The European passport

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At the end of the Paris Summit of 9-10 December 1974, the Heads of State or Government of the Nine issued a final communiqué that referred to the setting up of a committee of experts to work on the standardisation of passports prior to the introduction of a passport union, the abolition of passport controls within the Community and the harmonisation of conditions for entry and residence in each of the Member States. At its meeting in Rome on 3-4 December 1975, the European Council approved the introduction of passports based on a standard format, to be issued as from 1978. Representatives of the governments of the Ten adopted the first standard passport format on 23 June 1981. The prototype of the European passport was presented to the press during the Fontainebleau European Council on 25-26 June 1984 by François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic and President-in-Office of the Community.

The first European passports, based on the standard format and burgundy in colour, bearing both national and Community symbols, were issued on 1 January 1985. The heading 'European Community' and the name of the Member State appeared on the passport cover in the official language(s) of the country issuing the passport. However, the fee, period of validity and conditions for obtaining the passport continued to be national prerogatives. The European passport nonetheless constituted a sign of mutual recognition and an identity document common to all the citizens of the European Community. It was introduced gradually as national passports expired.