Security of identity cards of Union citizens and of residence documents issued to Union citizens and their family members

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Coreper 2 reached an **agreement in principle** on the draft Council Regulation on strengthening the security of identity cards of Union citizens and of residence documents issued to Union citizens and their family members exercising their right of free movement, with a view to consulting the European Parliament.

The proposed Regulation seeks to strengthen the security standards applicable to identity cards issued by Member States to their nationals and to residence documents issued by Member States to Union citizens and their family members when exercising their right to free movement.

The main adaptations introduced in the draft regulation concern the following points:

Scope

The regulation will apply to identity cards issued by Member States to their own nationals. It should not apply to identification documents issued on a provisional basis and valid for six months or less.

National identity cards

Identity cards will incorporate a highly secure storage medium containing biometric data, namely a facial image of the holder of the card and two fingerprints, in interoperable digital formats.

Collection of biometric identifiers, data protection

The biometric identifiers will be collected solely by qualified and duly authorised staff designated by the authorities responsible for issuing identity cards or residence cards, for the purpose of being integrated into the highly secure storage medium for identity cards and residence cards.

The facial image of the holder stored in the storage medium of identity cards and residence documents will only be **accessed by duly authorised staff** of competent national authorities, Union agencies and private entities and in compliance with Union data protection law for the purposes of verifying:

- the authenticity of the identity card or residence document;

- the identity of the holder by means of directly available comparable features where the identity card or residence document is required to be produced by law.

Access to the facial image by private entities will also require the **consent of the holder**, unless access regardless of consent is strictly necessary and provided for by Union or national law in compliance with Union data protection law.

The facial image accessed will not be **retained** unless its further processing is necessary and is provided for by Union or national law, in compliance with Union data protection law.

The retention of facial images should remain limited to the purposes of verifying the authenticity of the document or the identity of the holder. Furthermore, facial images should not be retained for longer than necessary for those purposes; they should be deleted as soon as those purposes have been achieved and they should not be transferred to third countries or international organisations unless permitted by Union data protection law.

Those safeguards are intended to ensure an appropriate level of protection of facial images without prohibiting their use for the benefit of the holder of the document, in particular in the context of cross-border travel.

Lastly, the verification of the **fingerprints** stored on the storage medium should only be carried out by duly authorised staff of competent national authorities and Union agencies and only when the document is required to be produced by Union or national law. The fingerprints accessed for this purpose should not be retained.