



MEPs back relaxation of visa rules for Georgia and Taiwan

[DICO] Commission: Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Georgian citizens will be able to obtain EU entry visas more easily and Taiwanese nationals will need no visa at all to enter the EU, under proposals supported on Tuesday by the EP Civil Liberties Committee. MEPs also gave their backing to an agreement with Tbilisi on the readmission of irregular immigrants. These measures will be put to the vote at Parliament's November plenary session in Brussels.

The visa accord with Georgia will simplify the documents required for Georgian nationals who wish to obtain an EU visa. A decision on whether or not to issue a visa will have to be taken within 10 days of the application's being lodged and the fee charged will be €35. Some people will require no visa, such as students, journalists and people taking part in cultural, artistic, scientific and sports events.

The Civil Liberties Committee approved the agreement on the basis of a report by Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE, FR) which was adopted overwhelmingly, with only one vote against. A second report by the same MEP, approved by 42 votes to 6, backs a separate agreement on the readmission of irregular immigrants. On the basis of complete reciprocity, Georgia and the EU will have to take back any of their nationals who are in an irregular situation as well as nationals of third countries and stateless persons where it is proved that the person holds a visa for the signatory state or has resided or transited through that state.

The two agreements will enter into force a month after ratification by both parties.

Visa liberalisation with Taiwan

A third report adopted near-unanimously on Tuesday, with only one vote against, supports a move to transfer Taiwan onto the list of countries exempt from EU visa controls. Rapporteur Agustín Díaz de Mera (EPP, ES) points out that "the liberalisation of visas for Taiwan will enable trade ties to develop" and that the EU has "already granted this exemption to other countries and entities in the same geographical area and at a similar level of economic development, such as Hong Kong, Macau, Japan, South Korea and Singapore". Taiwan currently does not require visas for nationals of most EU Member States, the exceptions being Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria. However, the Taiwanese authorities have undertaken to exempt these countries completely by the end of 2010.

*In the chair: Juan Fernando LÓPEZ AGUILAR (S&D, ES)
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Contact :

Baptiste CHATAIN

LIBE

BXL: (+32) 2 28 40992

STR: (+33) 3 881 74005

PORT: (+32) 498 98 35 90

EMAIL: libe-press@europarl.europa.eu