EU/Georgia Agreement: facilitation of the issuance of visas

2010/0106(NLE) - 18/01/2011 - Final act

PURPOSE: to conclude the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Decision 2011/117/EU on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas.

BACKGROUND: in accordance with Council Decision 2010/706/EU, the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas was signed, on behalf of the European Union, on 17 June 2010, subject to its conclusion at a later date.

It is now appropriate to conclude this Agreement and to provide for a simplified procedure for the establishment of the Union position in this case.

CONTENT: this Decision approves the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas.

The main elements of the Agreement may be summarised as follows:

- **setting rules applicable to the issuing of visas for all visa applicants**, a decision on whether or not to issue a visa will have to be taken within 10 calendar days. This period may be extended up to 30 calendar days when further scrutiny is needed. In urgent cases, the period for taking a decision may be reduced to three working days or less;
- **setting the visa fee for processing applications of Georgian citizens**:this fee shall amount to **€35**. It will be applied to all Georgian visa applicants and concerns both single and multiple-entry visas. Moreover, certain categories of persons benefit from a full waiving of the visa fee: pensioners, close relatives, members of national and regional governments, members of official delegations participating in government activities, students, disabled persons, journalists, representatives of civil society, children under the age of 12, humanitarian cases and persons participating in scientific, cultural, artistic activities and sport events;
- **definition of the documents to be presented regarding the purpose of the journey**: these have been simplified for some categories of persons: close relatives, business people, members of official delegations, students, participants in scientific, cultural and sporting events, journalists, persons visiting military and civil burials, representatives of civil society, members of the professions drivers conducting international cargo and passenger transportation services and persons visiting for medical reasons. For these categories of persons, only the documents listed in the agreement can be requested for justifying the purpose of the journey. No other justification, invitation or validation provided for by the legislation of the Member States is required;
- **setting the simplified criteria for issuing multiple-entry visas**: the simplified criteria shall be used for the following categories of persons: (i) for members of national and regional Governments, Constitutional and Supreme Court, permanent members of official delegations and spouses and children visiting citizens of Georgia legally residing in the Member States: visa valid up to five years (or shorter, limited to the period of the validity of their mandate or authorisation for legal residence); (ii) participants in scientific, cultural, official exchange programmes and sport events, journalists, students, business people, representatives of civil society, members of the professions and drivers, provided that during the previous two years they have made good use of 1 year

multiple-entry visas and the reasons for requesting a multiple entry are still valid: visas valid for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 5 years are issued;

- **setting specific rules for citizens of Georgia who are holders of valid diplomatic passports**: these people shall beexempt from the visa requirement for short-stays.

Territorial application: Ireland and Denmark are not taking part in the adoption of this Decision and are not bound by it or subject to its application.

It should be noted that since the two agreements on readmission are linked, both agreements should be concluded and enter into force simultaneously.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: the Decision shall enter into force on 18 January 2011. The Agreement shall enter into force on 1 March 2011.