

European passport and travel documents: standards for security features and biometrics

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This Commission report responds to the requirement in Regulation (EC) No 444/2009 that the Commission should present a report on the requirements for children travelling alone or accompanied, crossing the external borders of the Member States not later than 26 June 2012 (the date after which no family or other group passports can any longer be issued).

The report's **main conclusions** are as follows:

- **One person – one passport:** the implementation of this principle does not seem to pose problems. Practitioners and stakeholders consider that it has made travelling of children safer and the border crossings faster, insofar as it is now possible for the border guards to actually identify the child as being the person on the passport, which was difficult when the child was travelling with a family passport. The Commission stands ready to further discuss with Member States and stakeholders the pros and cons of the inclusion in the passport of the name(s) of the legal guardian(s) in the passports of children.

- **Legislation and practices at EU level:** certain stakeholders consider that **more detailed guidelines** and best practice examples could facilitate the work at the border crossing points. On the other hand, it would be difficult to capture in formal rules and procedures the range of situations faced by the border guards. The Commission will consider adjusting the Practical Handbook for Border Guards and the Visa Code Handbook and clearly spelling out that the child's best interests must be a primary consideration.

- **Legislation and practices at national level:** the national legislation and practices regarding **parental authorisation** are rather diverse in the Member States. At the same time, despite the limited harmonisation in the area, the practices employed by the border guards with respect to controls of children are relatively similar. The Commission and Member States should follow the discussions on the **possible development of a model "Consent to travel" form** which was put forward by the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law and may be further considered by the ICAO.

Due to the different provisions of the Member States particularly regarding the need for a parental authorisation at the border, **providing reliable information to the public** is crucial. The Commission is ready to upgrade its europa.eu/travel site on the basis of the inputs of the Member States. Member States should also considerably improve the quality of information distributed to the public on the requirements for children crossing borders.

Member States are encouraged to develop **appropriate national coordination mechanisms** and to inform the border crossing points about these mechanisms so that border guards know whom to contact, in which situation and what the responsibilities between the different actors are.

Lastly, few **statistical data** exist concerning children detected to be at risk at the borders (or on border crossing by children in general) as well as concerning child trafficking and abduction.