

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3669/08
by Vural Öger (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Timetable for relaxing visa formalities or abolishing the visa requirement for Turkish nationals

Following the submission of the 'timetable for the abolition of the visa requirement' for Serbian nationals in May 2008, in future our Serbian neighbours will be able to enter the EU without a visa. In keeping with the Council conclusions of 28 January 2008, the Commission has opened a structured dialogue on the relaxation of visa formalities with Serbia, FYROM, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania. The abolition of the visa requirement for entry into the EU is the basis for closer links between the nationals of countries seeking to join the EU and EU citizens. Direct contact fosters mutual understanding and relations at all levels.

A relaxation of visa formalities might also help the citizens of our long-standing partner country Turkey establish closer links with people in the EU. Given that Turkey has been conducting accession negotiations with the EU since 2005, the relaxation of visa formalities, as a first step, and the abolition of the visa requirement, as a further step, for Turkish citizens would be desirable and would send out a positive message of openness.

Does the Commission plan to put forward a timetable for Turkey similar to those drawn up for the countries of the Western Balkans? If so, when might it do so? Why has no timetable for the relaxation of visa formalities for Turkey yet been put forward?