

Visa policy: Council confirms agreement on changes to the visa code

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The EU is updating its visa rules to improve conditions for legitimate travellers and increase the tools available to respond to the challenges posed by illegal migration.

EU ambassadors today confirmed on behalf of the Council the informal agreement reached between representatives of the European Parliament and the Romanian Presidency of the Council on the proposal amending the visa code.

Better conditions for legitimate travellers

New rules will provide faster and clearer procedures for legitimate travellers, notably by:

- allowing for the lodging of applications up to 6 months and no later than 15 days before the trip
- providing for the possibility of filling in and signing the application form electronically
- introducing a harmonised approach to issuing multiple entry visas to regular travellers with a positive visa history for a period which increases gradually from 1 to 5 years.

Covering costs of processing

To ensure member states can better cover the costs of visa processing without constituting a deterrent for visa applicants, the visa fee will be increased to 80 euros.

The regulation also introduces a mechanism to assess every three years the need to revise the amount of the visa fee.

Better cooperation on readmission of irregular migrants

The regulation should also contribute to improving cooperation with third countries on readmission by introducing a new mechanism for using visa policy as leverage.

Under this mechanism, the Commission will regularly assess third countries' cooperation on readmission. Where a country is not cooperating, the Commission will propose that the Council adopt an implementing decision applying specific restrictive visa measures related to visa processing and, eventually, visa fee.

On the other hand, if a country is found to be cooperating on readmission, the Commission may propose to the Council to adopt an implementing decision providing for a reduction in visa fees, a reduction in the time to decide on visa applications or an increase in the period of validity of multiple entry visas. The implementing decision will be valid for no more than one year, and can be renewed.

Background

The visa code entered into force in 2010. It covers the rules regarding processing of applications and issuance of short stay visas to the EU (visas for stays not exceeding 90 days in any 180 days period).

The Commission presented its proposal for the reform of the visa code on 14 March 2018.

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