

**15256/04**

**LIMITE**

**VISA 210  
COMIX 717**

**"A" ITEM NOTE**

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from: Council Secretariat General  
to: Council

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Subject: Integration of biometric identifiers into the uniform format for visa stickers and residence permits for third country nationals

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At the meeting on 27 November 2003 the JHA Council agreed on a general approach on the amendment of Council Regulations 1683/95 and 1030/2002 introducing the integration of biometric identifiers into the uniform formats for visas and residence permits. The proposals provided for the mandatory storage of the facial image and two fingerprints within two and three years respectively after adoption of the proposal. A contact less chip should serve as the storage medium.

The European Council in its declaration on terrorism asked the Council to adopt by the end of 2004 the above mentioned proposals and the Commission to adopt the technical specifications within the same timeframe.

On 16 November 2004 the report of the technical "Article. 6 Committee", was examined by the Visa Working Party. The report establishes that technical problems arise with the storage of biometric identifiers in visas. The storage medium integrated in the visa could lead to so-called collision problems when multiple visas are to be put in one travel document. A similar problem could occur in relation to the storage medium in residence permits, if such permits are issued in the form of a sticker in the passport. There are no technical problems for residence permits which are issued in the form of a separate card.

The Visa Working Party therefore, concluded that due to these problems the timeframe for the adoption of the technical specifications for the draft regulation on visas wished by the European Council can not be met.

The Presidency has concluded that among the alternatives presented by the Article 6 Committee the most suitable alternative for the basic technical concept has to be decided, which entails further discussions. A suitable solution should be identified within the first three months of 2005.

On 24 November 2004 the Mixed Committee at Senior Officials level took note of this and agreed to forward it to the Council for information.

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