

Juan Fernando López Aguilar
Chairman of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

IPOL-COM-LIBED (2010) 11809

Ms Cecilia Malmström
Commissioner for Home Affairs
European Commission

Subject: Balkans visa liberalisation and the procedural time frame

Dear Commissioner,

Since 19 December 2009, citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia can travel freely to Schengen countries. This successful visa liberalisation was possible thanks to the determination of the Commission and Swedish Presidency of the Council at the time. I am sure that your personal involvement as Minister for European Affairs of Sweden made a difference to this swift abolishment of the visa requirements.

As you know, in a declaration of November 2009¹ "(...) Parliament and the Council invite the Commission to present a legislative proposal for amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 as soon as it has assessed that each country meets the benchmarks set out in the Commission's roadmaps, with a view to achieving visa liberalisation for citizens of those countries as soon as possible". During discussions in the LIBE Committee on February 23 2010, your services presented their working agenda concerning reaching that goal. Mid-April 2010 was mentioned as a date for the publication of an assessment report but the date for the actual issuing of the new legislative proposal was not provided.

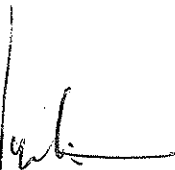
The LIBE Committee would very much welcome the possibility of the whole process, from completion of the verification missions (end of February) and sending the legislative proposal to the Parliament, being conducted in a way that enables the Parliament to start working on the new proposal as early as April.

This timeframe would allow the Parliament and the Council to work on the Commission's proposal with a goal of adopting a common first reading position before the summer. Any delay, in particular between publication of the assessment report and the issuing of the legislative proposal², after April diminishes Parliament's ability to complete the legislative procedure before the summer recess. I strongly believe that your personal involvement can make a difference and will allow the Parliament and the Council to fulfil our promise of the November declaration where it was declared that the proposal would be dealt with "as a matter of urgency".

¹ Joint Declaration attached to Legislative Resolution P7_TA(2009)0062 of 12th November 2009

² When Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 was amended last year, there was a seven week gap between the presentation of the assessment report (25.05.2009) and the issuing of the legislative proposal (15.07.2009).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. F. López Aguilar', written over a vertical line that extends from the signature down to the printed name below.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar

CC:

Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

Gabriele Albertini, Chairman of AFET Committee

Éduard Kukan, Chairman of Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo