

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4336/07
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to the Commission

Subject: Visa facilitation and readmission agreement with Georgia

Last year the visa facilitation and readmission agreements with the Russian Federation were concluded successfully. The European Parliament was consulted on the agreements and adopted its position on 15 February 2007.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs, which gave an opinion to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, expressed concerns regarding the visa facilitation agreement, arguing in particular that the agreement could be used as an implicit recognition of separatist tendencies violating the territorial integrity of Georgia.

The residents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia who are in possession of Russian citizenship are automatically covered by the agreement. This means that they pay less for a visa to the EU than Georgian passport holders and have facilitated access to travel to and within the EU compared to Georgians. This is in direct contrast to the stated aims of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Moreover, it may lead to increased tensions in the breakaway regions and lessen incentives for a peaceful settlement, which is one of the priorities of the EU-Georgia European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan.

1. What steps is the Commission intending to take to neutralise the destabilising effects of the visa facilitation agreement with the Russian Federation on the Georgian breakaway regions?
2. What steps is the Commission intending to take to achieve the timely commencement of the negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Georgia?