



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Foreign Affairs

2010/0192(COD)

6.10.2010

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)0358 – C7-0162/2010 – 2010/0192(COD))

Rapporteur: Andrey Kovatchev

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SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The main purpose of this amendment of Regulation EC 539/2001 is to exempt holders of Taiwanese passports from visa requirement to enter the EU.

As detailed very precisely in the Commission proposal, the principle of the visa exemption is certainly to be supported, given that the level of economic development, education and democratic governance of Taiwan is comparable to OECD countries of the region South Korea and Japan.

It should be reminded that the EU and its Member States adhere to the "One China policy" and do not recognise Taiwan as an independent sovereign state, but trade (Taiwan is a member of the WTO) cultural and personal links are active. The European Parliament continues to encourage Taiwan's participation in international organisations. The visa regimes as well as any consular or private law regimes do not prejudice of any position on the status of territories under Public International Law.

After decades of tension, the political climate between the present Taiwanese Government and the People's Republic of China is currently very positive, as the establishment of direct flights and the unprecedented level of cross-Straits business and personal exchanges show, thus providing a window of opportunity for a trouble-free implementation of the measure.

At present, citizens of all EU Member States except Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania, as well as citizens from non-EU countries in the Schengen area enjoy the reciprocal visa-free access to Taiwan.

The Taiwanese Government has committed itself to lifting the visa requirement for the remaining three EU countries before the end of 2010 and while we welcome the intention of the Taiwanese Government to grant visa-free access for all 27 Member States we expect this to happen before the adoption of this EU measure.

The inclusion in the proposal of another territory, the tiny archipelago of U.S. Northern Mariannes, with a population of less than 90 000 inhabitants holding U.S. passports, is intended to correct an inaccuracy in the current text of the Regulation, which already covers nearby Guam that has the same political status and similar demographics.

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	Amendment of 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						
References	COM(2010)0358 – C7-0162/2010 – 2010/0192(COD)						
Committee responsible	LIBE						
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	AFET 9.9.2010						
Rapporteur Date appointed	Andrey Kovatchev 15.9.2010						
Discussed in committee	20.9.2010						
Date adopted	5.10.2010						
Result of final vote	<table> <tr> <td>+: </td><td>30</td></tr> <tr> <td>–: </td><td>3</td></tr> <tr> <td>0: </td><td>0</td></tr> </table>	+:	30	–:	3	0:	0
+:	30						
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0:	0						
Members present for the final vote	Gabriele Albertini, Frieda Brepoels, Andrzej Grzyb, Heidi Hautala, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Ioannis Kasoulides, Tunne Kelam, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Andrey Kovatchev, Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler, Vytautas Landsbergis, Krzysztof Lisek, Mario Mauro, Kyriakos Mavronikolas, Francisco José Millán Mon, María Muñoz De Urquiza, Norica Nicolai, Raimon Obiols, Kristiina Ojuland, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Alojz Peterle, Libor Rouček, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Adrian Severin, Ernst Strasser, Boris Zala						
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Nikolaos Chountis, Evgeni Kirilov, Marietje Schaake, Helmut Scholz, Dominique Vlasto						
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Marie-Christine Vergiat						