

Commission Communication, A People's Europe: extract on the European Passport (24 September 1984)

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[...]

II. Current position and new moves

3. European Passport

At its meeting in Rome on 3 and 4 December 1975 the European Council approved the introduction of a passport having a uniform format. Pursuant to this decision the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council passed a resolution on 23 June 1981¹ agreeing on the uniform format and the scope of the passport; in addition they resolved that the “Member States will endeavour” to issue European passports from 1 January 1985 at the latest.

According to the information available to the Commission a number of Member States have already taken the necessary steps to ensure that the deadline of 1 January 1985 for the introduction of the European passport explicitly confirmed by the Fontainebleau European Council will be met. But in other Member states its introduction by that date appears to have come up against problems, largely because deliberations on the simultaneous adoption of a machine-readable format are still not concluded.

The Commission considers that the consequent delay in many Member States in introducing the European passport is unacceptable. Any Member State that condones it is seriously underestimating the urgency of the operation from the point of view of the integration policy and flagrantly contradicting the conclusions of the European Council; in addition, such an attitude is incomprehensible if only in view of the preparation period of several years that has been allowed for introducing the passport.

The Commission has, repeatedly expressed misgivings about a machine-readable document, to the extent that use of this technique entails the risk of tighter and more systematic checks at the Community's internal borders.

Although possibly justified at the Community's outer frontiers, any “computerised gates” at internal borders are at all costs to be avoided. The eventual solution should rather lie in a general abolition of border checks of passports and identity documents in passenger travel between Member States, while at the same time tightening controls at the Community's outer borders. (See points 4.2 and 4.3)

The Commission would therefore strongly urge all Member States to take the necessary measures, without any delay, to ensure that the European passport can actually be issued to their nationals from 1 January 1985.

In this context the Commission finds it difficult to hide its concerns arising from the tendency emerging in some Member States to substantially increase the fee for the issue of a passport to coincide with the issue of the European passport. The Commission appreciates that a Member State may charge a fee in the course of its administrative activities to cover the services provided. The risk, however, that an excessive increase in such fees would have dissuasive and harmful effects with regard to the way the European passport is received, should not be underestimated. As complaints reaching the Commission show, current fees for passports in many Member States are already regarded as excessive and are consequently considered to be an obstacle to travel, particularly for young people. The Commission would therefore urge the Member States to review their fee policies and, in any event to refrain from using the introduction of the European passport to increase passport fees.

[...]

1 OJ C 241, 19 September 1981, p. 1.