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12.10.2007

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## **REPORT**

on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas (COM(2007)0421 – C6-0294/2007 – 2007/0159(CNS))

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Rapporteur: Adina-Ioana Vălean

### ***Symbols for procedures***

- \* Consultation procedure  
*majority of the votes cast*
- \*\*I Cooperation procedure (first reading)  
*majority of the votes cast*
- \*\*II Cooperation procedure (second reading)  
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position  
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend  
the common position*
- \*\*\* Assent procedure  
*majority of Parliament's component Members except in cases  
covered by Articles 105, 107, 161 and 300 of the EC Treaty and  
Article 7 of the EU Treaty*
- \*\*\*I Codecision procedure (first reading)  
*majority of the votes cast*
- \*\*\*II Codecision procedure (second reading)  
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position  
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend  
the common position*
- \*\*\*III Codecision procedure (third reading)  
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the joint text*

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the Commission.)

### ***Amendments to a legislative text***

In amendments by Parliament, amended text is highlighted in ***bold italics***. Highlighting in *normal italics* is an indication for the relevant departments showing parts of the legislative text for which a correction is proposed, to assist preparation of the final text (for instance, obvious errors or omissions in a given language version). These suggested corrections are subject to the agreement of the departments concerned.

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## DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

**on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas  
(COM(2007)0421 – C6-0294/2007 – 2007/0159(CNS))**

### **(Consultation procedure)**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the proposal for a Council decision (COM(2007)0421)<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to Articles 62(2)(b)(i) and (ii) and 300(2), first subparagraph, first sentence, of the EC Treaty,
  - having regard to Article 300(3), first subparagraph, of the EC Treaty, pursuant to which the Council consulted Parliament (C6-0294/2007),
  - having regard to Rules 51 and 83(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A6-0383/2007),
1. Approves conclusion of the agreement;
  2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council and Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

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<sup>1</sup> Not yet published in OJ.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The European Parliament is consulted on the approval of the conclusion of two mutually conditional and parallel agreements with the Western Balkans: Readmission agreements with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro, and agreements with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visa (Albania having already concluded a readmission agreement in 2005).

The EU-Western Balkans Summit held in Thessaloniki on 21 June 2003 reaffirmed the importance for the Western Balkan countries of concluding visa facilitation and readmission agreements for coping with illegal migration issues.

The rapporteur welcomes and underlines the importance of these agreements for the Western Balkans that need to be seen as a package that benefit both sides; the EU and this region of strategic importance to the EU, which includes countries that hold an EU membership perspective (Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia having been granted candidate status).

The conclusion of such agreements on visa facilitation must be seen as an important step that can encourage the Western Balkan countries to implement relevant reforms and reinforce their cooperation at regional level and with the EU in areas such as strengthening the rule of law, fighting organised crime and corruption, and increasing their administrative capacity as regards border control and the security of documents by introducing biometric identifiers.

A well-functioning immigration system requires effective readmission agreements, and no visa facilitation agreement should be concluded if no readmission agreements are in place. However the EU should also consider making use of other instruments to achieve the conclusion and implementation of a readmission agreement, e.g. political, economic, commercial or development policy related.

The rapporteur welcomes the fact that the EC takes account of JHA factors in deciding whether to open negotiations on visa facilitation with third countries, such as border management, document security, migration and asylum, fight against terrorism, organized crime and corruption. Indeed, Albania, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina each face specific challenges in these areas that need a differentiated approach.

The rapporteur remains however very critical of the very limited role of the European Parliament in the conclusion of such agreements, a regrettable fact that increases the democratic deficit between the European institutions and its citizens. These issues have direct implications for the EU citizens and the EP is unfortunately not informed at any stage of the opening of negotiations, during the negotiations, as regards the impact of readmission and visa agreements and its implications in terms of human rights and asylum rights.

The objectives and the formal framework of these Community agreements of readmission

justify that the EP be informed of the impact of its implementation in the Member States. Information as regards the number of returned migrants, nationality, status, average waiting period between the arrest, readmission request and transfer, etc., are needed to draw up an annual report that should be presented to the EP in view of a debate.

A monitoring mechanism and a suspension clause ought to be included in the visa facilitation agreements to allow the EU to suspend, at any time, the application of the agreement in case of difficulties in respect of implementation or unexpected political developments.

4.10.2007

## **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 former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas  
(COM(2007)0421 – C6-0294/2007 – 2007/0159(CNS))

Draftsperson: Erik Meijer

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### **SHORT JUSTIFICATION**

The European Parliament has been consistently calling for a relaxation of the draconian visa regime which was imposed on the countries belonging to the former Yugoslavia. This regime, which contrasts sharply with the pre-war conditions that applied to Yugoslavian citizens, has been particularly pernicious for the social and economic development of the countries of south-eastern Europe.

Rather than serving its original purpose, notably that of preventing local criminal networks from extending their activities outside the region, it has prevented honest students, academics, researchers and businessmen from developing close contacts with partners in the EU countries. A sense of isolation, of undeserved discrimination, of ghettoisation has prevailed, particularly amongst the youngest, which has undermined their European identity. Europe is a prosperous society to which they would like to belong but from which they feel rejected.

In the meantime, criminals have expanded their networks, forged alliances with fellow organisations in the EU Member States and expanded their activities in our territories, all this despite the visa restrictions which currently apply.

It is therefore legitimate to question the very foundations of the visa policy which the Union has applied so far towards the countries of south-eastern Europe. Much more emphasis should be placed on regional cooperation in the fight against organised crime and trafficking, with more funds and programmes being directed at upgrading facilities, training and better remuneration for staff, and promoting more sophisticated technologies. All this costs money, and this is where the Union should show solidarity. It is in the interests not just of these countries but also of the Union to develop efficient, reliable and corruption-free border



control forces, police and public administration. Assistance under the Pre-Accession Instrument should therefore be stepped up, with additional funds being provided for this purpose.

By providing such (financial and technical) assistance the Union would enable these countries to fulfil the requirements for the next step: visa liberalisation. The European Parliament, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs in particular, strongly advocate lifting as soon as technically possible the visa requirements for citizens of the region. In our view, this would be a tangible sign that their countries belong to Europe. It would encourage them to take resolute action to adopt the reforms which will eventually lead them to full membership of the European Union.

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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>	Agreement between the EC and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on short-stay visas
<b>References</b>	COM(2007)0421 - C6-0294/2007 - 2007/0159(CNS)
<b>Committee responsible</b>	LIBE
<b>Opinion by</b> Date announced in plenary	AFET 24.9.2007
<b>Drafts(wo)man</b> Date appointed	Erik Meijer 12.9.2007
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	3.10.2007
<b>Date adopted</b>	3.10.2007
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 23 -: 0 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Vittorio Agnoletto, Christopher Beazley, Monika Beňová, Michael Gahler, Jas Gawronski, Alfred Gomolka, Richard Howitt, Anna Ibrisagic, Vytautas Landsbergis, Willy Meyer Pleite, Samuli Pohjamo, Libor Rouček, Katrin Saks, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Gitte Seeberg, Ari Vatanen, Josef Zieleniec
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, Gisela Kallenbach, Erik Meijer, Rihards Pīks, Csaba Sándor Tabajdi, Marcello Vernola

## PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Agreement between the EC and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on short-stay visas
<b>References</b>	COM(2007)0421 - C6-0294/2007 - 2007/0159(CNS)
<b>Date of consulting Parliament</b>	18.9.2007
<b>Committee responsible</b> Date announced in plenary	LIBE 24.9.2007
<b>Committee(s) asked for opinion(s)</b> Date announced in plenary	AFET 24.9.2007
<b>Rapporteur(s)</b> Date appointed	Adina-Ioana Vălean 10.9.2007
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	10.9.2007                      2.10.2007
<b>Date adopted</b>	9.10.2007
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+:                      24 -:                      3 0:                      0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Alexander Alvaro, Philip Bradbourn, Mihael Brejc, Kathalijne Maria Buitenweg, Michael Cashman, Giuseppe Castiglione, Giusto Catania, Jean-Marie Cavada, Elly de Groen-Kouwenhoven, Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra, Kinga Gál, Patrick Gaubert, Roland Gewalt, Livia Járóka, Ewa Klamt, Claude Moraes, Inger Segelström, Károly Ferenc Szabó, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Manfred Weber, Tatjana Ždanoka
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Simon Busuttil, Charlotte Cederschiöld, Evelyne Gebhardt, Ona Juknevičienė, Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann, Eva-Britt Svensson