

Visas: third countries whose nationals are subject to or exempt from a visa requirement

2010/0192(COD) - 15/12/2010 - Final act

PURPOSE: to delete Taiwan and Northern Mariana Islands from Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders of Member States and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EU) No 1211/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council 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.

CONTENT: following an agreement at first reading with the European Parliament, the Council adopted this Regulation deleting Taiwan and Northern Marina Islands from the list of third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders of the EU.

The Regulation states that the imposition of the visa requirement on the citizens of Taiwan is no longer justified, as, in particular, the territory does not represent any risk of illegal immigration or threat to public policy for the Union. Visa liberalisation will apply only to holders of passports issued by Taiwan which include an identity card number.

The reference to Northern Mariana is deleted from Annex I, as the citizens of the territory in question are, as holders of US passports, citizens of the United States, which is listed in Annex II to that Regulation.

Accordingly, Taiwanese holding passports which include an identity card number will be able to travel to and throughout the Schengen area without a visa.

The visa free regime concerns stays of up to 90 days. The visa waiver granted to Taiwanese is fully reciprocated. Taiwan decided on 11 November 2010 to lift the visa requirement for citizens of Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania, the remaining three EU Schengen Member States whose citizens had not profited from visa free travels to Taiwan yet.

The visa waiver is implemented despite the fact that the EU does not recognise Taiwan as a sovereign state and has no diplomatic or formal relations with Taiwan. The EU has, however, developed regular contacts and cooperation in economic, trade, research, science and technology, education and culture as well as environmental issues with the Taiwanese authorities. As a result, the EU is the largest foreign investor in Taiwan. Granting Taiwanese visa free access to the EU will reinforce regional coherence as the EU grants visa free regime to other countries and entities of the region having a similar level of economic development, such as Hong Kong, Macao, Japan, South Korea and Singapore.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 11/01/2011.