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E-002669/2024

Answer given by Mr Brunner
on behalf of the European Commission
(24.1.2025)

The Commission is aware of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' interest in obtaining a visa exemption, as well as the importance attached to regional coherence, in particular since the granting of visa exemption to the United Arab Emirates in 2014 and the Commission proposal for visa exemption for Qatar and Kuwait in April 2022.

Since the decision in December 2022 by the Parliament to postpone a plenary vote on the Commission proposal for visa exemption for Qatar and Kuwait, the proposal has been with the relevant parliamentary committee for its review. The Commission will follow closely the developments on its proposal in the newly constituted European Parliament.

As announced in the political guidelines of the President, the Commission will present an EU Visa Policy Strategy. The Strategy will outline the Commission's strategic approach on all relevant issues related to the EU visa policy, including on visa exemptions.

In the meantime, the EU continues to reduce the burden for visa applicants from GCC countries, via the local adaptation of the visa rules applicable to GCC nationals. Citizens from all GCC countries (except the United Arab Emirates, which is visa exempt) are now eligible for five-year multiple-entry visas upon first application. These visa cascades are the most generous visa adaptations under the Visa Code and considerably facilitate travel for GCC citizens.