

Adopted resolution

VISA LIBERALISATION FOR WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES

The EU has adopted a Regulation listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders (the so-called 'negative list') and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (the so-called 'positive list').

Until now Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, F.Y.R.O.Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo have been included in the negative list obliging the citizens of these countries who wished to travel to the European Union to undergo long, complicated, expensive and often humiliating procedures to obtain a visa.

On July 15th, 2009 the European Commission has proposed to the Council to transfer F.Y.R.O.Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia from the negative list to the positive list - and, if certain benchmarks are fulfilled, to grant visa-liberalisation as of Jan. 1st, 2010.

European Greens have welcomed the proposal for the three countries but have criticized that this proposal - if it remains closed to the other countries of the region - risks to create a deep divide in the Western Balkans undermining the full resumption of regional cooperation and jeopardising the development of the Stabilisation and Association process.

The impact of this proposal on Bosnia-Herzegovina could be devastating dealing a further blow to the fragile institutional framework of this country since Bosnian Croats and, in the future, Bosnian Serbs that already enjoy double citizenship and hold two passports will be able to travel freely to the EU while for Bosniacs an EU visa will still be required.

All the countries of the region have made and are making substantial progress in meeting the conditions set by the Commission in order to grant a visa-waiver status. Also Kosovo is on the way to adopt substantial measures in order to be ready to start a visa-liberalisation dialogue with the EU - even if some EU-member countries have not recognized Kosovo's independence yet.

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on Oct. 6th 2009 has adopted an opinion to the European Parliament's report to the Commission's proposal to the Council Regulation (to be discussed and adopted in the Committee of Justice and Home Affairs on November 19th and then in the EP Plenary in November) in which the Foreign Affairs Committee clearly demands the inclusion of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania into the positive list and also the initiation of a dialogue on a roadmap to visa-liberalisation for Kosovo to be included into the Regulation.

The European Greens

1. Express their firm support for the process of integration of the Western Balkans countries into the European Union;
2. Call on the European Parliament and the Council to modify the proposal of the Commission and include also Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the list of those countries whose nationals are exempt from visa as soon as all technical requirements are met;
3. Urge the Commission to start as soon as possible a visa liberalisation dialogue with Kosovo is to be started with a view to adopting a roadmap for visa liberalisation and preparing and assisting this country in implementing all the measures that are necessary so that its nationals are exempt from visa.