Resolution on the accession to the Schengen area

2023/2668(RSP) - 12/07/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 526 votes to 57, with 42 abstentions, a resolution on the accession to the Schengen area.

Every day around 3.5 million people cross internal borders to work, study or visit families and friends and almost 1.7 million people reside in one Schengen country while working in another. Europeans make an estimated 1.25 billion journeys within the Schengen area yearly, which greatly benefits the tourism and cultural sector.

For more than a decade, Romania and Bulgaria have not enjoyed the full benefits of the Schengen area due to the fact that they are still not full members, even though they have fulfilled all the obligations established in the Schengen acquis.

The non-accession of Romania and Bulgaria into Schengen represents an important societal and economic burden for the businesses and population of the two countries.

All citizens of Bulgaria and Romania are discriminated against because they face delays, excessive bureaucratic burden and additional costs when travelling or doing business abroad, compared to their counterparts from the Schengen countries. Moreover, the veto on the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area can lead to anti-European sentiment in these countries, thereby leading to a decline in confidence in the EU project and its institutions.

In its 8th of December 2022 deliberations, the Council did not support the decision on the full application of the Schengen acquis in Romania and Bulgaria, in spite of the positive evaluation by the Commission, which underlined that Romania and Bulgaria continue to fulfil all criteria for fully acceding the Schengen area.

In its resolution Parliament reiterated, in line with its long-standing position as set out in its previous resolutions on the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area, its strong support for the enlargement of the Schengen area to include Romania and Bulgaria based on the fact that these countries have already demonstrated compliance with the necessary criteria, their effective fulfilment of Schengen obligations and the positive contribution they already bring to the Schengen area.

It expressed deep regret about the outcome of the deliberations, resulting in Romania and Bulgaria being denied accession to the Schengen area, without any legal justification related to accession criteria having been presented. It considered that this outcome was motivated by national domestic political campaigns rather than the actual accession criteria.

Parliament also regretted and pointed out with deep concern that the negative decision on the Schengen membership of Romania and Bulgaria is instrumentalised by anti-EU propaganda, including Russian propaganda, to the detriment of the EU’s foreign policy goals.

The Council is called on to:

- fulfil its loyal cooperation obligations under Article 13 TEU in its relationship with the Commission and the European Parliament and express its good faith to act on the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area;

- respect Article 4(2) of the 2005 Act on the accession of the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU and vote, without further delay and no later than the end of 2023, in favour of the accession of the two countries and their full application of the Schengen acquis solely on the basis of their fulfilment of the Schengen criteria;

- take note that the collateral and irreparable damage, such as that produced by the increase in CO2 emissions generated by the millions of vehicles per year waiting for hours at border controls, is in stark contrast with the Union’s climate neutrality goals;

- give high priority to this topic during the Spanish Presidency and to schedule a vote on this matter in 2023;

Parliament called on the Commission to estimate the financial losses, missed gains and environmental damage incurred by Romania and Bulgaria, as well as by the Union as a whole, since 2011 due to the fact that Romania and Bulgaria are not Schengen members. The Commission should analyse possible mechanisms for the compensation of these financial losses. The Commission is also urged to analyse all possible procedures to defend the right to free movement of Romanian and Bulgarian citizens.