



Brussels, 21/11/2007

PRESS RELEASE

Visa applicants entering Schengen will be required photo and fingerprints

The Civil Liberties Committee gave its go ahead on Tuesday to a law proposal which will oblige Member States in the Schengen area to take the facial image and ten fingerprints from visa applicants wanting to enter the EU territory. MEPs amended the proposal to exempt children under the age of 12 from giving fingerprints. Children will be also allowed to send scanned photographs so they are not required to appear in person in the consulate.

Member States may also provide for exceptions from the requirement of collecting photographs and fingerprints (known as *biometric identifiers*) for holders of diplomatic passports.

In order to avoid all Member States having to install the necessary equipment for collecting biometrics in every consular office, the regulation allows Member States to cooperate with one or more EU countries in the creation of a common centre in each country to deal with visa applications and the collection of biometrics. For security and data protection reasons MEPs added several binding amendments in their first reading to make sure that cooperation with external service providers in the collection of fingerprints and photos is only the done "as a last resort". In the case of outsourcing, consular officials will have to supervise the service provider and the Member State concerned will be liable for any breaches of strict data protection rules by the service provider.

Finally, MEPs requested the Commission to present a revision report three years after the Visa Information System is brought into operation and every four years thereafter.

Press enquiries:

María Andrés Marín - tel. (32-2) 28 44299

Mobile: +32 (0) 498 98 35 90

e-mail: libe-press@europarl.eu.int