

STATEMENT

OF THE COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND OVERSIGHT OF THE EUROPEAN FUNDS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

After the discussion on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 562/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Community Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code) and the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement, the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds (CEAOEF), expresses the following statement, which is to be sent to the European institutions:

1. CEAOEF considers that the proposed amendments will clarify the existing texts and will contribute towards practical problems solving which have occurred in the process of the Schengen Borders Code implementation. Furthermore, a concrete legal framework is being established for bilateral agreements with neighbour countries for the execution of joint border checks of the road and railway traffic. The Regulation has a direct effect and at this stage its adoption does not require an amendment to the Bulgarian Legislation. The above-mentioned opinion comes in support to the Bulgaria's Council of Ministers position. According to it, the Republic of Bulgaria expresses a principal approval of the Proposal for Regulation.

2. The Proposal for Regulation is in full compliance with the subsidiarity principle, established in article 5, paragraph 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) because the objectives in the proposed Regulation cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States but can rather be better achieved at EU level.

The Proposal for Regulation is in compliance with the principle of proportionality, established in article 5, paragraph 4 of the TEU, because it does not exceed what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaties and does not create an additional administrative or financial burden.

3. In the spirit of parliamentary diplomacy, CEAOEF works actively in order for Bulgaria's Schengen Area accession to be successfully finalized. This is a national cause of wide political unanimity and synergy among all political parties in the country. In this regard, with the joint initiative of CEAOEF and the Foreign Policy and Defense Committee (FPDC), in mid-January 2011 the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted a Decision for the elaboration of Parliamentary Foreign-political Activities Program In Support to the Bulgarian Accession to the Schengen Area. It is to be implemented within the indicative time framework "February-April" 2011. The Program consists of initiatives, measures and actions of the Bulgarian Parliament in support to our country's accession to Schengen. It is based upon the following milestones:

- Actions in the framework of the cooperation between the national parliamentary committees on European affairs and foreign policy of the Schengen Agreement Member-States;
- Actions in the framework of the parliamentary Friendship Groups and international delegations of the Schengen Agreement Member-States;
- Actions in the framework of the cooperation between the National Assembly and the EU institutions, particularly the European Parliament and the different political families within;

- Actions related to conducting a public-information campaign for the Schengen topic popularization in the Bulgarian society and covering our country's progress towards the fulfillment of the technical criteria with the civil sector and media participation;
- The Government is to provide information on regular basis about Bulgaria's progress on the fulfillment of the Schengen Area accession criteria;

In relation to the Program implementation, CEAOEF observes concrete, visible results.

1. CEAOEF underlines that the Schengen Area is above all an area of trust. In this regard, the Bulgarian Parliament is a warrant for the exercising of double democratic control- by the MPs and by the civil society at every stage of Bulgaria's Schengen membership preparation. An important part of it is the Schengen Facility implementation. CEAOEF reports 100 % contracting rate and full absorption of the European funds.

2. The Bulgarian Authorities are convinced that Schengen is not a privilege but a great responsibility, building a strong and stable border to ensure the security and safety of all European citizens. Keeping the pace, Bulgaria has taken all necessary steps to fulfill the technical criteria in compliance with the Schengen acquis. This fact guarantees our preparedness to be a reliable external EU border.