

# EU/Trinidad and Tobago Agreement: short-stay visa waiver

2015/0054(NLE) - 16/11/2015 - 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 draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the short-stay visa waiver.

The committee recommended the European Parliament to **give its consent** to the conclusion of the Agreement.

To recall, the Agreement signed on 28 May 2015 provides for **visa-free travel** for the citizens of the European Union and for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago when travelling to the territory of the other Contracting Party for **a maximum period of 90 days in any 180-day period**. The visa waiver covers all categories of persons (ordinary, diplomatic, service/official and special passport holders) travelling for all kinds of purposes, except for the purpose of carrying out a paid activity.

The report is accompanied by a short justification stating that this agreement on the waiver of short-stay visas simultaneously represents a **culmination of the deepening of relations** between the European Union and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago – which is politically highly significant in the context of the Cotonou Agreement – and is an **additional way of stepping up economic and cultural relations** and intensifying political dialogue on various issues, including human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- **In the economic sphere**, the EU is ranked second among the trading partners of Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago has one of the most dynamic and prosperous economies in CARICOM, because of the oil and gas resources, the high levels of direct investment and growing tourism. It seeks to promote a diversified and competitive economy based on technology, innovation and growth. The visa waiver will simplify conditions for travel by businesspeople and will facilitate investment.
- **As regards the political and institutional situation**, civil and political rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and respected in the country. Trinidad and Tobago is a stable, democratic country, which, like the European Union, defends the values and principles of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law. This agreement will make it possible to cooperate in such fundamental fields as human rights and to pursue a balanced, regular, in-depth political dialogue on more specific issues such as abolition of the death penalty or promoting the rights of women and children. These two issues remain the Union's priorities.
- **As regards mobility**, the visa refusal rate in 2014 being around 0.3%. Trinidad and Tobago is therefore a country which does not present the slightest risk of clandestine immigration into the EU or irregular migration or any threat to security and public policy.

As regards the **implementation and monitoring of the agreement**, the rapporteur:

- called on the Commission to observe any developments in relation to the **criteria** regarding clandestine immigration, public policy and security, including, considerations relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- urged the Commission and the authorities of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure **full reciprocity of the visa waiver**, which should permit equal treatment of all citizens, particularly all citizens of the Union;

- encouraged the Commission to **review the composition of the joint management committees** for future agreements to enable the European Parliament to be involved in the work of these committees.

Lastly, the rapporteur also queried the practice of signing visa waiver agreements and applying them provisionally before the European Parliament has approved them, a practice which is liable to reduce Parliament's room for manoeuvre.