Residence permits: uniform format, biometric identifiers

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The committee adopted the report by Carlos COELHO (EPP-ED, PT) broadly approving the proposal under the consultation procedure, subject to a number of amendments aimed at clarifying the purpose of the amended regulation and upholding citizens' privacy and data protection rights:

- it should be clearly stated in the legal text which authorities will have access to the biometric data in residence permits, namely, the Member State authorities which are competent to read, store, modify and erase data, and authorised bodies entitled to read the data;

- the purpose of including biometric data in the uniform format for residence permits should be made more clear in the legal text: the committee specified that the biometric features should be used only for the purpose of verifying the authenticity of the document and the identity of the holder. No provision should be made for further information to be stored in the resident permit;

- the Member States should regularly forward to the Commission audits of the application of the regulation, in particular regarding the rules limiting the purposes for which data may be used and the bodies which may have access to the data. They should also inform the Commission of any problems encountered in applying the regulation;

- as the technical specifications are of crucial importance for data protection, the committee proposed that experts assessing these specifications from a data-protection viewpoint should be able to take part in the work of the technical committee. And, to ensure democratic accountability, it wanted the European Parliament to be given the possibility of opposing the adoption of the technical specifications.