Council Regulation (EC) No 856/2008 of 24 July 2008 amending Regulation (EC) No 1683/95 laying down a uniform format for visas as regards the numbering of visas

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 856/2008

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amending Regulation (EC) No 1683/95 laying down a uniform format for visas as regards the numbering of visas

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 62(2)(b)(iii) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the Opinion of the European Parliament,

Whereas:

(1) The current legal framework provided for in Council Regulation (EC) No 1683/95[(1)] and the additional technical specifications, adopted by the Commission on 7 February 1996 and 27 December 2000, do not allow for reliable searches in the Visa Information System established under Regulation (EC) No 767/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 on the Visa Information System (VIS) and the exchange of data between Member States on short-stay visas (VIS Regulation)[(2)].

(2) The numbering system in use does not allow in particular for sufficient characters to be indicated on the visas issued by Member States with large numbers of applications.

(3) A consistent and unique visa sticker numbering system is therefore essential for the verification in the VIS.

(4) Regulation (EC) No 1683/95 should be amended accordingly.

(5) As regards Iceland and Norway, this Regulation constitutes a development of provisions of the Schengen *acquis* within the meaning of the Agreement concluded by the Council of the European Union and the Republic of Iceland and the Kingdom of Norway concerning the latters' association with the implementation, application and development of the Schengen *acquis*[(3)] which fall within the area referred to in Article 1, point B of Council Decision 1999/437/EC[(4)] on certain arrangements for the application of that Agreement.

(6) As regards Switzerland, this Regulation constitutes a development of provisions of the Schengen *acquis* within the meaning of the Agreement signed between the European Union, the European Community and the Swiss Confederation concerning the association of the Swiss Confederation with the implementation, application and development of the Schengen *acquis*, which fall within the area referred to in Article 1, point A of Decision 1999/437/EC read in conjunction with Article 4(1) of Council Decisions 2004/849/EC[(5)] and 2004/860/EC[(6)].

Changes to legislation: *There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Council Regulation (EC) No 856/2008. (See end of Document for details)*

(7) As regards Liechtenstein, this Regulation constitutes a development of provisions of the Schengen *acquis* within the meaning of the Protocol signed between the European Union, the European Community, the Swiss Confederation and the Principality of Liechtenstein on the accession of the Principality of Liechtenstein to the Agreement between the European Union, the European Community and the Swiss Confederation on the Swiss Confederation's association with the implementation, application and development of the Schengen *acquis*, which fall within the area referred to in Article 1, point A of Decision 1999/437/EC, read in conjunction with Article 3 of Council Decision 2008/261/EC[7].

(8) In accordance with Article 1 of the Protocol on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty establishing the European Community, the United Kingdom and Ireland are not participating in the adoption of this Regulation. As a result, and without prejudice to Article 4 of the said Protocol, the provisions of this Regulation do not apply to the United Kingdom and Ireland,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

Regulation (EC) No 1683/95 is hereby amended as follows:

1. in Article 2, the following paragraph shall be added:

3. In accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 6(2), it may be decided that the specifications referred to in Article 2 shall be secret and not be published. In that case they shall be made available only to the bodies designated by the Member States as responsible for the printing and to persons duly authorised by a Member State or the Commission.;

2. in Article 3, paragraph 1 shall be deleted;

3. the Annex shall be replaced by the Annex to this Regulation.

Article 2

This Regulation shall enter into force on the 20th day following its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Member States shall apply this Regulation at the latest on 1 May 2009. Member States may use up their remaining stocks in consular offices not connected to the Visa Information System (VIS).

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in the Member States in accordance with the Treaty establishing the European Community.

***Changes to legislation:** There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Council Regulation (EC) No 856/2008. (See end of Document for details)*

Done at Brussels, 24 July 2008.

For the Council

The President

B. HORTEFEUX