



Schengen Zone

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Why in News?

Recently, **Kosovo** achieved a significant milestone after facing delays in **Schengen approval**. It has secured visa-free access to the **Schengen zone**, the world's largest area of free movement.

- Kosovo becomes the last non-[European Union \(EU\)](#) country in the Western Balkans to enjoy this privilege.

What is the Schengen Zone?

▪ About:

- The **Schengen Agreement is a treaty signed in 1985** by five member states (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) of the European Economic Community.
 - The agreement aims to **create a border-free area in Europe** that allows the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital called the Schengen Area, where internal border checks are largely abolished.
- All EU member states without opt-outs must join Schengen upon meeting technical requirements.
 - **Non-EU countries** like Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Iceland are part of Schengen **through special association agreements**.
- Over time, the Schengen area has grown to **encompass 27 countries**, spanning over **4 million square kilometres** and hosting nearly 420 million inhabitants.

▪ Benefits of Schengen:

- Schengen enables seamless travel for over 400 million individuals across member states without border checks.
- Facilitates approximately 1.25 billion journeys annually, fostering tourism, cultural exchange, and economic prosperity.
- Schengen promotes cooperation among police, customs, and border control authorities to **combat terrorism and organized crime**.
- For nationals of Schengen countries, visa-free travel and the absence of internal border checks enhance convenience and facilitate economic integration.
- Schengen's border-free regime symbolises European values of unity and solidarity.

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Key Facts About Kosovo

- Kosovo, which has a majority Albanian population and a minority of Serbs, is a landlocked region bordered by Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro.
- Its capital and largest city is **Pristina**.
- According to the [World Bank](#), Kosovo is a parliamentary republic and upper-middle-income country. It declared **independence from Serbia on 17th February 2008** and is recognised as an independent country by more than **100 United Nations members**.
 - India, Brazil, China, Russia, and Mexico have not recognised Kosovo as an independent country.
 - However, **Serbia does not recognize Kosovo as an independent state** and continues to claim it as the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija.



Read more: [Kosovo-Serbia Conflict](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following pairs : (2023)

Regions often Reason for being in news mentioned in news

1. North Kivu and Ituri : War between Armenia and Azerbaijan
2. Nagorno-Karabakh: Insurgency in Mozambique
3. Kherson and Zaporizhzhia: Dispute between Israel and Lebanon

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- Kivu and Ituri are related to the Republic of Congo. A war between the Republic of Congo and Rwanda started in 1994 with the genocide of 800,000 Rwandan Tutsis and Hutus. **Hence, pair 1 is NOT correctly matched.**
- Nagorno-Karabakh is a region of southwestern Azerbaijan. It is used to refer to an autonomous oblast (province) of the former Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (S.S.R.) and to the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, a self-declared country whose independence is not internationally recognized. The old autonomous region occupied an area of about 1,700 square miles (4,400 square km), while the forces of the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh presently occupy some 2,700 square miles (7,000 square km). **Hence, pair 2 is NOT correctly matched.**
- Kherson and Zaporizhzhia are related to Ukraine and they are related to the dispute between Ukraine and Russia. **Hence, pair 3 is NOT correctly matched.**

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