



## Draft Report of the European Parliament on the Union Code on Visas (Visa Code)

### Reaction and Proposed Amendments

September 2015

The European Youth Forum welcomes the [Draft Report](#) of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament (Rapporteur Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar), published on 4 September 2015.

The [European Youth Forum](#), the platform representing youth organisations in Europe, is convinced that mobility of young people is a vital contribution to employability, development of skills and intercultural understanding both in Europe and internationally, and strongly supports and advocates for mobility without barriers of all young people.

Unfortunately, the current Schengen Visa framework creates bureaucratic problems which jeopardise youth mobility. These include:

- lengthy and intransparent procedures
- high cost of applications
- unnecessary requirements for supporting documents

As a result, the European Youth Forum commends the Rapporteur of the Draft Report for addressing many of these key concerns, attempting to make Visa applications an easier and more accessible process and thus promoting the European Union as a place for leisure and learning for all.

In this reaction, the European Youth Forum will present further amendments for consideration as well as highlight the specific Amendments of the Parliament which we fully support, adding also the rationale of youth organisations.

#### Amendments proposed by the European Youth Forum

<b>Article 14</b>	<b>Visa Fees</b>
<b>Commission Proposal</b>	e) participants aged <b>25</b> years or less participating in seminars, conferences, sports, cultural or educational events organised by non-profit organisations;
<b>European Parliament Draft Report</b>	<b>Amendment 26</b> e) participants aged <b>30</b> years or less participating in seminars, conferences, sports, cultural or educational events organised by non-profit organisations;
<b>European Youth Forum Amendment Proposal</b>	e) participants aged <b>35</b> years or less participating in seminars, conferences, <b>exchanges and volunteering activities</b> , sports, cultural or educational events organised by non-profit organisations ;
<b>Rationale</b>	Given the extension of the transition to autonomy for young people that we have seen especially during the economic and financial crisis, the Youth Forum feels that the age limit should be raised to 35 and the reduced

	<p>fees should be abolished together. The implementation of the measure should be better monitored to avoid irregular application.</p> <p>Furthermore, as many of the events organized by non-profit organisations, particularly youth organisations, are in the form of exchanges and volunteering opportunities, the Youth Forum would like to see these forms of activities also specified in the exception to Visa fees.</p>
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<b>Article 14</b>	<b>Visa Fees</b>
<b>Commission Proposal</b>	n/a
<b>European Parliament Draft Report</b>	n/a
<b>European Youth Forum Amendment Proposal</b>	<b><i>ADD new point 7): Consulates and other Visa granting authorities must provide all applicants with clear information regarding exceptions or reductions in Visa fees.</i></b>
<b>Rationale</b>	Young participants of events organized by non-profit organisations have reported a lack of information regarding Visa fees and exceptions to such fees, often resulting in the fact that they do not benefit from them.

<b>Article 18</b>	<b>Verification of entry conditions and risk assessment paragraph</b>
<b>Commission Proposal</b>	7. Proof of sponsorship and/or private accommodation may also constitute evidence of sufficient means of subsistence.
<b>European Parliament Draft Report</b>	n/a
<b>Amendment Proposal</b>	<b><i>ADD new point 7.a) Age or marital status of the applicant must not be considered in the verification of whether the applicant has sufficient means of subsistence during their stay.</i></b>
	Youth Forum membership has reported that visa applications have been rejected with the justification that the applicant is not married and/or is too young to have an economic status that enables them to prove sufficient means of subsistence. Such justifications discriminate against young people who are by definition in a phase of transition into adulthood and often professional life. This praxis is also clear discrimination based on age, violating article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights on non-discrimination based on any ground, including age.

<b>Article 20</b>	<b>Decision on the application</b>
<b>Commission Proposal</b>	<p>1. Applications shall be decided on within 10 calendar days of the date of the lodging of an application which is admissible in accordance with Article 17.</p> <p>2. That period may be extended up to a maximum of 20 calendar days in individual cases, notably when further scrutiny of the application is needed</p>
<b>European Parliament Draft Report</b>	n/a
<b>Amendment Proposal</b>	<p>1. Applications shall be decided on within 10 calendar days of the date of the lodging of an application which is admissible in accordance with Article 17</p> <p>2. That period may be extended up to a maximum of 20 calendar days in individual cases, notably when further scrutiny of the application is needed</p> <p><b><i>ADD new point 2a) : A fast-track procedure for participants aged 35 years or less participating in seminars, conferences, exchanges and volunteering activities, sports, cultural or educational events organised by non-profit organisations should be put in place, which should be no longer than 7 days.</i></b></p>
	<p>Due to application procedures and short term planning for attendance in seminars, conference and project organised by European Union institutions or civil society organisations, the Youth Forum recommends fast track procedures for gaining a visa for such participants.</p>

### Existing amendments supported by the European Youth Forum

<b>Amendment</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<b>Amendment 5 Amendment 20 Amendment 22</b>	Enabling online applications for visas	Online applications as well as being able to send in support documents by mail can ease the application procedure as well as reduce travel costs for visa applicants.
<b>Amendment 15</b>	Facilitating the procedure for application through enabling, in certain conditions, the lodging of the application in another consulate.	Young people have reported having to spend time and money on reaching consulates to lodge applications. This provision would reduce this burden.
<b>Amendment 17</b>	Ability to lodge application 9 months before the start of the intended visit.	Allowing for a longer preparation time can ease the logistical burden on

		applicants.
<b>Amendment 25</b>	Clarification on supporting documents required.	Youth Forum membership has reported unclear and intransparent information on support documents required.
<b>Amendment 27</b>	Clarification that no additional fees may be charged.	Youth Forum membership has reported that extra charges were demanded for the service fee, contrary to the provisions of the Visa Code.
<b>Amendment 45 Amendment 46</b>	Ensuring appeal procedure is swift and easily accessible; compensation in case of wrongfully annulled visa.	Youth Forum membership has reported cases of appeals taking excessively long to process.
<b>Amendment 52</b>	Setting up a complaints procedure.	In order to ensure good administrative practice in consulates.
<b>Amendment 53 Amendment 57</b>	Adding cooperation possibilities among consulates.	To facilitate the applicant in terms of travel burden and costs of lodging Visa applications in specific consulates.
<b>Amendment 58</b>	Establishing possibility of Schengen Visa Centres.	Common application centres generally provide an easy and centralised method for visa applicants, and can reduce the costs of having to travel long distances for applications.
<b>Amendment 62</b>	Ensuring information on supporting documents is available.	Youth Forum membership has reported that visa denials are often justified through reference to the absence of support documents, whilst the list of those required is not often made clear to applicants.
<b>Amendment 64 Amendment 65</b>	Providing further information to applicants.	Clarifying regulation as well as ensuring information is in several languages allows the procedures to be transparent and applicants to be better informed of their requirements.