



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Security features in travel documents: Belgium does not comply with the obligations to issue biometric passports

Brussels, 29 September 2011 – The European Commission today called on Belgium to take all measures necessary in order to comply with its obligation to issue biometric passports with fingerprints. The harmonisation of security features and the integration of biometric identifiers is an important step towards more secure travel documents and better protection of EU citizens from fraud. With the entry into force of [Council Regulation \(EC\) 2252/2004](#), Member States had until 28 August 2006 to ensure that all passports issued contain a chip with the holder's facial image and until 28 June 2009 to ensure that this chip also carries the holder's fingerprints. More than two years after the deadline set for including fingerprints, Belgian passports still do not meet this requirement.

Secure travel documents, which the EU citizens can rely on, are one of the building blocks of the Schengen area – the common European space of free and secure movement. It is crucial that all Member States issue compliant passports if we are to guarantee the same level of protection against fraudulent use throughout the EU.

Further to a letter sent by the Commission on 1 October 2010, the Belgian authorities have provided clarifications on the timeline foreseen for issuing passports with fingerprints to all citizens. However, to date, Belgium has not adopted the necessary measures and has not yet provided specimen passports to other Member States.

Amongst the EU Member States that have to comply with this legislation, Belgium is the only one who does not currently issue biometric passports with fingerprints. The Commission has therefore decided to issue a reasoned opinion inviting Belgium to comply with the Regulation (in accordance with Article 258 of the TFEU). In the absence of a satisfactory response within two months, the Commission may refer the Member States concerned to the EU's Court of Justice.

Background

Council [Regulation \(EC\) 2252/2004](#) on standards for security features and biometrics in passports and travel documents issued by Member States of 13 December 2004 harmonizes the security features, including biometric identifiers, for passports and travel documents issued by EU Member States.

All States which are bound by the Regulation (all EU Member States except Ireland and the UK, as well as the associated Schengen States – Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) are obliged to adapt their national legislation accordingly.

For more information

[MEMO/11/646](#)

Homepage of Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/malmstrom/welcome/default_en.htm

Homepage DG Home Affairs:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/index_en.htm

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