

## EP urges Council to open talks on a visa waiver for Georgia “without any further delay”

**Parliament calls on the Council to start negotiations on exempting Georgian citizens from EU visa requirements “without any further delay”. In a letter sent on Wednesday to the Slovak Presidency, Civil Liberties MEPs invite the Council to open trilogue talks “as soon as possible at the beginning of November”.**

MEPs note that there is no real reason for delaying the talks on Georgia’s visa waiver, given that both the Parliament and the Council have approved mandates, following the confirmation by the Commission that the country has fulfilled all criteria.

MEPs complain that the Council decided that “*trilogues would not start before an agreement on the revision of the suspension mechanism is reached with the European Parliament*”. They underline that the interinstitutional discussions on the review of the suspension mechanism - which allows a temporary reintroduction of visa requirements in certain situations- are ongoing, with negotiators actively seeking solutions on the remaining open issues.

“We cannot but regret the delay the Council statement has caused in the negotiations on visa liberalisation with Georgia”, committee chair Claude Moraes (S&D, UK) and Rapporteur Mariya Gabriel (EPP, BG) state in their letter.

“Our guiding principle is that every country that meets all the benchmarks can benefit from visa liberalisation, and that is the case of Georgia”, underlined Ms Gabriel, insisting that the EU must deliver on its promises.

“There should be no further delay to move” on this file, she added, and reminded that visa liberalisation represents, in the context of the EU-Georgia partnership and the Eastern Partnership, a very concrete achievement for citizens.

### **Note to editors**

*The European Commission proposed on 9 March lifting visa requirements for the citizens of Georgia, following the assessment, published in December 2015, that the country had successfully complied with all criteria of its Visa Liberalisation Action Plan. The visa liberalisation dialogue between Georgia and the EU had started in June 2012.*

*On 5 September 2016, Parliament's Civil Liberties committee backed the Commission's proposal by 44 votes to 5. The committee also approved the mandate to open negotiations with the Council (44 votes to 5 with 1 abstention), with a view to reaching an agreement at the first reading, and the composition of the negotiating team, led by Ms Gabriel.*

*Disclaimer: this is an informal message intended to help journalists covering the work of the European Parliament. It is neither an official press release nor a comprehensive record of proceedings*

### Further information

[Civil liberties MEPs back visa waivers for Kosovo and Georgia \(Press release, 5.09.2016\)](#)

[Fourth progress report on Georgia's implementation of the action plan on visa liberalisation \(18.12.2016\)](#)

[Civil Liberties committee web page](#)

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