

Visa suspension mechanism: Parliament and Council negotiators strike a deal

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The EU Commission and member states will be able to reimpose visa requirements faster and more easily under new rules agreed by Parliament and Council negotiators on Wednesday.

Parliament's rapporteur for the proposal, [Agustín Díaz de Mera](#) (EPP, ES), noted that "the changes agreed provide flexibility for the rapid activation of the suspension mechanism". He also underlined that the deal "will facilitate the immediate consideration of the two visa liberalization proposals for Georgia and Ukraine."

According to the deal, visa requirements may be reintroduced for a non-EU country in one or more of the following cases:

- a substantial increase in the number of nationals of that country refused entry or irregularly staying in the EU territory,
- a substantial increase in unfounded asylum applications, or
- a lack of cooperation on readmissions (returns of migrants).

Visas could also be reintroduced in the event of threats to public policy or internal security related to nationals of the third country concerned.

The informal deal was backed by the Civil Liberties Committee on Thursday by 37 votes to 9, with 2 abstentions. The text still needs to be endorsed by Parliament as a whole, probably next week, and national governments.

The review of the visa suspension mechanism, which has existed since 2013, is linked to the proposals to grant visa-free access to the EU to Ukraine, Georgia and Kosovo, currently under discussion.

How it works

Under the draft law, both member states and the European Commission will be able to trigger the suspension mechanism. The Commission will be in charge of monitoring the situation in visa-exempt countries and reporting to Parliament and the Council on whether they still fulfill visa waiver conditions such as respect for human rights.

Following a notification by a member state (or a request by a simple majority of member states), or based on its own report, the Commission will have one month in which to decide to suspend the visa waiver for nine months. This decision will take effect automatically.

During the suspension period, the Commission should try, together with the country concerned, to find solutions to the circumstances that led to the suspension.

Prolonging a temporary restoration of visa requirements

If the situation persists, the Commission will have to present, at the latest two months before the end of the nine-month period, a proposal to prolong the temporary restoration of visa requirements for an additional period of 18 months. Both MEPs and member states can object to this decision.

Press release

The Commission may also decide at any point to present a legislative proposal to move a non-EU country from the list of countries exempted of visa requirements to the list of those that are subject to them.

Targeting categories of third country nationals

The suspension of the visa waiver may target certain categories of nationals of the third country concerned. The draft text stresses, however, that categories will have to be sufficiently large to address the specific problems detected while being proportionate to the threat.

The visa suspension mechanism will not apply to the UK or Ireland.

Further information

- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/libe/home.html>
- Profile of rapporteur Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra (EPP, ES):
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28397/AGUSTIN_DIAZ+DE+MERA+GARCIA+CONSUEGRA_home.html
- Procedure page:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2016/0142%28COD%29&I=EN>

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