

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2690/07  
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to the Commission

Subject: EU - Georgia negotiations on concluding the visa facilitation and readmission agreements

Georgia is an important EU partner under the European neighbourhood policy. Its current Government has demonstrated clear European aspirations and strong commitments to reforms directed to European values, as well as a good capacity to implement them.

A lack of desire from the EU side for talks with Georgia on visa facilitation and readmission agreements is being observed. This contrasts distinctly with the successful conclusion of the EU visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Russia which will be put into effect from 1 June this year, as well as the EU negotiations with Ukraine completed in 2006, and negotiations with Moldova launched early this year.

Through simplification of the visa regime with Russia, residents of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are encouraged to obtain Russian citizenship and passports since they benefit from it, while the rest of the Georgian population is in a disadvantageous situation concerning travelling to the EU. One can question whether it is in the EU's interests to facilitate this trend towards the Georgian population obtaining Russian passports?

In addition, many EU countries do not have consulates in Georgia and often visas can only be obtained through Russia, which further complicates matters.

Simplification of the existing visa regime with Georgia has never been placed on the EU's agenda and, surprisingly, it seems that this country is being punished for aspiring to European values and reforms.

What is the Commission doing to accelerate the process of negotiations and conclusion of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Georgia, and what are the Commission's plans regarding these negotiations?