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Committee on Foreign Affairs

2007/0175(CNS)

9.10.2007

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Moldova on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas
(COM(2007)0488 – C6-0000/2007 – 2007/0175(CNS))

Draftsman: Jan Marinus Wiersma

PA_Legapp

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

Your draftsman welcomes the swift conclusion of the negotiations on an agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Moldova on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas, in parallel with a readmission agreement. Going beyond the priorities set out in the European Neighbourhood Action Plan for Moldova, the agreement offers Moldovan citizens a tangible benefit of closer cooperation between the EU and Moldova.

The agreement puts the Republic of Moldova on a par with its neighbour Ukraine and tackles some of the adverse effects on the cross-border mobility of Moldovan citizens which resulted from Romania's accession to the European Union on 1 January 2007. It also avoids the situation in which Moldovan nationals holding a Russian passport would enjoy greater freedom of travel than others.

The Moldovan government should undertake all reforms necessary to allow an extension of the visa facilitation regime to more categories of travellers and to open the way for full visa liberalisation in the future, which is recognised in the agreement as a long term objective. Such a development could help to reduce the number of third-country passports held by Moldovan citizens, and thus also improve the cohesion of the country.

Your draftsman hopes that the agreement can make a positive contribution to the further intensification of ties between the EU and Moldova. Such intensification cannot, however, be disconnected from the overall stabilisation of the country, which depends on the efforts undertaken by the Moldovan government to implement democratic reforms as set out in the Action Plan and a peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the Transnistrian conflict within the framework of respect for the territorial integrity of Moldova.

Your draftsman also welcomes in particular the initiative of setting up a Common Visa Application Centre in Chişinău, which opened in April 2007. This novel form of consular cooperation between EU Member States and a host country considerably reduces the transaction costs of obtaining a Schengen visa. This is particularly important for the citizens of a small country, where only a minority of the EU Member States have a full diplomatic presence. It also offers the opportunity to enhance the visibility of the European Union in third countries. Your draftsman hopes that the experience obtained in Chişinău will lead to the opening of other such centres, and encourages Member States to join the initiative.

Your draftsman calls on both parties to proceed to a swift ratification so that the two agreements can enter into force on 1 January 2008.

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

Title	Agreement between the EC and Moldova on short-stay visas
References	COM(2007)0488 - 2007/0175(CNS)
Committee responsible	LIBE
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	AFET
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Jan Marinus Wiersma 12.9.2007
Discussed in committee	9.10.2007
Date adopted	9.10.2007
Result of final vote	+: 8 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Cristian Silviu Buşoi, Michael Gahler, Anna Ibrisagic, Ioan Mircea Paşcu, Samuli Pohjamo, Charles Tannock, Josef Zieleniec
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García