

German Lawmakers Slam Would-Be EU Visa Accord

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Two senior German lawmakers have lambasted Berlin's recent U-turn on a proposed European visa accord with Moscow.

The decision to allow government officials visa-free entry to EU countries gives unfair advantages to bureaucrats over civil society, Marieluise Beck and Volker Beck of the Green Party said in a statement that was e-mailed late Tuesday.

"The [German] government's message is to give privileges to the nomenklatura while the people must continue to stand in line," they said, adding that it would be better to abolish visas altogether.

The German foreign ministry said last week that it had asked Brussels to accept Moscow's demand to lift visa restrictions for government officials, prompting EU negotiators to say a visa facilitation deal with Moscow could be signed soon.

The deal would make it easier for certain professions like businessmen, NGO workers and journalists to obtain long-term multiple-entry visitor visas. It had been held up since October 2011 after Moscow demanded that it should include a visa waiver for holders of so-called official passports. EU officials first refused to meet this, citing security fears because such passports are given also to soldiers and state corporation employees.

Now both sides agreed to limit the visa waiver to biometric passports. Anvar Azimov, the Russian Foreign Ministry official in charge of visa policy, said Tuesday that this would reduce the numbers of entitled holders from 120,000 to "a maximum of 15,000," Interfax reported.

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