

European travel document: MEPs and ministers strike informal deal

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A new standard European travel document to speed the return of non-EU nationals staying "irregularly" in EU member states without valid passports or identity cards was informally agreed by MEPs and EU ministers on Thursday evening. A key goal during the talks has been to increase third countries' acceptance of the document through improved technical details. To enter into force, this informal deal needs to be formally endorsed by the full Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

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

The purpose of the new regulation is to remove some of the reasons why the travel document is not always used by member states or recognised by the third countries. It also aims to reduce the period during which returnees without valid identity documents are held in administrative detention.

By using the same security features laid down in 2002 for visas issued by EU countries, the document's recognition should be enhanced and the administrative burdens reduced for both EU and destination countries' authorities.

Readmission agreements

Parliament asks EU and member states to promote the use of this harmonised document in the context of readmission agreements reached with third countries. MEPs also stress the need for EU countries to enhance cooperation with third countries' diplomatic representations on this issue.

Update with new information

At Parliament's request, the deal also includes a guarantee that competent authorities issuing the updated travel document will have to take into account any relevant technical developments in the future. The same authorities will also provide more attached information, as well as translations of the new travel document, should it be required.

Parliament also negotiated clear references in the new regulation to respect for international law, the Charter of fundamental rights, and the rights of the Child.

Review mechanism

Finally, MEPs inserted guarantees that the operation of the new European travel document will be thoroughly reviewed by the EU Commission, as part of a wider review of the EU's Return Directive. The Commission will be required to report back on its findings to Parliament and to the Council.

Press release

Next steps

The informal agreement will be put to a confirmation vote in the Civil Liberties Committee in July, on a date to be decided later on. If the deal is approved in the committee it will be put to a vote by Parliament as a whole and the Council of Ministers. All the dates for these votes will also be decided later this year.

Further information

- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/libe/home.html>
- Press release on the committee vote (30.05.2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160530IPR29679/MEPs-back-new-EU-travel-document-to-ease-return-of-irregular-non-EU-residents>
- Procedure file:
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/0306\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/0306(COD)&l=en)
- Profile on rapporteur Jussi Halla-aho (ECR, FI):
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/124727/JUSSI_HALLA-AHO_home.html
- 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)

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