Obligations in the field of visa reciprocity

2016/2986(RSP) - 02/05/2017 - Follow-up document

This Communication is the Commission's position taken following the European Parliament Resolution of 2 March 2017 on obligations of the Commission in the field of visa reciprocity, in accordance with Article 1(4) of Regulation (EC) No 539/2001.

In this non-legislative resolution, Parliament considered that the Commission was legally obliged to adopt a delegated act to temporarily suspend the exemption from the visa requirement for nationals of third countries which have not lifted the visa requirement for citizens of certain Member States by the deadline of 12 April 2016. It also called on the Commission to adopt the required delegated act within two months from the date of adoption of the resolution at the latest.

The Commission remains committed to **achieving full visa reciprocity for all Member States**. However, in the light of the progress made over the past year and the ongoing work, it considered that the adoption of a **delegated act** temporarily suspending the exemption from the visa requirement for nationals of Canada and the United States would be counterproductive at this moment and it **would not serve to achieve the objective** of visa free travel for all EU citizens.

The Commission highlighted the following points:

- Canada: the **Canadian government announced the lifting of the visa requirement from 1 May 2017 for Bulgarian and Romanian citizens** who have held a Canadian temporary resident visa in the past 10 years or who currently hold a valid United States non-immigrant visa.

An update on the state of play of the implementation of the lifting of the visa requirement was provided by Canada during the Joint Consultations on Migration and Asylum held on 28 April 2017 in Brussels between the Commission and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The Commission will remain in close contact with Bulgaria, Romania and Canada, both at technical and political level, to ensure that full visa reciprocity is achieved by 1 December 2017.

- United States: during the last months, political and technical contacts have been stepped up. Following a meeting with Minister of Homeland Security, John F. Kelly, in Washington on 8 February 2017, US Department of State interlocutors agreed to launch a **result oriented process** towards bringing the five Member States into the Visa Waiver Program.

The Commission considered that this **process**, which the Commission is handling in close cooperation with the five Member States concerned, is as things stand, the **most appropriate way forward**. In this context, it is essential to ensure that the European Union speaks with **one voice** on this important matter.

The Commission will continue to work closely with both the European Parliament and the Council to achieve full visa reciprocity and report on the further developments **before the end of December 2017**.