

Third countries whose nationals are subject to or exempt from a visa requirement: Georgia

2016/0075(COD) - 09/09/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted a report by Mariya GABRIEL (EPP, BG) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending 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 (Georgia).

Parliament recommended the European Parliament to adopt its position at first reading, **taking over the Commission proposal**.

The proposal aims to amend [Regulation No 539/2001](#) and to transfer Georgia to Annex II, which establishes the list of third countries whose nationals are exempt from the requirement to obtain visas in order to cross the external borders of the Member States.

In the explanatory statement accompanying the report, it is stressed that Georgia is a strategic partner for the EU in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and in particular of the Eastern Partnership.

The Association Agreement between the EU and Georgia signed in 2014 has brought relations to a new level by enhancing the cooperation in wide range of fields. The Association Agreement constitutes an integral part of the EU policy of a sequenced engagement with Georgia and its commitment to a close relationship that encompasses political association and economic integration.

The Association Agreement intensified cooperation also by establishing a **free trade area**. As consequence trade with the EU has significantly increased and the EU became Georgia's most important commercial partner, representing 30% of its exports.

As regards the political and institutional situation, Georgia is **relatively stable democracy**. It may also become a key partner in the fight against organised crime, including trafficking in human beings, terrorism and corruption.

In terms of **mobility**, the potential migratory and security challenges have to be considered given the fact that the EU remains an attractive destination for migrants from Georgia. According to the latest statistics by Eurostat in 2014 the number of entry refusals at the external borders of EU 28 decreased by 61% compared to 2013, and by 56.5% in 2015.