

Visas: nationals of a Member State, reciprocity mechanism to be used by a third country on the list in Annex II

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The committee adopted the report by Henrik LAX (ALDE, FI) amending the proposal under the consultation procedure:

- to reinforce solidarity between the Member States, the directive should clearly state that "reciprocity should be the guiding principle for the Commission in its efforts to establish visa-free travel";
- where a third country introduces a visa requirement, the Member State concerned should have more time (90 days rather than 10 days as proposed) in which to negotiate on a bilateral basis with that country for the withdrawal of the requirement, before having to notify the Commission;
- the European Parliament should be able to give its opinion on a proposal for the temporary restoration of the visa requirement for nationals of the third country in question. Should the EP disagree with the proposal, the Commission should re-examine it and subsequently submit a new one or continue the procedure, giving the reasons for its action. Parliament should also be kept informed of the mechanism at all stages;
- MEPs wanted to rectify what they saw as a weakness in the proposed mechanism, in that there was no provision for a follow-up if the Commission chose not to act after 6 months. They therefore added a second period of 6 months in which the Commission can make further efforts to restore visa-free travel, following which it would be required to propose further action, meaning either the temporary restoration of the visa requirement for nationals of the third country in question or "another appropriate measure in the external field";
- the concept of reciprocity as proposed by the Commission was too narrow, as the mechanism would apply only in cases where third countries introduce or maintain a visa requirement. The committee therefore introduced a second reciprocity mechanism applicable to conditions and procedures for issuing visas introduced by a third country, "the effect of which is substantially to limit the movement of nationals of a Member State ".