Council Decision (EU) 2019/1915 of 14 October 2019 on the signing, on behalf of the Union, of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Belarus on the facilitation of the issuance of visas

COUNCIL DECISION (EU) 2019/1915

of 14 October 2019

on the signing, on behalf of the Union, of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Belarus on the facilitation of the issuance of visas

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular point (a) of Article 77(2) in conjunction with Article 218(5) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

(1) On 28 February 2011, the Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations with the Republic of Belarus on an Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Belarus on the facilitation of the issuance of visas ('the Agreement'), in parallel with the negotiations of an Agreement on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation. The negotiations were successfully concluded by the initialling of the Agreement via exchange of emails on 17 June 2019.

(2) In the Eastern Partnership Summit Declaration of 7 May 2009, the Union and the partner countries expressed their political support towards liberalisation of the visa regime in a safe and secure environment and reaffirmed their intention to take gradual steps towards a visa free regime for their citizens in due course.

(3) The purpose of the Agreement is to facilitate, on the basis of reciprocity, the issuance of visas for an intended stay of no more than 90 days in any 180-day period to the citizens of the Union and Belarus.

(4) This Decision constitutes a development of the provisions of the Schengen *acquis* in which the United Kingdom does not take part, in accordance with Council Decision 2000/365/EC[(1)]; the United Kingdom is therefore not taking part in its adoption and is not bound by it or subject to its application.

(5) This Decision constitutes a development the provisions of the Schengen *acquis* in which Ireland does not take part, in accordance with Council Decision 2002/192/EC[(2)]; Ireland is therefore not taking part in the adoption of this Decision and is not bound by it or subject to its application.

(6) In accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of Protocol No 22 on the position of Denmark, annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Denmark is not taking part in the adoption of this Decision and is not bound by it or subject to its application.

Changes to legislation: *There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Council Decision (EU) 2019/1915. (See end of Document for details)*

(7) The Council should decide on the conclusion of the Agreement in the light of an assessment by the Commission as to the security and integrity of Belarus' system of issuance of biometric diplomatic passports and their technical specifications.

(8) The Agreement should be signed and the Joint Declarations attached to the Agreement be approved,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The signing on behalf of the Union of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Belarus on the facilitation of the issuance of visas is hereby authorised, subject to the conclusion of the said Agreement[(3)].

Article 2

The Joint Declarations attached to the Agreement shall be approved on behalf of the Union.

Article 3

The President of the Council is hereby authorised to designate the person(s) empowered to sign the Agreement on behalf of the Union.

Article 4

The Commission shall assess the security and integrity of Belarus' system of issuance of biometric diplomatic passports and their technical specifications, and it shall communicate its assessment to the Council. The Council shall decide, in the light of such assessment, on the conclusion of the Agreement.

Article 5

This Decision shall enter into force on the day of its adoption.

Done at Luxembourg, 14 October 2019.

For the Council

The President

J. LEPPÄ