EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004 *2009*

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

PROVISIONAL
2007/0144(CNS)

20.9.2007

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DRAFT REPORT

on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Serbia on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas
(COM(2007)0422 – C6 0295/2007 – 2007/0144(CNS))

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Rapporteur: Edith Mastenbroek

Symbols for procedures

*	Consultation procedure *majority of the votes cast*
**I	Cooperation procedure (first reading) *majority of the votes cast*
**II	Cooperation procedure (second reading) *majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position* *majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend the common position*
***	Assent procedure *majority of Parliament's component Members except in cases covered by Articles 105, 107, 161 and 300 of the EC Treaty and Article 7 of the EU Treaty*
***I	Codecision procedure (first reading) *majority of the votes cast*
***II	Codecision procedure (second reading) *majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position* *majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend the common position*
***III	Codecision procedure (third reading) *majority of the votes cast, to approve the joint text*

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the Commission.)

Amendments to a legislative text

In amendments by Parliament, amended text is highlighted in ***bold italics***. Highlighting in *normal italics* is an indication for the relevant departments showing parts of the legislative text for which a correction is proposed, to assist preparation of the final text (for instance, obvious errors or omissions in a given language version). These suggested corrections are subject to the agreement of the departments concerned.

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DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Serbia on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas
(COM(2007)0422 – C6-0295/2007 – 2007/0144(CNS))

(Consultation procedure)

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the proposal for a Council decision (COM(2007)0422)[1],

– having regard to Articles 62(2)(b)(i) and (ii) and 300(2), first subparagraph, first sentence, of the EC Treaty,

– having regard to Article 300(3), first subparagraph, of the EC Treaty, pursuant to which to Council consulted Parliament (C6-0295/2007),

– having regard to Rules 51 and 83(7) of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A6-0000/2007),

1. Approves conclusion of the agreement;

2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council and Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Republic of Serbia.

[1] Not yet published in OJ.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE) approves conclusion of two, mutually conditional and parallel agreements with Serbia on readmission and facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas. The Committee welcomes these agreements, which together with forthcoming Visa Code, implementation of Visa Information System (VIS) and further cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs will extend an area of freedom and security reaching beyond EU. They are also concrete results of the improved relations between Serbia and the EU since the installation of a new Serb government.

The Committee believes that in the spirit of joint commitment and ownership, EU and Serbia can effectively fight illegal immigration and contribute to the development of democracy, rule of law, human rights and civil society by encouraging easier contact and travel of people between two contracting parties. In this context, the Committee welcomes previous decision by the Serbian authorities to abolish visa requirement for EU citizens and is of the opinion that European Union is still in search of adequate response to that decision.

As stated in its recommendation to the Council on relations between the European Union and Serbia, being currently discussed, the European Parliament calls on the Council, with the support of the Commission, to establish a concrete roadmap for visa-free movement and to adopt support measures designed to increase travel opportunities for a greater proportion of citizens, particularly young people. It emphasises the importance of mobility for the political and economic development of Serbia, since mobility grants people the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the EU and facilitates Serbia's European integration process; calls for greater participation in life-long learning and cultural exchange projects; invites the Council to consider establishing a common system for managing visa applications in such a way as to lighten the burden on the busiest consulates and to ensure that applications are processed within reasonable deadlines.

There is also room for improvement on the side of European Commission to launch an information campaign and to find means and ways to make all the necessary information easily accessible to all travellers in the light of these and other agreements concluded. So far, even Commission's website does not contain any systematic and transparent information on this subject.

It is strongly recommended for the committee monitoring implementation of these agreements as well as to the European Commission itself to identify any asymmetrical barriers preventing from reciprocate procedures becoming obstacles for travellers at the consulates, as well as, at the border crossings. In particular a study must be carried whether partial outsourcing of visa consular services may have an impact on the accessibility and possible undesired increase of visa prices or creating visa-shopping phenomenon.

Finally, the LIBE Committee expects from the European Commission to provide the Parliament with information on the results of the implementation of the agreements.