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Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

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***I
DRAFT REPORT

on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council relating to measures envisaged to facilitate the procedures for applying for and issuing visas for members of the Olympic family taking part in the 2006 Olympic and/or Paralympic Winter Games in Turin
(COM(2005)0412 – C6-0275/2005 – 2005/0169(COD))

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Rapporteur: Stefano Zappalà

Symbols for procedures

*	Consultation procedure *majority of the votes cast*
**I	Cooperation procedure (first reading) *majority of the votes cast*
**II	Cooperation procedure (second reading) *majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position* *majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend the common position*
***	Assent procedure *majority of Parliament's component Members except in cases covered by Articles 105, 107, 161 and 300 of the EC Treaty and Article 7 of the EU Treaty*
***I	Codecision procedure (first reading) *majority of the votes cast*
***II	Codecision procedure (second reading) *majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position* *majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend the common position*
***III	Codecision procedure (third reading) *majority of the votes cast, to approve the joint text*

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the Commission.)

Amendments to a legislative text

In amendments by Parliament, amended text is highlighted in ***bold italics***. Highlighting in *normal italics* is an indication for the relevant departments showing parts of the legislative text for which a correction is proposed, to assist preparation of the final text (for instance, obvious errors or omissions in a given language version). These suggested corrections are subject to the agreement of the departments concerned.

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(COM(2005)0412 – C6-0275/2005 – 2005/0169(COD))

(Codecision procedure: first reading)

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2005)0412)[1],

– having regard to Article 251(2) and Article 62(a) and (b)(ii) of the EC Treaty, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C6-0275/2005),

– having regard to Rule 51 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (A6-0000/2005),

1. Approves the Commission proposal;

2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it intends to amend its proposal substantially or replace it with another text;

3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council and Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

[1] OJ C ... / Not yet published in OJ.

1. Background

On 15 July 2003, having consulted the European Parliament[1], the Council adopted Regulation (EC) No 1295/2003[2] aimed at simplifying both the procedures for applying for and issuing Schengen visas for members of the Olympic family participating in the 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Athens.

The simplification of procedures was designed to allow Greece to respect the obligations incumbent upon it, according to Article 65 of the Olympic Charter concerning the Olympic Identity and Accreditation Card. This article stipulates that this card is a document which, together with the passport or official travel document of its holder, authorises entry into the country in which the city organising the Olympic Games is situated. The members of the Olympic family may thus enter the territory of the State where the Games are held without being subject to other procedures or formalities. The specific objective of the Regulation was to ensure that this requirement was met, without challenging the essential principles and the smooth running of the Schengen area.

2. Objective and Substance of the Proposal

In his report (see above), Marjo Matikainen-Kallström asked for the implementation of Regulation 1295/2003 to be evaluated in good time so as to use this first experience to best advantage for the organisation of the Winter Olympic Games in Turin.

On the basis of a report submitted by Greece, the Commission carried out an evaluation[3], from which it emerged that, in general, the Greek authorities did not come up against any major problem in applying the provisions of Regulation (EC) No. 1295/2003. This allowed the Commission to conclude that the derogation system provided for by the said Regulation constituted a flexible and efficient process, which would not compromise the level of security required in the Schengen area.

Due to the very satisfactory operation of Regulation (EC) No 1295/2003, this proposal includes exactly the same requirements and simply adapts them to the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2006.

Thus, by way of derogation from the provisions in the Schengen *acquis,* visa applicants are not required to present themselves in person at the consular services to submit the visa applications nor to receive their visas, nor does the visa application have to be presented using the standard form provided. Furthermore, the requirements for providing supporting documents for the visa application are less strict. The visa is not, however, delivered in the form of a sticker but appears as a specific number on the Accreditation Card for the 2006 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It should be noted that the proposed system does not in any way challenge the requirements of

[1] On the basis of the report by Marjo Matikainen-Kallström, A5-0211/2003.
[2] OJ L 183, 22.7.2003, p. 1.
[3] SEC(2005) 1051 of 11 August 2005.

the Schengen *acquis* as regards the verification and applicable procedures in matters of public safety.

3. Remarks of the Rapporteur

Although this proposal is governed by the codecision procedure which gives Parliament an increased role compared with when the proposal for a regulation was considered for the Athens Olympic Games, the rapporteur is prepared to support the Commission proposal without amendment in light of the following:

1. This proposal is almost identical to the previous one. It includes exactly the same provisions and simply adapts them to the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in Turin.

2. When the first proposal for a regulation was considered by the European Parliament under the consultation procedure, all amendments proposed by Parliament were accepted by the Council and are now included in this proposal.

3. In accordance with the evaluation carried out by the Commission, which was based on the experience acquired during the Athens Olympic Games, the provisions of the Regulation were found to be efficient and reduced the need for issuing visas, without jeopardising public safety which needs to be guaranteed in the Schengen area.

4. To guarantee the success of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Turin, it is essential that the Regulation is put into effect at an early date.