

European passport: standards for security features and biometrics elements

2004/0039(CNS) - 13/12/2004 - Final act

PURPOSE: To lay down standards for security features and biometrics in passports and travel documents issued by the Member States.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Regulation 2252/2004/EC.

CONTENT: Minimum security standards for passports were introduced by a Resolution of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on 17 October 2000. It is now appropriate to upgrade this Resolution by a Community measure in order to achieve enhanced harmonised security standards for passports and travel documents to protect against falsification. At the same time biometric identifiers should be integrated in the passport or travel document in order to establish a reliable link between the genuine holder and the document.

This Regulation is limited to the harmonisation of the security features including biometric identifiers for the passports and travel documents of the Member States. The designation of the authorities and bodies authorized to have access to the data contained in the storage medium of documents is a matter of national legislation, subject to any relevant provisions of Community law, European Union law or international agreements.

This Regulation only lays down such specifications that are not secret. These specifications need to be supplemented by specifications which may remain secret in order to prevent the risk of counterfeiting and falsifications. Such additional technical specifications will be adopted in accordance with Council Decision 1999/468/EC of 28 June 1999 laying down the procedures for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission.

In order to ensure that the information referred to is not made available to more persons than necessary, each Member State will designate no more than one body having responsibility for producing passports and travel documents, with Member States remaining free to change the body, if need be. For security reasons, each Member State will communicate the name of the competent body to the Commission and the other Member States.

The minimum security standards with which passports and travel documents issued by Member States shall comply are set out in the Annex.

Passports and travel documents shall include a storage medium which shall contain a facial image. Member States shall also include fingerprints in interoperable formats. The data shall be secured and the storage medium shall have sufficient capacity and capability to guarantee the integrity, the authenticity and the confidentiality of the data.

This Regulation applies to passports and travel documents issued by Member States. It does not apply to identity cards issued by Member States to their nationals or to temporary passports and travel documents having a validity of 12 months or less.

Additional technical specifications for passports and travel documents relating to the following shall be established in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 5(2) of the Regulation:

- additional security features and requirements including enhanced anti-forgery, counterfeiting and falsification standards;
- technical specifications for the storage medium of the biometric features and their security, including prevention of unauthorised access;
- requirements for quality and common standards for the facial image and the fingerprints.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 18/01/2005.