

EU-US visa reciprocity: the Commission must defend the rights of all EU citizens

- Bulgarian, Croatian, Cypriot and Romanian citizens still need a visa to enter the US
- The Commission is obliged to propose the suspension of the visa waiver for US nationals; both EP and Council can block it
- The legal act reintroducing visa requirements for US nationals should have been tabled more than four years ago

MEPs call on the European Commission to take the measures foreseen in EU legislation to guarantee full visa reciprocity between the EU and the US.

With 376 votes to 269 and 43 abstentions, the Chamber adopted on Thursday a resolution urging the Commission to present a legal act suspending the visa waiver for US nationals for twelve months, as established in the so-called [reciprocity mechanism](#).

Bulgarian, Croatian, Cypriot and Romanian nationals are still required to hold a visa to enter the US, while all other EU citizens are exempt from that requirement for short-stays (up to 90 days in any 180-day period), as are US nationals when they visit the European Union.

According to EU legislation, if a third country does not lift visa requirements within 24 months of being formally notified of a situation of non-reciprocity, the EU Commission must adopt a legal act suspending the visa waiver for its nationals for 12 months. Both the European Parliament and Council could object to such an act ([Article 290\(2\) of the Treaty](#)).

The situation of non-reciprocity affecting Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania was formally raised on 12 April 2014 (at the time, Poland was also affected, but since last year Polish citizens can travel to the US visa-free), so the deadline for the Commission to act expired on 12 April 2016.

[Parliament already asked the Commission to comply](#) with the rules in a plenary resolution adopted in March 2017.

Quote

“The discrimination that Bulgarians, Croatians, Cypriots and Romanians experience when travelling to the US is unacceptable. Respecting the fundamental principle of solidarity among EU members, we call on the Commission to act as established in European legislation and table a proposal to suspend the visa waiver for US nationals. It will then be up to the Parliament and the Council to assess the political consequences of this move”, said [Juan Fernando López Aguilar \(S&D, ES\)](#), Chair of the Civil Liberties Committee and rapporteur.

Further information

[Steps of the procedure](#)

[Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs](#)

[The adopted text will be published here](#)

[Video of the debate](#)

[Oral question to the Commission](#)

[State of play as regards the situation of non-reciprocity in the area of visa policy \(European Commission, 23.03.2020\)](#)


[EP resolution of 2 March 2017 on obligations of the Commission in the field of visa reciprocity](#)


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