

WRITTEN QUESTION E-6100/08
by Petru Filip (PPE-DE)
to the Council

Subject: Visa waiver program - unequal treatment of Community citizens

President George W. Bush recently announced that visas would no longer be compulsory for the citizens of six Community countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic) wishing to enter the USA. According to the information provided on the White House website, a number of other EU Member States (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland and Romania) could shortly be included in the visa waiver program. Although the European Parliament has confirmed its support for the mandate the Council granted the Commission to negotiate an agreement guaranteeing visa-free travel for all EU citizens entering US territory, the recent announcement by the US President raises serious question marks over the EU's ability to impose a uniform approach for each of the Member States.

Viewed in the context of the principle of European solidarity, this process, which officials from the US administration have named the 'Visa Waiver Roadmap' would not seem to provide a means sufficient to ensure that the rights of all Community citizens are respected equally. Beyond reaffirming Community solidarity at a diplomatic level, what immediate strategy is the Council considering to ensure equal treatment for all EU citizens in this matter?