

Address to the Minister of Migration and Asylum of Greece, Mr. Dimitris Kairidis

**Subject:**

**Lifting of the Schengen land border control between Greece, Romania and Bulgaria**

Dear Minister,

First of all, we would like to express our appreciation for all the diplomatic efforts Greece has made for the cause of Schengen enlargement to Romania and Bulgaria. As Members of the European Parliament, and representatives of Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, we realise how much full Schengen membership would favour positive developments in economy, tourism, professional and academic mobility, people-to-people contacts and many other areas. The unjustified presence of Schengen land border control is a huge obstacle in the development of our countries and the whole region. While the Council's decision of 30 December 2023, lifts the air and maritime border controls in Romania and Bulgaria, it falls short of addressing the biggest pressing issue, namely the land border crossing.

Next opportunity to address this issue is the Informal Meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers organised by the Belgian presidency of the EU on January 24-26, 2024. During this meeting, in your capacity of a Minister representing Greece, you can propose to all participating ministers the lifting of the Schengen land border control between Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. There are multiple reasons why this call would be valid and very timely.

Firstly, since 2011 the European Commission has been systematically reiterating that Bulgaria and Romania are ready for the full Schengen membership.

Secondly, the European Parliament has issued numerous resolutions and reports calling for the full Schengen membership, which were supported by an absolute majority of the House.

Thirdly, representatives of Greek tourism and HORECA sectors call for the lifting of land border control, to facilitate the arrival of Romanian and Bulgarian tourists to Greece. This would become a very important factor of the economic development particularly in the northern parts of Greece, provided that the land border becomes fully open before the summer period.

Fourthly, at the moment the controls at the land borders between the three countries that are officially in the Schengen area still bring huge losses to transportation companies and tourists, in terms of travel costs, missed financial gains and time. This is a factor we cannot underestimate in the context of unprecedented economic crisis and inflation.

Fifthly, the border lifting would immediately improve environmental parameters of the concerned areas, thus contributing to the EU's objective of lowering CO2 emissions, air pollution and related diseases.

Therefore, we would very much welcome your efforts in promoting this call in the upcoming JHA meeting and in the subsequent meetings, so as to schedule the lifting of the land border controls between Romania, Bulgaria and Greece before the start of the summer season. We believe that the maintenance of controls between the three countries is no longer justified and we ask the governments to lift them.

Therefore we would very much welcome your willingness to advance this idea among your colleagues at the JHA meeting in Brussels.

We strongly believe that the swift and decisive implementation of our proposal will enhance the existing mutual trust among the three Member States and increase the efficiency of their collaboration within the EU. This proposal stems from the citizens' needs and it is our responsibility to overcome the difficulties and deliver for the citizens of our countries on the basis of good neighbourly relations and mutual benefit.

Thank you very much in advance for your consideration.

Best regards,

Vlad Gheorghe, Romanian MEP  
Dacian Cioloş, Romanian MEP  
Georgios Kyrtzos, Greek MEP  
Daniel Lorer, Bulgarian MP