

Revision of the Visa Code

In March 2018, the European Commission submitted a proposal to revise the Community Code on Visas (the Visa Code). The proposal's main objective is to strengthen the common visa policy while taking into account migration and security concerns, through increasing the role of visa policy in the EU's cooperation with third countries. Economic considerations will also come into play, with the facilitation of visa processing for legitimate travellers who contribute to the EU's economy and its cultural and social development. The agreement on the proposal, reached after trilogue negotiations, now needs to be confirmed by Parliament, with a vote expected during the April II plenary session.

Background

The EU visa code was established in 2009 on the basis of [Regulation \(EC\) No 810/2009](#). It is one of the main elements of [EU visa policy](#), establishing harmonised procedures and conditions for processing visa applications and for issuing visas for transit through the territory of Member States, or intended stays not exceeding three months in any six-month period. Currently, travellers from 105 non-EU countries or entities need a visa to enter the Schengen area. The number of [visas issued](#) by Member States increased steadily between 2010 and 2017, from 12.5 million to 14.6 million.

European Commission proposal

On 16 May 2018, the Commission adopted a [proposal](#) to revise the Visa Code. The impact assessment [study](#) accompanying the proposal identified three main issues needing addressed: (1) the visa fee; (2) multiple-entry visas (MEVs); and (3) the link between visa policy and readmissions policy. The main changes that the proposal would bring include: a moderate increase in the visa fee from €60 to €80; extension of the maximum period for submitting an application prior to travel to six months; faster and more flexible procedures; harmonised rules on MEVs; the possibility to issue single-entry visas directly at the EU's external borders under certain conditions; and a mechanism for negative incentives in visa policy, to put pressure on third countries not cooperating on the readmission of illegally staying third-country nationals.

European Parliament position

Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) adopted its [report](#) on the proposal on 6 December 2018. Parliament voted on that report in plenary on 11 December 2018 and adopted [amendments](#) to the proposal. The EP's amendments call for the introduction of an electronic visa by 2025, and provide for the possibility for applicants to lodge a visa application at the consulate of one of the Member States of destination of the intended visit, at the consulate of the Member State of first entry, or at any Member State consulate present in the country. Parliament is also in favour of waiving the medical travel insurance requirement for applicants applying for short-stay visas. It supports an annual assessment of third countries' cooperation with regard to readmission, and urges the Commission to report on the results of that assessment to the Parliament and Council. The [text](#) resulting from interinstitutional negotiations was [endorsed](#) by Coreper, for the Council, on 20 February 2019, and then approved during the LIBE committee meeting of 26 February. The text now needs to be formally adopted by Parliament; a vote is scheduled for the April II plenary session.

First-reading report: [2018/0061\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: LIBE; Rapporteur: Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, Spain). For further information see our 'EU Legislation in progress' [briefing](#).

