



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS



20.03.09

Biometric visas: children under twelve won't have to give fingerprints

Children under twelve will be exempted from the requirement to provide fingerprints following an agreement with the Council approved by the EP Civil Liberties Committee on Monday.

The European Visa Information System (VIS) is intended to facilitate the procedure for issuing visas while preventing "visa shopping", i.e. simultaneous applications for visas in more than one EU country. For the system to work well, common consular instructions are needed to ensure that all Member States issue visas on the same basis and that the visas contain the same features. The purpose of biometric features - a photograph and ten fingerprints, as recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organization - is to enable the identity of visa applicants to be verified and to establish a reliable link between visa holders and their passports so as to prevent the use of false identities.

During negotiations with the Council, MEPs successfully argued for children under twelve to be exempted from the requirement to give their fingerprints. Studies on the reliability of fingerprints suggest that they can undergo change before that age and might therefore no longer match those on the visa.



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Discrimination in the provision of services

On Monday, the European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee backed a directive, put forward by the European Commission, which aims to reduce discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, age, gender or sexual orientation, whether direct or indirect, and whether based on real or presumed criteria. It comes on top of three other directives: one on discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, both within and outside the labour market, one on discrimination on the labour market and one on equal treatment between men and women.

The directive will apply to social protection and health care, social benefits, education and access to goods and services, including housing.

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