Third countries whose nationals are subject to or exempt from a visa requirement: Ukraine

2016/0125(COD) - 29/09/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted the report by Mariya GABRIEL (EPP, BG) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 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 (Ukraine).

The committee recommended the European Parliament to adopt its position at first reading, taking over the Commission proposal.

In the explanatory memorandum attached to the draft legislative resolution, the rapporteur welcomed the Commission proposal and stressed the need for close monitoring of the visa liberalisation dialogue.

The rapporteur pointed out that the current refusal rate for EU visas for Ukrainian citizens is below 2%. Moreover, the EU-Ukraine readmission agreement on the return of irregular migrants is one of the most effective readmission agreements with a return rate of over 80%, demonstrating an excellent degree of cooperation in this area that makes it possible to mitigate migration risks.

The rapporteur stated that, by voting in favour of this Commission proposal, the European Parliament will be confirming the principle whereby every country that meets all the benchmarks can benefit from visa liberalisation, while pointing out that the criteria which led to this liberalisation must continue to be met after the decision has entered into force. The European Unions credibility and reliability as a partner for third countries, and particularly for neighbouring countries that have embarked on a European course, depend on compliance with this method. This method reflects the respect given to the rule of law and the pre-eminence of law and international law as a fundamental principle of the European Union, including in the context of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sebastopol by the Russian Federation.

In conclusion, taking into account the consideration of the criteria set out in the visa liberalisation action plan and the significance of visa liberalisation for European and Ukrainian citizens, the rapporteur recommended the Parliament to support this proposal.