



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Committee on Foreign Affairs*

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**2010/0137(COD)**

7.9.2010

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders of Member States and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (COM(2010)0256 – C7-0134/2010 – 2010/0137(COD))

Rapporteur: Sarah Ludford

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## **SHORT JUSTIFICATION**

The European Parliament has been consistently calling for the liberalisation of the visa regime for the Western Balkan countries. This regime has never succeeded in its aim of preventing the criminal networks from crossing the borders; it has however hurt the ordinary people from the Balkans, not allowing them to see with their own eyes what the European Union stands for and to develop social and professional contacts with their counterparts in the EU Member States.

On 19 December 2009 three countries - Serbia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - were given visa-free access to the EU. Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina were not included in the initial proposal but they have recently made substantial efforts to fulfil the benchmarks in order to qualify for the same waiver. The current proposal to liberalise the visa regime for these countries acknowledges this progress and is an important step in extending the visa-free access to the whole region.

This process should not stop with the current proposal. Kosovo's citizens should not be left feeling isolated as the only peoples in the Western Balkans not being able to travel freely but visa facilitation and eventually visa liberalisation should also be extended to the country. Therefore, the Commission should start the visa dialogue with Kosovo so that the visa facilitation can be granted as soon as the authorities fulfil all the benchmarks.

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as the committee responsible, to propose approval of the Commission proposal.

## PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Amendment to Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders of Member States and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement						
<b>References</b>	COM(2010)0256 – C7-0134/2010 – 2010/0137(COD)						
<b>Committee responsible</b>	LIBE						
<b>Opinion by</b> Date announced in plenary	AFET 15.6.2010						
<b>Rapporteur</b> Date appointed	Baroness Sarah Ludford 23.6.2010						
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	6.9.2010						
<b>Date adopted</b>	6.9.2010						
<b>Result of final vote</b>	<table> <tr> <td>+: </td><td>41</td></tr> <tr> <td>–: </td><td>2</td></tr> <tr> <td>0: </td><td>3</td></tr> </table>	+:	41	–:	2	0:	3
+:	41						
–:	2						
0:	3						
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Gabriele Albertini, Sir Robert Atkins, Dominique Baudis, Bastiaan Belder, Frieda Brepoels, Arnaud Danjean, Marietta Giannakou, Ana Gomes, Andrzej Grzyb, Heidi Hautala, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Jelko Kacin, Ioannis Kasoulides, Tunne Kelam, Maria Eleni Koppa, Andrey Kovatchev, Barry Madlener, Kyriakos Mavronikolas, Alexander Mirsky, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Raimon Obiols, Kristiina Ojuland, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Alojz Peterle, Bernd Posselt, Hans-Gert Pöttering, Cristian Dan Preda, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Werner Schulz, Adrian Severin, Marek Siwiec, Hannes Swoboda, Charles Tannock, Geoffrey Van Orden, Graham Watson						
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Emine Bozkurt, Reinhard Bütikofer, Lorenzo Fontana, Roberto Gualtieri, Baroness Sarah Ludford, Nadezhda Neynsky, Doris Pack, György Schöpflin, Dominique Vlasto						
<b>Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote</b>	Filip Kaczmarek						