

**Question for oral answer O-000052/2012
to the Commission**

Rule 115

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Subject: Biometric passports

The Council Regulation (EC) No 2252/2004 on standards for security features and biometrics in passports and travel documents issued by Member States was adopted, in 2004, as an important step to make travel document more secure, and to establish a more reliable link between passports and their holders, ensuring better protection against fraudulent use.

However, passport security is not confined to the passport itself: the whole process, beginning with the presentation of the documents needed for a passport to be issued, followed by the collection of the biometric data and ending with checking and 'matching' at border control posts, is relevant. It is useless to increase the level of passport security if we continue to allow 'weak points' in other parts of the chain.

During the subsequent revision, in 2008, the EP drew attention to the fact that there was still not very much experience in the use of these new technologies, and too many concerns remained regarding:

- the reliability and usefulness of fingerprints taken from children and the elderly;
- the level of confidence in the process of collecting the biometric data;
- the possible shortcomings in identification systems and the error rates existing in the various Member States;
- the existing disparities regarding the documents that must be submitted and the way in which these documents are issued (the so-called 'breeder documents').

Therefore, a three-year revision clause was introduced, in order to allow the necessary studies (requested by the EP in each of these areas) to take place.

Could the Commission confirm whether the results of the requested studies are already available? Is the Commission considering re-evaluating the rules given the problems that appear to exist in several Member States? (For example, it is alleged that 500 000 to 1 000 000 of the 6.5 million biometric passports in circulation in France are false, having been obtained on the basis of fraudulent documents, and that a test conducted by the local government of Roermond (Netherlands) revealed that in 21 % of 448 cases, the fingerprints taken were non-verifiable and therefore useless).

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