

Visa Reciprocity: Commission responds to Parliament

The Commission considers that, in view of the significant progress achieved during the last year and the positive momentum of ongoing work, the temporary suspension of visa waivers for nationals of Canada and the United States would be counterproductive at this moment and would not serve the objective of achieving visa-free travel for all EU citizens. The Commission's diplomatic approach meanwhile has already started to bring tangible results: Canada lifted the visa requirements for some categories of Bulgarian and Romanian citizens on 1 May 2017 and is set to achieve full reciprocity as of 1 December 2017 and contacts have been re-launched with the new U.S. administration to push for full visa reciprocity for the five EU Member States concerned.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs, and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Our goal is and remains to obtain full visa reciprocity with both Canada and the U.S. Our continued engagement and patient diplomatic contacts over the past year have brought tangible results already with Canada, and we are committed to proceeding in the same way with the U.S. Dialogue with our strategic partners is the right way forward and we are on the right track."*

Today's report defines the Commission's position following the European Parliament's non-legislative Resolution of 2 March which called on the Commission to adopt a delegated act to suspend the visa waiver for Canadian and U.S. nationals.

The Commission reported on visa reciprocity in [April](#), [July](#) and [December](#), welcoming the clear timeline provided by Canada for achieving full visa reciprocity for all EU citizens and committing to re-launching efforts with the new U.S. administration with the aim of agreeing on a way forward for the five EU Member States concerned in the first half of 2017.

Canada

On 30 October 2016, Canada provided a clear timeline for achieving visa reciprocity for all EU citizens and has so far delivered on this commitment by lifting visa requirements on some categories of Bulgarian and Romanian citizens as of 1 May 2017. The Commission welcomes Canada's continued engagement and will remain in close contact with Bulgaria, Romania and Canada, both at technical and political level, to ensure that full visa reciprocity is achieved by 1 December 2017.

The United States

During the last months, contacts with U.S. interlocutors at the political and technical level were intensified, leading to the launch of a result-oriented process to bring the five EU Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland

and Romania) into the Visa Waiver Program. The U.S. reconfirmed its commitment to admit the five EU Member States into the Program once they meet all the requirements set out by U.S. legislation. To this end, the need to accelerate the necessary work on the outstanding requirements was stressed. The Commission, in close cooperation with the five Member States concerned, will work with the U.S. on a way forward to be endorsed in a Joint Statement by the EU-U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meeting in June 2017.

Next Steps

The Commission will continue to work closely with both the European Parliament and the Council and will report on further developments before the end of December 2017.

Background

On 2 March, the European Parliament adopted a non-binding resolution calling the European Commission to suspend visa exemption for nationals of third countries that do not grant a reciprocal visa waiver to citizens of all EU Member States. Under the Article 265 TFEU, the Commission was obliged to define its position on the matter within two months.

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 effort a visa reciprocity mechanism has been set up.

In the framework of the reciprocity mechanism, which among other stipulations requires that the Commission takes into account the consequences of the suspension of the visa waiver for the external relations of the EU and its Member States, 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 three Communications in [April](#), [July](#) and [December](#) 2016. In the Communication of 12 April 2016, the Commission assessed the consequences and impacts of a suspension of the visa waiver for citizens of Canada and the United States and concluded that, in addition to the adverse impact on EU citizens and the difficulties in implementation, it would also have significant negative impacts in a wide range of policy areas, notably on external relations, trade, tourism and the EU's economy.

The United Kingdom and Ireland do not take part in the development of the common visa policy and would not be bound by a visa waiver suspension.

For More Information

[Frequently asked questions: EU visa reciprocity mechanism](#)

[Communication adopted on 3 May 2017](#)

[Communication](#) adopted on 21 December 2016

[Communication](#) adopted on 13 July 2016

[Communication](#) adopted on 12 April 2016

5 November 2015 – [Report](#) from the Commission assessing the situation of non-reciprocity with certain third countries in the area of visa policy

22 April 2015 – [Report](#) from the Commission assessing the situation of non-reciprocity with certain third countries in the area of visa policy

10 October 2014 – [Report](#) from the Commission assessing the situation of non-reciprocity with certain third countries in the area of visa policy

Council Regulation listing those countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement ([Council Regulation \(EC\) No 539/2001](#))

Regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement ([Regulation \(EU\) 1289/2013](#))