

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Session document

FINAL
A6-0384/2007

12.10.2007

REPORT

on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas
(COM(2007)0423 – C6-0296/2007 – 2007/0140(CNS))

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Rapporteur: Claudio Fava

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 Bosnia and Herzegovina on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas

(COM(2007)0423 – C6-0296/2007 – 2007/0140(CNS))

(Consultation procedure)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal for a Council decision (COM(2007)0423)¹,
 - 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 to Council consulted Parliament (C6-0296/2007),
 - 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 0384/2007),
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 of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹ Not yet published in OJ.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE) approves conclusion of two, mutually conditional and parallel agreements with Bosnia and Herzegovina on readmission and facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas. The Committee welcomes these agreements, which together with forthcoming Visa Code, implementation of Visa Information System (VIS) and further cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs will extend an area of freedom and security reaching beyond EU.

The Committee believes that in the spirit of joint commitment and ownership, EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina can effectively fight illegal immigration and contribute to the development of democracy, rule of law, human rights and civil society by encouraging easier contact and travel of people between two contracting parties. In this context, the Committee welcomes previous decision by the Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to abolish visa requirement for EU citizens and is of the opinion that European Union is still in search of adequate response to that decision.

There is also room for improvement on the side of European Commission to launch an information campaign and to find means and ways to make all the necessary information easily accessible to all travellers in the light of these and other agreements concluded. So far, even Commission's website does not contain any systematic and transparent information on this subject.

It is strongly recommended for the committee monitoring implementation of these agreements as well as to the European Commission itself to identify any asymmetrical barriers preventing from reciprocal procedures becoming obstacles for travellers at the consulates, as well as, at the border crossings. In particular a study must be carried whether partial outsourcing of visa consular services may have an impact on the accessibility and possible undesired increase of visa prices or creating visa-shopping phenomenon.

Finally, the LIBE Committee expects from the European Commission to provide the Parliament with information on the results of the implementation of the agreements.

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 Bosnia and Herzegovina on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas
(COM(2007)0423 – C6-0296/2007 – 2007/0140(CNS))

Draftsperson: Doris Pack

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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.

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 Bosnia and Herzegovina on short-stay visas
References	COM(2007)0423 - C6-0296/2007 - 2007/0140(CNS)
Committee responsible	LIBE
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	AFET 24.9.2007
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Doris Pack 12.9.2007
Discussed in committee	3.10.2007
Date adopted	3.10.2007
Result of final vote	+: 23 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	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
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, Gisela Kallenbach, Erik Meijer, Rihards Pīks, Csaba Sándor Tabajdi, Marcello Vernola

PROCEDURE

Title	Agreement between the EC and Bosnia and Herzegovina on short-stay visas		
References	COM(2007)0423 - C6-0296/2007 - 2007/0140(CNS)		
Date of consulting Parliament	18.9.2007		
Committee responsible Date announced in plenary	LIBE 24.9.2007		
Committee(s) asked for opinion(s) Date announced in plenary	AFET 24.9.2007		
Rapporteur(s) Date appointed	Claudio Fava 3.10.2007		
Previous rapporteur(s)	Edith Mastenbroek		
Discussed in committee	10.9.2007	2.10.2007	9.10.2007
Date adopted	9.10.2007		
Result of final vote	+: 25	-: 3	0: 0
Members present for the final vote	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, Barbara Kudrycka, Claude Moraes, Inger Segelström, Károly Ferenc Szabó, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Manfred Weber, Tatjana Ždanoka		
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Simon Busuttil, Charlotte Cederschiöld, Evelyne Gebhardt, Ona Juknevičienė, Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann, Eva-Britt Svensson		