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Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

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PROGRAMME

Public Hearing

on the

New Community Code on Visas

Wednesday, 28 February 2007

15:00 – 18:30

Brussels

**Room ASP 3E-2
(Altiero Spinelli Building)**

***THE NEW COMMUNITY CODE ON VISAS:
HOW TO STRIKE THE RIGHT BALANCE
BETWEEN BORDER CONTROL AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT?***

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs is dealing with several legislative proposals which, together, will constitute the basis for the visa policy of the Schengen countries. This seminar aims at discussing the Commission proposal for a Regulation establishing a Community Code on Visas¹ to be adopted in codecision by the European Parliament and the Council. Mr. Henrik LAX is rapporteur on behalf of the LIBE committee² on this proposal.

The rapporteur considers it important to have consistency and coordination between the reports dealing with the common visa policy of the Schengen area, i.e. this report, the Commission proposal on the introduction of biometrics and the establishment of common visa application centres³ and the Commission proposal concerning the establishment of a visa information system⁴ (Rapporteur: Baroness Sarah LUDFORD).

The seminar shall enable the Commission and the Council Presidency to give their views, take into account reactions from the various stakeholders to the proposal and bring them to the attention of Members of the LIBE committee, and, at the same time, inform a wider audience about the current policy developments in the field of visa policy.

Moderator: Mr. Henrik LAX, Member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Rapporteur.

15.00-15.30 INTRODUCTION

VISA POLICY: THE FACE OF THE EU

Welcome by Mr. Jean-Marie CAVADA, Chairman of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (5 min)

Jerzy BUZEK, MEP, Former Prime Minister of Poland
The Consequences of Isolation (10 min)

René VAN DER LINDEN, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe
Europe without new dividing lines (5 min)

Judy BATT, Professor of Central and South-East European Politics, Institute for Security Studies, Paris
Importance of People-to-People Contacts (10 min)

¹ COM (2006) 403

² Working document on establishing a Community Code on Visas (PE 382.378)

³ COM (2006) 0269

⁴ COM (2004) 0835

The visa policy is very much contributing to the image of the European Union. The dual nature of visa policy lies in the fact that its objectives are simultaneously to combat illegal immigration and criminality (e.g. people trafficking, illegal working, organized crime) and to promote the legitimate crossing of borders. It is important to see both sides but there is a tendency in visa policy to stress the former at the expense of the latter, which accounts for the overwhelming majority of the total number of travellers. Shouldn't we search for a synthesis?

15.30-17.00 SESSION I

BORDER MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY: VISA POLICY TO TACKLE ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AND TO PREVENT THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF THE MEMBER STATES

How did the EU visa policy develop? The draft Visa Code needs to be considered against a 'historical' background. Only a few years ago there was no harmonised list of countries subject to the visa requirement; there was no uniform format, no reciprocity policy and no agreements with third countries. After the adoption of the Borders Code, we now enter the consolidation phase of a Visa Code. What does this imply? What do, for instance, an improved consular cooperation and mandatory motivations of reasons for refusals mean?

Philippe DE BRUYCKER, Professor, Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Odysseus Network

The Common Schengen Visa Policy; How Has It Developed? (15 min)

Jean-François PACTET, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, France

La délivrance des visas et la coopération consulaire : la pratique (15 min)

Joannes DE CEUSTER, Head of Unit, Borders and Visas, DG JLS, Commission

Presentation of the Commission proposal establishing a Community Code on Visas (15 min)

Friedrich LÖPER, Chairman of the Visa Working Party, Council Presidency

State of Play in the Council; Potential Problems and the way Ahead (15 min)

Discussion

17.00-18.20 SESSION II

A 'CLIENT' PERSPECTIVE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT ACQUIS AND OF THE MODIFICATIONS PROPOSED IN THE NEW VISA CODE

Businessmen and service providers need a non-discriminatory visa policy but people studying, taking part in exchange programmes, those with relatives etc. also have the same

need. A special group is made up of individuals with a clean visa history, i.e. those who have visited Schengen countries several times without ever having caused any problems in the form of criminal or other infringements. These individuals are not covered by the Commission's proposal.

Anita SZYMBORSKA, Batory Foundation

How do applicants perceive visa procedures? Presentation of a study (15 min)

Bojan BOSKOVIC, Project Manager of the Serbian Exit Festivals

Young people wishing to travel to the EU: mobility and identity-building (10 min)

Peter KISITU, East-Africa Community Development Association

An African angle to European visa policy (10 min)

Tom JENKINS, Executive Director, European Tour Operators association (ETOA)

Tourism and Visas, Europe as the first tourism destination in the world (10 min)

Hannu HERNESNIEMI, Research Director of the Research Institute of the Finnish Economy

Passenger ferries as a travel mean: a hidden potential to be unleashed? (5 min)

Peter KRAUSZ, International Road Transport Union (IRU)

Problems facing road transport (5 min)

Grahame JUPP, UK Home Office

Simon PEACHEY, UK Visas

A Comparative Perspective: The Use of Modern Technologies (15 min)

18.20-18.30 CONCLUDING REMARKS

ANNEX

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE DEBATE

Presentations will be limited to 5-15 minutes (see programme for details).

During the discussion, so as to make it possible for the highest possible number of parliamentarians to intervene, speaking time will be limited to 2 minutes per contribution or question.

The floor will be given to Members in the order in which requests are received.

Speakers wishing to supplement their speeches may do so in writing by submitting documents (preferably in English or French) in advance to the secretariat (email: olivera.mandic@europarl.europa.eu). These documents will be circulated during the meeting.

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR THOSE WISHING TO ATTEND THE HEARING

This seminar is open to the public. However, for security reasons, participants who do not have a European Parliament access badge must obtain a pass in advance. Those wishing to obtain such a pass should contact the seminar secretariat (Ms. Olivera Mandic) before **23 February 2007**. It is essential to provide us with your full name, address and date of birth. Without this information, the Security Service will not provide entry passes.

Simultaneous interpretation will be available in the following languages : EN, FR, DE, IT, NL, ES, DA, EL, PT, FI, SV, PL

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