

EU/Azerbaijan Agreement: facilitation of the issuance of visas

2013/0356(NLE) - 14/04/2014 - Final act

PURPOSE: to conclude an agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan aiming to facilitate the issuance of visas.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Decision 2014/242/EU on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the facilitation of the issuance of visas.

BACKGROUND: in accordance with Council Decision 2013/695/EU, the Agreement between the European Union and Azerbaijan on the facilitation of the issuance of visas was signed on 29 November 2013, subject to its conclusion. The Agreement should be approved.

CONTENT: the Decision provides that the Council, after obtaining the approval of the European Parliament, concludes, on behalf of the EU, the Agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan on visa facilitation.

Terms of the Agreement: the main provisions are as follows:

- 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 two working days or less. As a rule, the visa applicants can have an appointment for lodging their application within a period of two weeks from the date of request and in cases of urgency immediately or without an appointment;
- the visa fee for processing applications shall amount to **EUR 35**. This fee will be applied to all visa applicants and concerns both single and multiple-entry visas. Moreover, certain categories of persons benefit from a full waiver of the visa fee;
- the documents to be presented regarding the purpose of the journey have been **simplified for some categories of persons** for whom only the documents listed in the Agreement may be requested for justifying the purpose of the journey. No other justification, invitation or validation provided for by the legislation of the Member States or Azerbaijan will be required;
- **simplified criteria for issuing multiple-entry visas** for the following categories of persons:
 - (i) for permanent members of official delegations and spouses and children visiting citizens of the EU legally residing in the territory of Azerbaijan or citizens of Azerbaijan legally residing in the Member States or EU citizens residing in the territory of the Member States of which they are nationals or citizens of Azerbaijan residing in the territory of Azerbaijan: visas valid for five years (or shorter, limited to the period of the validity of their mandate or authorisation for legal residence);
 - (ii) participants in scientific, cultural, and sport events, in accordance with the conditions set out: **visas valid for a minimum of two years and a maximum of 5 years are issued;**
- citizens of Azerbaijan who are holders of a **valid diplomatic passport** will not require a visa for short stays.

Other provisions: the Agreement also contains a series of technical provisions including a Joint Declaration reaffirming that the Agreement does not affect the ability of individual Member States and Azerbaijan to conclude bilateral Visa Waiver Agreements for holders of service passports.

Territorial provisions: the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark will not take part in the adoption of the Agreement and are not bound by it or subject to its application.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 14.04.2014. The date of entry into force of the Agreement will be published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* by the General Secretariat of the Council.