

MEPs urge Commission to press for full US-EU visa reciprocity

Plenary sessions [15-12-2016 - 10:23]

The EU Commission should comply with EU law by temporarily reintroducing visa requirements for US citizens, so as to encourage Washington to grant citizens of all EU countries visa-free access to the US, said a majority of MEPs in a debate in plenary on Wednesday.

Most speakers agreed that this is “a matter of principle” and stressed that EU rules require the Commission to present a delegated act to suspend an EU visa waiver if the country to which it was granted not offer full visa reciprocity to citizens of all EU member states. Some MEPs suggested that Parliament could bring this issue to the European Court of Justice.

Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos underlined that while the Commission has a legal obligation to act in cases of lack of visa reciprocity, it must “take account of the consequences” of its decisions. He assured MEPs that even announcing the reintroduction of visa requirements for US citizens would lead to “retaliation” and, furthermore, to a drop in visitor numbers and substantial losses of income and employment in the tourism sector.

Background

Under the visa reciprocity mechanism, which entered into force in January 2014, if a third country does not lift its visa requirements 24 months after being notified of non-reciprocity, the EU Commission must suspend the visa waiver for citizens of that country for 12 months, via a delegated act to which Parliament and the Council could object.

Following a notification of non-reciprocity on 12 April 2014, the Commission should have acted before 12 April 2016, but has yet to take any measures to reimpose visas on US and Canadian citizens.

Canada imposes visa requirements on citizens of Bulgaria and Romania (though it has pledged to lift them by the end of 2017) and the US imposes them on citizens of Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland and Romania. Recently passed US legislation could also affect citizens of all countries with certain dual nationalities.

You can catch up with the debate via [Plenary on Demand](#)

Further information

- Video recording of debate: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/video?debate=1481736968147>
- Regulation 1289/2013 amending Regulation 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement
: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R1289>
- State of play and the possible ways forward as regards the situation of non-reciprocity with certain third countries in the area of visa policy (Communication from the Commission, 13.07.2016)
: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/docs/situation_of_non-reciprocity_with_certain_third_countries_in_the_area_of_visa_policy_en.pdf

Political groups

- News pages of the EPP group
: <http://bit.ly/1WuQLqB>

Press release

- News pages of the S&D group
: <http://bit.ly/1WWG6F4>
- News pages of the ECR group
: <http://bit.ly/1Y0YFrj>
- News pages of the ALDE group
: <http://bit.ly/1XbSQs6>
- News pages of the GUE/NGL group
: <http://bit.ly/1UrAIM9>
- News pages of the Greens/EFA group
: <http://bit.ly/1TV9vvr>
- News pages of the EFDD group
: <http://bit.ly/2cxzxcR>
- News pages of the ENF group
: <http://bit.ly/2cxzxcR>

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