

Georgia visa waiver approved by Parliament

Plenary sessions [02-02-2017 - 12:09]

Georgian citizens will be able to enter the Schengen area without a visa for short stays, under a new law passed by Parliament on Thursday.

The legislation still needs to be formally approved by the Council and will only enter into force once the suspension mechanism, which allows the temporary reintroduction of visas in the event of migration surges or risks to public security, is in place.

Parliament's rapporteur for the proposal, [Mariya Gabriel \(EPP, BG\)](#), acknowledged the "broad and complex reforms" carried out by Georgia in order to get the visa waiver and thanked the country's authorities and citizens for their consistency and patience. She also congratulated them on the strength of their democratic conviction and noted that the visa exemption brings the country closer to the EU.

Under the visa exemption, endorsed in plenary by 553 votes to 66, with 28 abstentions, Georgians who hold a biometric passport will have the right to enter the EU visa-free for 90 days in any 180-day period, for business, tourist or family purposes, but not to work.

Tbilisi has complied with all the benchmarks of its visa liberalisation plan, the text notes, underlining that "continuous fulfilment by Georgia of such criteria, especially on the fight against organised crime, will be duly monitored by the Commission."

The visa waivers apply to the Schengen area, which includes 22 EU member states (all except Ireland, the UK, Croatia, Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria), plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Next steps

The legal change transferring Georgia from the list of countries whose nationals need a visa to enter the EU (the "negative" list) to the list of countries exempted from this requirement (the "positive" list) will have now to be approved by the Council of Ministers. Following its formal signature, the text will be published in the EU Official Journal.

The visa waiver for Georgia will enter into force on the same date as the revised suspension mechanism, [approved by Parliament](#) on 15 December but still pending finalisation of the official translation of the legal texts.

Procedure: Ordinary legislative procedure, first reading agreement

Further information

- Adopted text 2016/0075(COD) will soon be available here (02.02.2017)

: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>

Press release

- Video recording of debate (click on 02.02.22017)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- EbS+
: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm?sitelang=en&page=3&institution=0&date=02/02/2017>
- Lists of third countries whose nationals must be in possession of a visa when crossing the external borders and of those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (European Commission)
: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/apply_for_a_visa/docs/visa_lists_en.pdf
- Audiovisual material for media
: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/visa-policy>
- Procedure file
:
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2016%2f0075%28COD%29>

Political groups

- News pages of the EPP group
: <http://bit.ly/1WuQLqB>
- News pages of the S&D group
: <http://bit.ly/1WWG6F4>
- News pages of the ECR group
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