



**2016/0125(COD)**

7.7.2016

## **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 and those whose nationals are exempt from requirement (Ukraine) (COM(2016)0236 – C8-0150/2016 – 2016/0125(COD))

Rapporteur: Jacek Saryusz-Wolski

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## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Foreign Affairs Committee has repeatedly supported visa facilitation and visa liberalisation for Eastern Partnership countries, as an important instrument of EU's Foreign and Security Policy and as a way to promote people to people contacts and enhance relations with the EU. It is considered one of the main pillars of our policy, repeatedly highlighted in the Summits by heads of EU Member States, and giving a strong message of support to the citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries.

The Visa Liberalisation Dialogue with Ukraine was launched in October 2008, the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements having entered into force on 1 January 2008, and the former amended in 2013. In the past two years, Ukraine has achieved significant progress in implementing the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan, as recognised by the Commission in the last two progress reports.

Visa-free regime should be granted to Ukraine as soon as possible and without any further delays, in recognition of the progress the country has achieved on its European path since the EuroMaidan protests two years ago, where the Ukrainian nation fought for its European choice and European democratic values.

In order to further incentivise reform process, a monitoring mechanism should be introduced ensuring that EU has a leverage while monitoring continuous implementation of the anti-corruption and rule of law legislation. The currently considered suspension mechanism is not sufficient, as it focuses only on migration risks, and it should be completed by adding continued fulfilment of required standards and benchmarks.

The decision to grant the visa free regime to Ukraine should not be postponed until the establishment of the monitoring mechanism. The visa free regime should be granted now, however, with a reservation that the suspension mechanism will be automatically introduced as soon as its modalities are elaborated.

In the past two years, since EuroMaidan and the changes prompted by the protests, Ukraine has embarked on an ambitious and comprehensive reform path aiming to create a genuine democratic political system and properly functioning economy. The success of these reforms should enable Ukraine transition from a post-Soviet to a European state. Since 2014 Ukraine has seen an unprecedented reform effort. As the Commission recognised there was progress made in implementation of the required reforms, including in the field of fight against corruption, the reform of the prosecution office, reform of the judiciary, strengthening the democratic institutions and rule of law. However, these reforms have to be fully implemented. This task is still far from over. The new government needs to provide the necessary determination to further pursue reforms and the political stability, which, coupled with popular support, are paramount to its success. Granting visa free regime is a recognition of the effort and success in meeting all the benchmarks set in the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP). It is also a symbolic yet very tangible act of support from the EU addressed to Ukraine and its citizens.

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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 that Parliament adopts its position at first reading taking over the Commission proposal.

## PROCEDURE – COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Title</b>	Listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (Ukraine)
<b>References</b>	COM(2016)0236 – C8-0150/2016 – 2016/0125(COD)
<b>Committee responsible</b> Date announced in plenary	LIBE 28.4.2016
<b>Opinion by</b> Date announced in plenary	AFET 28.4.2016
<b>Rapporteur</b> Date appointed	Jacek Saryusz-Wolski 24.5.2016
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	14.6.2016
<b>Date adopted</b>	7.7.2016
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+ :                    42 - :                    3 0 :                    6
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Michèle Alliot-Marie, Petras Auštrevičius, Mario Borghezio, Elmar Brok, Klaus Buchner, James Carver, Lorenzo Cesa, Aymeric Chauprade, Andi Cristea, Arnaud Danjean, Mark Demesaemaker, Georgios Epitideios, Knut Fleckenstein, Anna Elzbieta Fotyga, Eugen Freund, Michael Gahler, Iveta Grigule, Richard Howitt, Sandra Kalniete, Tunne Kelam, Afzal Khan, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Andrey Kovatchev, Eduard Kukan, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Arne Lietz, Barbara Lochbihler, Ulrike Lunacek, Andrejs Mamikins, David McAllister, Francisco José Millán Mon, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Alojz Peterle, Tonino Picula, Kati Piri, Cristian Dan Preda, Jozo Radoš, Sofia Sakorafa, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Jaromír Štětina, László Tőkés, Ivo Vajgl, Hilde Vautmans, Boris Zala
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Laima Liucija Andrikiienė, Andrzej Grzyb, András Gyürk, Paavo Väyrynen, Janusz Zemke
<b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b>	Heidi Hautala