

# Visa non-reciprocity: Commission takes stock of progress and developments

Visa reciprocity is a fundamental principle of the European Union's common visa policy, and the Commission remains fully committed to achieving visa free travel to the United States for all EU Member States as a matter of priority. To this end, the Commission will continue to engage with the United States, in coordination with the five Member States whose citizens still need a visa to travel to the United States, in a result-oriented process.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs, and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Achieving visa reciprocity for all EU Member States is our top priority. Recent experience shows that a continued diplomatic engagement brings positive results and we will stick to this approach also with the United States. Visa-free travel is in the interest of both sides of the Atlantic, and we expect concrete actions on all sides to accelerate progress to achieve this."*

Over the last 12 months, contacts with the United States have intensified, both at political and at technical level. The Commission has continued to urge the United States to cooperate further with the five Member States concerned: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland and Romania to accelerate progress towards full visa reciprocity. Visa reciprocity was discussed at all official meetings between the EU and the U.S., including the two recent EU-U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meetings – held in [Sofia in May 2018](#) and in [Washington D.C. in November 2018](#).

The Commission will continue to actively support the Member States concerned, including through financial assistance, and to work closely with them to help them fulfil the requirements of the U.S. Visa Waiver Program.

The Commission maintains its position that cooperation and joint diplomatic engagement is the most appropriate way forward. The Commission still considers that adopting a delegated act temporarily suspending the visa waiver for U.S. citizens would be counterproductive at this moment and would not help achieve visa-free travel for all EU citizens. This position can be reviewed in light of future developments.

## **Next Steps**

The Commission will continue to actively support the Member States concerned and to intensify contacts with the U.S. to achieve full visa reciprocity. The EU-U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Senior Officials' Meeting and the Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meeting, both scheduled for the first half of 2019, will provide occasions to advance further.

The Commission will continue to work closely with both the European Parliament and the Council to achieve full visa reciprocity and will report on the further developments in September 2019.

## Background

A fundamental principle of EU visa policy is to ensure that third countries on the visa-free list grant a reciprocal visa waiver to citizens of all EU Member States. To support this objective, a visa reciprocity mechanism was set up.

In the framework of the reciprocity mechanism, the Commission has already adopted three reports assessing the situation: on [10 October 2014](#), on [22 April 2015](#) and on [5 November 2015](#), as well as six Communications in [April](#), [July](#) and [December](#) 2016, [May](#) and [December](#) 2017, and today's Communication of 19 December 2018.

The number of non-reciprocity cases has been vastly reduced in the last three-and-a-half years, with the U.S. now being the only country in the EU's visa-free list which does not grant visa-free access to all EU citizens. Full visa reciprocity was achieved with Canada after it lifted visa requirements for Romanian and Bulgarian citizens as of 1 December 2017. Similar results were already achieved with Australia, Brunei and Japan.

For More Information

[Questions and Answers](#): EU visa reciprocity mechanism

[Communication](#): State of play and way forward as regards the situation of non-reciprocity in the area of visa policy