

Question for written answer E-000908/2017
to the Commission
Rule 130
Notis Marias (ECR)

Subject: Application extending in 2017 the visa facilitation pilot programme for the islands of the Northern and Southern Aegean

Great indignation now prevails in the Aegean islands after the written update of 6 February 2017 of the Alternate Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Katrougkalos that, despite the relevant Greek request to the Commission, 'it has not been possible to extend the visa facilitation pilot programme for the islands of the Northern and the Southern Aegean beyond 30 October 2016'.

This is despite the request sent in by the Group of Chambers for the Development of Greek Islands for an extension of the application of the visa facilitation pilot programme (Schengen visa gate) in 2017 at the Island gateways, which, as already known, was applied to third-country tourists every year between 2012 and 2016 with phenomenal success, especially on the five major islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Rhodes.

The importance of this pilot programme for both tourism and the local economy is considerable, particularly as tourism, not only in the Aegean Islands but also elsewhere in Greece, has been irreparably damaged by the huge refugee-migration flows.

1. Can the Commission confirm the above written update from the Greek Alternate Foreign Minister?
2. If so, will the Commission eventually accept the application on the Greek islands of the above pilot programme for 2017?