Basic information

2003/0061(CNS) CNS - Consultation procedure Regulation	Procedure completed
Visas: facilitating procedures for members of the Olympic family taking part in the 2004 Games in Athens **Subject** 4.10.13 Sport 7.10.04 External borders crossing and controls, visas	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
LIBE Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs	MATIKAINEN-KALLSTRÖM Marjo (PPE-DE)	19/05/2003

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
CULT Culture, Youth, Education, Media and Sport	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Economic and Financial Affairs ECOFIN	2520	2003-07-15

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Justice and Consumers	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
08/04/2003	Legislative proposal published	COM(2003)0172	Summary
12/05/2003	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
11/06/2003	Vote in committee		Summary
11/06/2003	Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading	A5-0211/2003	
19/06/2003	Decision by Parliament	T5-0280/2003	Summary
15/07/2003	Act adopted by Council after consultation of Parliament		

15/07/2003	End of procedure in Parliament		
22/07/2003	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2003/0061(CNS)
Procedure type	CNS - Consultation procedure
Procedure subtype	Legislation
Legislative instrument	Regulation
Legal basis	EC Treaty (after Amsterdam) EC 062-p2
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	LIBE/5/19484

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading		A5-0211/2003	11/06/2003	
Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		T5-0280/2003	19/06/2003	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Legislative proposal	COM(2003)0172	08/04/2003	Summary
Follow-up document	SEC(2005)1051	11/08/2005	Summary

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act

Regulation 2003/1295
OJ L 183 22.07.2003, p. 0001-0005 Summary

Visas: facilitating procedures for members of the Olympic family taking part in the 2004 Games in Athens

2003/0061(CNS) - 11/08/2005 - Follow-up document

PURPOSE: To present a Report to the European Parliament and Council on the functioning of the derogation system to facilitate the procedures for issuing visas during the 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Athens.

CONTENT: The 2004 Olympic Games in Athens were the first such games organised by a Member State participating in the Schengen Agreement. As a host country, Greece was obliged to honour an Olympic obligation whereby participants to the Olympic and Paralympic Games have a right to access their territory. To allow Greece to fulfil both this, and its Schengen obligations, the EU adopted specific measures, facilitating the issuing of Schengen visas to Olympic participants. Those provisions were set out in EU Regulation 1295/2003. The objective of the Regulation was to offer user friendly procedures when applying for and issuing visas for those taking part in the 2004 Athens Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Under the terms of Regulation 1295/2003, the Commission is obliged (based on a statement from the Greek authorities) to prepare a Report on the functioning of the derogations system in time for the Olympic Winter Games, which will take place in Turin in 2006. Much of the information and detail discussed by the Commission stems from an exhaustive and precise account forwarded by the Greek authorities to the Commission in February 2005.

Specifically speaking, Regulation 1295/2003 sought to achieve its objectives by providing a collective application for participants via the Olympic accreditation system. Other provisions included simplifying supporting documents as well as allocating visas a special number attached to the Olympic accreditation card. The derogation system was in place only for the duration of the Athens 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games and was based on a list of participants who had been selected to take part in the Games. The IOC and ATHOC-ATHENS (the Organising Committee of the Olympic Games) were responsible for issuing accreditation cards.

In accordance with the Regulation's provisions, the Greek authorities set up a number of features to help in the smooth running of the derogation procedure. Such measures included, *inter alia*, :

- The setting up of an Olympic Consulate as a special service under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to examine the applications and approve visas for participants. It functioned from 01/01/2004 to 30/10/2004 and was staffed with permanent officials of the MFA and located in the ATHOC-ATHENS building. Its task was to receive the visa applications in electronic format. A specific computer software programme was used for the transmission of the application forms to the competent authorities for controlling records in SIS and, where necessary, the consultation of central authorities of other Member States in conformity with the Common Consular Instruction rules.

- Preparing an 'Accreditation Handbook', in which all of the visa application procedures were spelt out. The handbook was sent to all relevant organisations in advance of submitting lists. The procedure for forwarding visa applications, together with requests for an accreditation card were outlined in the 'Accreditation Card Manual'.

- Forming a network of contacts with Schengen embassies in Athens (co-ordination meetings, exchanging information)

- Establishing a communication network with links to Schengen partner capitals, police and border authorities.

- Creating a 24 hour call centre available from July 2004 until the end of the derogation period in 2004. This service offered direct information on the issuance of visas for participants. This service acted as an effective communication link between border control posts and the Olympic consulate.

- Creating a website on the Internet providing real-time access to Schengen partner services. A special code had to be entered to obtain further information on visa applications and any cancellations.

On other issues, such as document security, the Report suggests that the Olympic accreditation cards issued in 2004 met the highest standards – at least equivalent to those for uniform format for visas. The document encompassed both visible and non-visible optical and physical security features, photograph protection and personal data fields.

The total number of applications received from Members of the Olympic and Paralympic family was 77 230. Ultimately, the number of those accredited and who used their accreditation card were 53 168. Of these 13 077 were visa-requiring third country nationals – so approximately 25%. For Olympic participants, the derogation was valid for 78 days whereas for Paralympic participants the derogation period was set at 72 days. Some journalists and other media related persons were accredited for both games for a no violation of the 90-day rule.

In cases where a participant failed to fulfil certain conditions or if another Schengen State voiced objections during the consultation procedure, the Greek authorities refused the issuing of a uniform Schengen visa for the person concerned. The Greek authorities mentioned 19 cases of refusals during the whole derogation period due to SIS registration

In terms of problems encountered with the implementation of the Regulation, the Greek authorities recorded that, by and large, implementation went smoothly, noting that the provisions in the Regulation proved to be both effective and flexible allowing for a smooth application of the Olympic Chapter, without compromising Schengen area security. Nevertheless, a certain number of issues were raised in their report. Namely,:

- Cases where athletes participated in the Games with a country flag that was different from the country which issued their passport – such as the Dutch Antilles and the British Virgin Islands.

- Participants holders of Residence permits issued by a Schengen State

- Double accreditation.
- Validity of passports.
- Extension of the duration of the say in the common area VTL for persons listed in the SIS.
- Visa ban lists

To conclude, on the basis of information submitted by the Greek authorities, the Commission services are of the opinion that the derogation system for the issuing visas by a Schengen participant who is hosting the Olympic games was successful. Based on the experience of the first derogation, the Commission proposes that it be applied to the issuing of visas for the winter Olympic games in Turin with certain modifications aimed at improving its overall functionality.

Visas: facilitating procedures for members of the Olympic family taking part in the 2004 Games in Athens

2003/0061(CNS) - 15/07/2003 - Final act

PURPOSE : to establish a temporary derogation from the rules relating to visas for members of the Olympic family for the 2004 Games. COMMUNITY MEASURE : Council Regulation 1295/2003/EC relating to measures envisaged to facilitate the procedures for applying and issuing visas for members of the Olympic family taking part in the 2004 Olympic or Paralympic Games in Athens. CONTENT : This Regulation establishes specific provisions introducing a temporary derogation from certain provisions of the Schengen acquis concerning the procedures for applying for and issuing visas as well as for the uniform format for visas for members of the Olympic family for the duration of the 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Apart from these specific provisions the relevant provisions of the Schengen acquis remain in force. A visa may be issued only where the person concerned: - has been designated by one of the responsible organisations and accredited by the Organising Committee of the 2004 Olympic Games and/or Paralympic Games; - holds a valid travel document authorising the crossing of external borders; - has not been identified for non-admission; - is not deemed liable to undermine public order, national security or the international relations of any of the Member States. If the person concerned does not meet the latter two conditions, the services responsible for issuing visas may issue a visa with limited territorial validity. The visa issued will be a uniform short-stay, multiple entry visa authorising a stay of 90 days for the duration of the Games. There are provisions filing the application and the form of the visas as well as for cancellation of a visa. The processing and issuing of the visas will not give rise to any fees being charged by the services responsible for issuing the visa. In addition: - not later than four months after the close of the Paralympic Games, Greece must transmit to the Commission a report on the various aspects of the implementation of the Regulation. - the Commission will draw up an assessment of the functioning of the derogation in respect of the issue of visas to members of the Olympic family. It will draft the evaluation report early enough for the experience gained during the Olympic and Paralympic Games of Athens to be taken into account by the Italian authorities for the organisation of the Winter Olympic Games which will be held in Turin in 2006. ENTRY INTO FORCE : 11/08/2003.

Visas: facilitating procedures for members of the Olympic family taking part in the 2004 Games in Athens

2003/0061(CNS) - 19/06/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Marjo MATIKAINEN-KALLSTRÖM (EPP-ED, FIN) and made a few amendments to the Commission's proposal. (Please refer to the summary dated 11/06/03).

Visas: facilitating procedures for members of the Olympic family taking part in the 2004 Games in Athens

2003/0061(CNS) - 08/04/2003 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to introduce specific provisions on visas for the Olympic family for the duration of the 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Athens. CONTENT : the provision introduced by this Regulation involve a temporary derogation from certain provisions of the Schengen acquis concerning the procedures for applying for and issuing visas for members of the Olympic family. Apart from these specific provisions the relevant provisions of the Schengen acquis remain in force. A visa may be issued only where the person concerned: - has been designated by one of the responsible organisations and accredited by the Organising Committee of the 2004 Olympic Games and/or Paralympic Games; - holds a valid travel document authorising the crossing of external borders; - has not been identified for non-admission; - is not deemed liable to undermine public order, national security or the international relations of one of the Member States. If the person concerned does not meet the latter two conditions, the services responsible for issuing visas may issue a visa with limited territorial validity. The visa issued will be a uniform short-stay, multiple entry visa authorising a stay of 90 days for the duration of the Games. There are provisions filing the application and the form of the visas as well as for cancellation of a visa. The processing and issuing of the visas will not give rise to any fees being charged by the services responsible for issuing the visa. Based on information transmitted by Greece, the Commission will assess the functioning of the derogation and inform the Council and the European Parliament.