

# **Visas: procedures for applying for and issuing visas for members of the Olympic family taking part in the 2006 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Torino**

2005/0169(COD) - 07/09/2005 - Legislative proposal

Based on the successful experience of the Greek authorities in the use of Regulation (EC) No 1295/2003 regarding measures envisaged to facilitate the procedures for applying for and issuing visas for members of the Olympic family taking part in the 2004 Olympic or Paralympic Games in Athens, it is planned that the EU should adopt a nearly identical regime to enable Italy, host country for the Torino 2006 Winter Games, to honour the obligation taken in compliance with the Olympic Charter.

Although it maintained the visa obligation for members of the Olympic family who are subject to that requirement under Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals fall under the visa duty when crossing the external borders, as well as exemptions from the latter, Regulation (EC) No 1295/2003 provided facilitating procedures for submitting a collective application for Members of the Olympic family via the Olympic accreditation system, for simplifying the supporting documents requirement and for allowing the visa to be issued in the format of special visa number to be included on the Olympic accreditation card. Furthermore, controls at the external borders for the Members of the Olympic family were limited to the strictly necessary, taking into account the specific provisions on visas. The derogation system was in place only for the duration of the Athens 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The introduction of a similar derogation system for the Torino 2006 Games is justified, even if the number of participants in the 2006 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games is expected to be smaller than in the Athens 2004 Games. The estimated number of visa required for the participating in the 2006 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games is 3.000 cases.

In this context, the present proposal follows the same principles as Regulation (EC) No 1295/2003: it maintains the visa requirement for members of the Olympic family who, because of their nationality, are subject to that requirement under Regulation (EC) No 539/2001; the arrangements proposed are aimed merely at facilitating both the procedures for submitting applications and the form in which visas are issued; the derogation will apply only for the duration of the 2006 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. This period runs — for the 2006 Olympic Winter Games — from 10 January 2006 (one month before the official opening on 10 February) to 26 March 2006 (one month after the closure of the Games on 26 February) and — for the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games — from 10 February 2006 (one month before the official opening on 10 March) to 19 April 2006 (one month after the closure of the Games on 19 March).

Because of the very satisfactory functioning of Regulation (EC) No 1295/2003, the proposal “copies” its provisions, solely adapting it to the 2006 Olympics and Paralympic Winter Games.