

Visas: uniform format

2001/0232(CNS) - 09/10/2001 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To harmonise rules on a uniform format for visas. **CONTENT:** The proposed amendment to Regulation 1683/95 on the laying down of a uniform format for visas modifies the Commission's amendments proposed initially in March 2001 (CNS 0080). The perceived need to introduce stricter security measures aimed at preventing fraud and counterfeiting of visas has been given added urgency since the attacks in America on 11 September. Both the Justice and Home Affairs Council as well as the European Council meeting at the end of September emphasised the need to take swift action in order to stop the spread of terrorism. In line with this thinking, Member States deem existing security standards vis-a-vis visas in urgent need of further improvements. Accordingly, they wish to introduce modern technologies to combat not only document fraud but also the fraudulent use of the visa format. With this proposal the Commission is seeking to take concrete action whereby technical committees will be given the power to take measures on:

- The integration of a photograph produced according to high security standards, thus establishing a more reliable link between the holder and the visa format. The integration of the photograph will also open the way to a future storage visa information system with search possibilities.
- The possibility to change the colours of the visa format, if an urgent need occurs to counteract forgeries.

Implementation powers will be delegated to the Commission with the assistance of the Committee created by Article 6 of Regulation 1683/95. This procedure will establish the technical specifications to render the documents compatible with the required security standards. The system allows for continuous peer control and adaptations as and when new situations arise.