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Press release | 13.10.2011

Romania and Bulgaria should get passport-free EU travel

Press release from EFA MEP Tatjana Ždanoka

Romania and Bulgaria have fulfilled all of the criteria and should be allowed to join the Schengen passport check-free area according to MEPs including **Tatjana Ždanoka.**

Ms Ždanoka spoke in Wednesday's debate on the issue at the European Parliament in Brussels with representatives of the European Commission and Council.

MEPs had already given their approval for Romania and Bulgaria to join the Schengen area by an overwhelming majority in June this year. But the decision has been blocked indefinitely by the Dutch and Finnish governments, both of whom are insisting that the Eastern European countries meet new additional criteria.

This has drawn accusations of double standards and of new criteria for membership 'being invented'.

MEPs voted on a resolution on the issue on Thursday, giving strong backing to allowing Romania and Bulgaria to join the Schengen area based on existing criteria.

Speaking in the debate in the European Parliament, **Tatjana Ždanoka MEP** said:

"The issue at stake is whether the Council grants access to the Schengen area for Bulgaria and Romania.

"I myself come from a new Member State. I remember how much we wanted to join the Schengen area. In this regard, I very much welcome accession of Bulgaria and Romania.

"There were some shortcomings on the road to Schengen. Now those problems have been resolved. Bulgaria and Romania are fully ready to join the free travel area.

"We cannot invent new criteria for joining the Schengen area, we cannot undermine certainty that a State may join, as soon as the existing criteria are met. My group finds it unacceptable that the Netherlands and Finland have blocked even the Polish Presidency's compromise in the Council without formulating any convincing reasons for doing so. Such action undermines European solidarity, and I hope that the European Council will find a solution."

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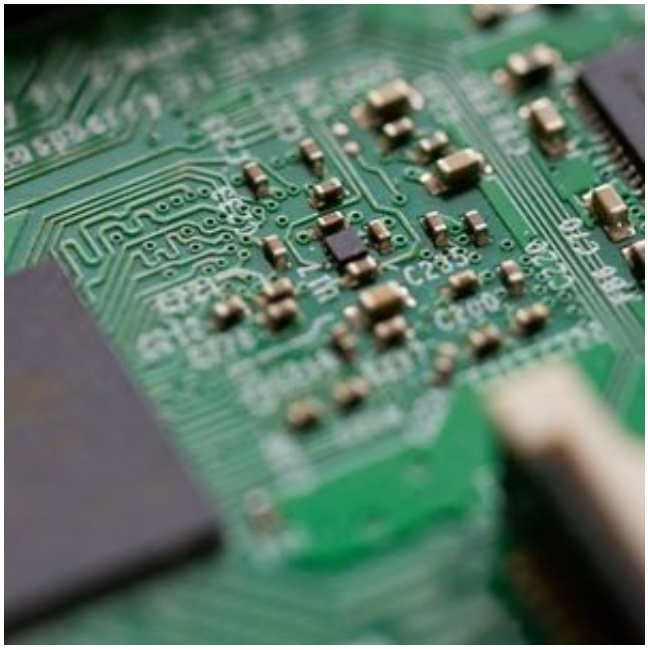


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