



No imminent threat to visa-free travel from US to Europe , says ETOA

3 March 2017

The European Parliament voted on 2nd March 2017 to require the European Commission to suspend visa exemption status for US citizens [1].

In ETOA's view this is extremely unlikely to happen: the Council of the EU will object and the status quo will prevail.

The situation arises because, since 2014, citizens of Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland and Romania have needed a visa to visit the US. This means that there is not full reciprocity in treatment of EU and US citizens.

EU legislation provides for a 'delegated act' allowing the Commission to suspend exemption from visa requirements in the event of 'non-reciprocity.' This would apply to citizens of countries that impose visa requirement on EU citizens.

The Commission asked Parliament and Council to review the situation in April 2016 [2].

Article 290 of the Treaty of Lisbon allows both the Council and Parliament to revoke such a delegated act, or object to its implementation. Given the Parliamentary vote, attention now switches to the Council.

Tom Jenkins, ETOA's CEO commented:

"There is no imminent threat to current US-Europe visa waiver arrangements. So long as the US requires visas from some citizens of the EU, then the EU - as a whole - is obliged to reciprocate. The European Parliament is exploring the nature of that obligation.

Seldom has an inter-institutional dialogue contained such startling ideas. If the visa exemption were to be suspended it would inflict burdensome checks on the citizens of our most valuable ally, to certain retaliation and consequent economic detriment. Destination countries would have to hire thousands of staff to process millions of unnecessary visas.

At a time when absurdity and politics are bedfellows, we are being asked to contemplate folly cubed. The Council needs to block this quickly. Then the Commission can return to establishing reciprocity quietly, through the normal diplomatic channels."

ETOA continues to work with its industry partners in Brussels to resist any reintroduction of visa requirements, and pushes for visa facilitation through reform of the Visa Code.

With the prospect of ETIAS, a new pre-clearance system designed to enhance security, ETOA believes that the case for more countries to be granted visa-waiver status will strengthen [3].

[ENDS]

[1] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdfs/news/expert/infopress/20170227IPR64156/20170227IPR64156_en.pdf

[2] <http://www.etoa.org/media/all-news/news-item/european-commission-proposes-suspension-of-schengen-visa-waivers-for-us-and-canadian-visitors>

[3] <http://www.etoa.org/media/all-news/news-item/new-controls-for-visa-free-visitors-to-schengen-zone#latest-news>

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www.etoa.org

Media Enquiries

David Tarsh, Public Relations Advisor

david@tarsh.com

+44 (0)207 6025262