

Visa Declaration

**issued from the European Chernobyl Network (ECN)
held in November 2011 in Schwerte, Germany.**

Twenty five years after the Chernobyl catastrophe charities across Europe continue to invite around 50,000 children every year from Belarus, Ukraine and Western Russia for recuperative holidays.

The positive effect of these holidays is not just on the health of the children but it also makes a significant contribution to the development of civil society in these countries and to the creation of partnerships across borders. This people-to-people initiative thus also contributes to the objectives of the EU-Eastern European Partnership.

It is therefore with great regret that we note that the Chernobyl organisations encounter serious obstacles to their work caused by current visa policies and regulations in certain EU member states.

We believe in view of the important role being played by the European Chernobyl organisations the EU member states should all be obliged to facilitate this work by:

- Recognising that “Chernobyl children” and the adults who travel with them constitute a unique category
- Issuing gratis visas to Chernobyl children and all those who are involved in these humanitarian programmes
- Treating all those involved in the process of applying with courtesy, understanding and flexibility
- Accepting Chernobyl organisations as responsible bodies capable of organising and supporting every aspect of these visits
- Removing any requirement for these visitors to register during their stay in the EU country
- Excluding Chernobyl children from any form of biometric data collection

We, the undersigned, believe that the implementation of the above measures would be of great benefit to all those concerned and we call upon all European politicians and decision makers to promote this declaration in accordance with the principles of good European neighbourhood.