moreover, in October 2022, a voluntary fact-finding mission of experts confirmed that Romania is ready and even went beyond by reinforcing the implementation of Schengen criteria and tools in all areas. Russia's war on Ukraine brought insecurity and uncertainty but also proved that Romania is a security provider in Europe. Now, it is time for the Council to deliver on its part and "tear down" the internal borders! Accepting Romania in Schengen will boost the EU's credibility, security, and prosperity!



Vladislava Gubalova

Senior Fellow, Centre for Global Europe, GLOBSEC Policy Institute

It is the right time to admit the three countries into the Schengen area. The EU will always deal with challenges, be it migration inflows, external threats or economic pressures. Waiting for the perfect moment to take such a step is unrealistic and a convenient way for some member states to respond to their own domestic pressures. Using politically motivated decisions rather than technical criteria has become a common practice, at times hindering the established processes. Sending the signal to other MS that they are not wanted or are not capable, even when criteria are met, decreases the Union's credibility, prompting anti-EU sentiments and dangerous proposals on veto tit-for-tat.