

Recommendation 51 (1953)¹

Simplification of passport, customs and currency formalities

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

Having considered the Motion tabled by the late Count Jacini on the simplification of frontier formalities for travellers, [Doc. 98 \(1951\)](#);

Having taken cognisance of the three reports of the Scandinavian Interparliamentary Committee on the simplification of passport, customs and currency formalities;

Having given careful consideration to the work of the United Nations on the subject of passports and frontier formalities in order that there should be no overlapping or duplication of effort;

Convinced that it is in the interests of all the Member States of the Council of Europe to facilitate the movement of nationals of Member States in order to promote greater understanding and good will between them;

Believing that frontier formalities as at present carried out cause unnecessary trouble and delay;

Having regard to the Report of the Committee on Legal and Administrative Questions, [Doc. 201](#), which is transmitted to the Committee of Ministers so that the present Recommendation may be examined in the light of this Report;

SECTION A

Visas

Having noted that the Resolution adopted by the Committee of Ministers at its Tenth Session, on the initiative of the Assembly, concerning the desirability of abolishing visas for travel between all Member States of the Council of Europe, has not yet been fully implemented,

1. Recommends to the Committee of Ministers

- a. that, wherever they are still required, visas should be completely abolished as soon as possible for travel between all member countries of the Council of Europe;
- b. that, in cases where special circumstances make it particularly difficult for visas to be completely abolished on a reciprocal basis, the possibility should be envisaged of action being taken on a unilateral basis and that in any case transit visas should be dispensed with and entry visas should be issued without charge;

1. This Recommendation was adopted by the Assembly at its twenty-first Sitting, on 23rd September, 1953 (see [Doc. 201](#), Report of the Committee on Legal and Administrative Questions).



- c. that immediate consideration be given to the possibility of abolishing the visa requirement for travel as between Member States of the Council of Europe and certain non-Member States, namely Austria, Finland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and Yugoslavia;

SECTION

Passport Control

Convinced that the ultimate objective of the Member States of the Council of Europe must be the complete abolition of passports for the purpose of travel between Member States;

Recalling that this would have no more than a partial return to the practice of free movement which existed before 1914 in virtually the whole of Europe;

Welcoming the arrangements obtaining as between the Scandinavian states whereby persons travelling from one country to another *are* no longer required to give proof of their identity on crossing the borders between these countries, and as between Ireland and the United Kingdom, whereby, in addition, aliens reaching the United Kingdom from abroad through the Republic of Ireland are not interviewed again by Immigration Officers on arrival in the United Kingdom and aliens travelling to the Republic of Ireland via the United Kingdom are seen by British Immigration Officers and not on arrival in the territory of the Republic of Ireland,

2. Recommends to the Committee of Ministers

- a. that similar arrangements should be *made* among other groups of States, for example the members of Uniscan (Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom) to which Iceland, Ireland and possibly Finland might be added, and the members of the European Coal and Steel Community (Belgium, France, the German Federal Republic, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands), to which the United Kingdom and possibly other Member States of the Council of Europe might be added, it being understood that there are other possible combinations and that it is intended that the creation of these regional passport unions should, in view of their interlocking element, eventually lead to the passport requirement for travel in all Member States of the Council of Europe;
- b. that, as an intermediate step towards the achievement of this purpose, groups of neighbouring countries, for example, those named above, should waive, the passport requirement for nationals of Members of the groups, and that. Identity cards at present issued by the competent national administrative authorities of Member States for domestic purposes bearing a photograph (for example, national identity cards, certificates of nationality valid as travel documents, electoral cards, driving licences, national health cards, social security cards, passes entitling holder to free railway travel, *etc.*), should be recognised by other Member States as documents providing a satisfactory means of identification;

SECTION C

Collective travel documents

Having given consideration to the arrangement concluded by the Brussels Treaty Powers (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) concerning collective travel documents for young persons which came into force on 1st April, 1952;

Believing that young people from all Member States of the Council of Europe should be able to travel on collective travel documents and that the form and contents of these should be standardised;

Recording its view that this recommendation in no way affects its main proposal for the ultimate abolition of passports for travel within the Member States of the Council of Europe and that it is a step towards that end,

3. Recommends to the Committee of Ministers :

- a. that Members of the Council of Europe which are not Members of the Brussels Treaty Organisation should be invited to adhere to the arrangement concerning collective passports for young persons which came into force on 1st April, 1952;

- b. that consideration be given to the possibility of extending the use of collective travel documents to persons over the age of 18 or 21, as the case may be, and that, so far as possible, there should be no limitation to the kind of visits for which collective travel documents are issued;

SECTION D

Customs Control

Believing that there is value in defining more precisely what categories of goods are included within the term "personal effects", so that tourists may know exactly which articles they are entitled to carry free of duty;

Considering, moreover, that it is desirable to relax current regulations in order that travellers may be granted increased facilities for carrying articles other than personal effects and personal food supplies;

Considering, furthermore, that quantitative limits must still remain in respect of certain commodities which are revenue-producing in a high degree;

Being of opinion, finally, that if the foregoing proposals were adopted it should be possible to modernise the actual way in which customs control is carried out at the present time,

4. Recommends to the Committee of Ministers :

- a. that all Member States of the Council of Europe should adopt regulations enabling all travellers, including their nationals, to import and export the following articles free of customs and other duties without special import and export permits, if they are part of the personal effects of the traveller and if they are intended solely for his personal use :
 - i. articles of clothing, bedding, and other articles for personal use, such as watches, jewellery, toilet articles, etc.;
 - ii. other small belongings, such as binoculars, cameras, and small cinematograph cameras, together with developed and undeveloped films and plates, portable musical instruments, gramophones (including a reasonable number of records) wireless receiving sets and portable typewriters;
 - iii. bicycles, camping equipment and sports articles (for example, sporting guns and other shooting equipment, fishing tackle, skis, tennis rackets, canoes and similar small crafts without engines, including collapsible boats);
 - iv. perambulators and invalid chairs;
 - v. articles of clothing for personal use acquired abroad which, having regard to their quantity and value and to the traveller's length of stay abroad, can be regarded as personal effects;
- b. that persons travelling as tourists should be allowed to import into all Member States, including their countries of origin, free of customs and other duties and without import licence, apart from personal effects, articles purchased abroad of a total value of not more than the equivalent of 20 U.S. dollars (this amount to be raised as soon as circumstances permit to 50 dollars) calculated on the basis of retail prices of such goods in the country of purchase, on condition that they are carried on the traveller's person or in the luggage accompanying the traveller at the point of entry, provided that from their volume and composition it is clear that the goods so imported are not intended for sale but solely for personal use or consumption, and provided also that the import of these goods does not contravene existing national regulations;
- c. that the following quantities should become minimum standards in all Member States :
 - 200 cigarettes or 250 grammes of tobacco, or 25 cigars or lesser quantities of each in relative proportions;
 - 2 litres of wines and spirits, of which not more than one litre may be spirits;
 - 1/2 litre (one pint) of toilet water, of which not more than one-eighth of a litre (a quarter of a pint) may be perfumed spirits;
- d. that the present system of customs control should be modified and replaced by a system of occasional checks, if possible only at the point of entry;

SECTION E

Currency Control

Recommendation 51 (1953)

Considering that it is not at present possible to establish uniform currency regulations in all Member States of the Council of Europe but that, nevertheless, certain improvements can be effected,

5. Recommends to the Committee of Ministers :

- a. that all Member States of the Council of Europe should make the most generous possible allocation of currency for travel between the member countries of the Council of Europe;
- b. that they should authorise the import and export by all travellers of banknotes up to the value of at least 10 pounds sterling in their own currency;
- c. that the currency control, insofar as it is considered necessary by Member States, should be exercised by the simplest means and least inconvenient to travellers, for example through their banks;
- d. that regular currency control at frontiers should be discontinued and replaced by occasional checks similar to those suggested in the case of customs control;

SECTION F

International Instruments

Having taken note of the recommendations of the 1947 Conference of Experts on Passports and Frontier Formalities and of the Convention to facilitate the crossing of frontiers for passengers and baggage carried by rail, signed in Geneva on the 1st January, 1952,

6. Recommends to the Committee of Ministers :

- a. that steps should be taken to ensure that those Members of the Council of Europe which did not take part in the 1947 Conference are, nevertheless, invited to comply with its recommendations; and
- b. that the Members of the Council of Europe who have signed but not ratified the 1952 Convention should deposit their instrument of ratification as soon as possible and that those who have not signed this Convention but are able to do so should be invited to accede to it forthwith.