Residence permits: uniform format, biometric identifiers

2003/0218(CNS) - 25/10/2004

The Council, pending two scrutiny reservations, agreed on the inclusion of a second mandatory identifier (fingerprints) in passports and other travel documents issued by Member States.

It should be noted that at its meeting on 8 June 2004, the Council agreed that facial image should be the first mandatory biometric identifier and that fingerprints should be the second done but optional.

The Council also agreed to include fingerprints as a mandatory identifier. The appropriate date of application of these biometric identifiers was also agreed by the Council.

For the facial image identifier, 18 months will be required after the date of adoption of technical specifications to implement the Regulation, while 36 months will be required for fingerprints. The harmonisation of security features and the integration of biometric identifiers is an important step towards the use of new elements in the perspective of future developments at European level, which render passports and other travel documents more secure and establish a more reliable link between them and the holder. It is an important contribution to ensuring that passports and other travel documents are protected against fraudulent use. The Regulation does not apply to identity cards issued by Member States to their nationals. The biometric features in passports and other travel documents will be used for verifying:

- the authenticity of the document;

- the identity of the holder by means of directly available comparable features when the passport or other travel documents are required to be produced by law.