

# Turkey, EU visa liberalisation and Schengen

*The Government has told us that the liberalisation of visa restrictions on Turkey only applies to the Schengen area. However, this post, from John Redwood's blog, raises the issue of whether we are being lied to – again.*

I drew attention to the fact that the official minutes of the 7 March EU/Turkey Agreement made clear that all member states need to lift visa restrictions on Turkey by June this year. The UK government keeps saying this does not apply to the UK. I suggested they have the minutes amended in that case.

Far from doing so, the minutes of the European Council held 17-18 March reconfirmed the minutes of the 7 March "Following the decisions of the Heads of State of government of 7 March" the European Council "calls for the full implementation of the EU-Turkey statement". So if we assume the UK is not actually going to lift visa restrictions we are left wondering why official statements of the Heads of State and government which we are asked to rely on in other contexts are wrong on this matter. We also need to remember how assurances that the UK would not have to bail out Euro countries were swept aside when it came to a new loan for Greece.

There can be no opt out for the UK when it comes to possible Turkish membership of the EU. There we are told clearly in the minutes of the Council meeting that "the EU and Turkey reconfirmed their commitment to re energise the accession process" for Turkey to become a full member.

Visa liberalisation even if confined to the continent means many more people having easy access to the EU and possibly establishing citizenship and free movement rights to the UK as well as the rest of the EU. Full membership of course

brings complete freedom of movement. In view of the pressure on us already from the many people in the rest of the EU who want to work and live here, we do need to consider this Turkish issue more seriously. One of the failings of William Hague's Referendum Act was it does not give the UK people a vote on new members joining the EU, though they can represent a big change to the EU and to our obligations as a result.