

EU/Grenada Agreement: short-stay visa waiver

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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 Grenada 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 Grenada 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 Grenada – 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**, Grenada, whose economy is heavily dependent on exports of bananas and spices, has taken measures to transform and substantially diversify the economy, in particular with tourism and construction gaining ground. Like all small island developing countries, Grenada faces many challenges because of its size, remoteness from markets. Visa liberalisation will simplify travel and make it possible to dynamise tourism and impart fresh impetus to trade.
- **As regards the political and institutional situation**, Grenada 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. The country stresses its commitment to human rights and is committed to improving its human rights machinery. Recent proposals for constitutional reform to promote and protect human rights, and the legislative reforms which have been undertaken, particularly the adoption of the new law on family violence and a new law on child protection. The conclusion of this agreement will make it possible to step up cooperation and intensify dialogue in many fields, including that of human rights.
- **With regard to mobility**, with the rate of refusal of visas being low, the country does not present any threat in terms either of irregular migration or of 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 Grenada 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.