



Press Release

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BIOMETRIC VISA TECHNOLOGY INTRODUCED AT THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION

The British High Commission issued its first biometric visa to a non-EU citizen wishing to travel to the United Kingdom on Wednesday.

The British High Commission is the first foreign representative office in Malta to issue visas using biometric technology. This state-of-the-art system recognises applicants' fingerprints using an electronic scanner, before sending them to a centrally held database for cross checking against previous applications.

The introduction of this technology is part of the world-wide biometric identification process designed to facilitate entry procedures to the UK and combat abuse of immigration and asylum systems.

Biometrics are unique, measurable, physical characteristics which can be used to recognise the identity or verify the claimed identity of an individual. These characteristics include facial image, fingerprints and iris patterns

Speaking after he took the finger-scan of visa applicant Malik Delic, British High Commissioner Nick Archer said:

"This is about making technology work for us. There is great public concern about illegal migration to Europe, so it's vital that we have the best possible systems in place to help the bona fide visitor and guard against visa fraud. Biometrics give us the means to improve our performance on both."

High Commission Visa Section Entry Clearance Assistant Maria Attard later handed the approved visa to Mr Delic.

Malta is in the first wave of posts introducing this technology, with the procedure being concluded in all British embassies by 1 January 2008.

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BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION

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Notes for editors: Attached is a document giving details on the biometric technology being used for the issue of visas for persons wishing to visit the United Kingdom. Also attached are three photos of the first applicant to be granted a biometric visa, Malik Delic, with the British High Commissioner Nick Archer, and being given the visa by Entry Clearance Assistant Maria Attard.

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