

MEPs back new EU travel document to ease return of irregular non-EU residents

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The Commission's proposal for a standard EU travel document, to speed up the process of returning non-EU nationals who stay "irregularly" in EU member states without valid passports or identity cards, was endorsed by Civil Liberties Committee MEPs on Monday. Members highlight that many EU countries are currently facing serious difficulties in returning these residents to their home countries in a safe and lawful way.

The text, drafted by Jussi Halla-aho (ECR, FI) and approved by 39 votes in favour to 9 against, with 2 abstentions, points out that the destination countries acceptance of the substitute documents used by member states today is low, for reasons that include inadequate security details and varying formats. The lack of valid travel documents issued by some third countries is also a major obstacle to a successful return process, say MEPs.

"The low enforcement-rate of return decisions is detrimental to the credibility and legitimacy of the European asylum and immigration policy in the eyes of our citizens, and it also encourages abuse of the asylum system. While the common European travel document for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals is no magic solution, it is one small piece in the puzzle and one step in the right direction", said Mr Halla-aho.

Improved security details and less red tape

The proposal would produce a common format for the European travel document. Its new technical details would also include personal information such as name, age, gender and distinguishing marks as well as a passport photograph, in order to combat counterfeiting and falsification.

By using the same security features laid down in 2002 for visas issued by EU countries to residents without valid travel documents, the document's recognition should be enhanced and the administrative burdens reduced for both EU and destination countries' authorities, according to the proposal.

Readmission agreements

Finally, MEPs call on the EU and member states to promote the use of this harmonised document in the context of readmission agreements reached with third countries.

Next steps

The new Regulation would also have to be agreed with the Council, using the ordinary legislative procedure, before it can enter into force.

Note to editors

The Civil Liberties Committee also debated separate amendments to a legislative proposal to determine an EU list of safe countries of origin. You can review the video recording of

Press release

the discussion here.

Further information

- Catch up via Video on Demand (VOD) (30.05.2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/?legislature=8&start-date=30-05-2016&end-date=31-05-2016&committee=LIBE>
- Profile on rapporteur Jussi Halla-aho (ECR, FI)
: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/124727/JUSSI_HALLA-AHO_home.html
- Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/libe/home.html>
- Dynamic page containing latest videos and photos:
: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Page.aspx?id=2744>
- EP Think Tank: EU Readmission Agreements: Facilitating the return of irregular migrants :
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI\(2015\)554212](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2015)554212)
- EuroparlTV: <http://www.europarltv.europa.eu>

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