

Schengen: Council refuses Parliament's compromise offer

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Community Institutions need to be involved / New legal basis for legislative acts hampers transparency / EPP Group considers taking the matter before the ECJ

"A lost opportunity and a reversion to the past." This is how the Vice-Chairman of the EPP Group, Manfred Weber MEP, and the Rapporteur, Carlos Coelho MEP, regard today's results of the meeting of EU Home Affairs Ministers in Luxembourg on the Schengen rules.

"Unfortunately, the Ministers have refused to accept the fair compromise offered by the Parliament. Instead, they are going for confrontation. The freedom to travel is a fundamental right of European citizens and one of the main pillars of the EU. Despite the clear mandate given by the European Council, the Ministers now intend to reinforce national competencies. This is a huge step backwards", said Messrs Weber and Coelho.

"It is not the intention of the Parliament to put into question the competencies of the Member States when it comes to guaranteeing public safety and order. However, closing borders that have been open until now is a question that concerns Europe as a whole. In such a case, the Community Institutions have to be included in the decision-making process. Otherwise, we are throwing the doors wide open to populism, as has already happened in Denmark. On substance, Council and Parliament have already approached common ground. With today's decision we're back to step one", both MEPs regretted.

They criticise in particular that the Council plans to change the legal basis of the legislative decision. "If the Council is going through with this, Parliament will no longer be included in the decision-making process. This would give rise to intransparent decisions by secretive bureaucrats and closed circles. This is a move back into the pre-Lisbon era. The EPP Group will therefore propose an examination of the legal basis by the ECJ. We are seriously asking ourselves how the Council expects the Parliament to cooperate in a spirit of trust in the future, if at the same time the Council obviously does not trust us", they concluded.