Inspecting a Document

Inspecting a document should be a straightforward process, so long as you follow the same process each time. When inspecting a document, pay specific attention to the following :

Passports

- Does the cover have the right appearance?
- Is the printing sufficiently sharp and detailed?
- Do any of the pages protrude from the (side of) the document?
- Is the binding of the booklet original? Are the stitch holes (perforations) equidistant from each other? Have all the stitch holes (perforations) been used?
- Are all the security features that the document should contain actually present? What about watermarks, UV features, etc?
- Does the document contain the correct number of pages? Are the page numbers sequential?
- Is the pattern of the background printing in any way damaged? Does this hold true for all pages?

Ten tips for inspecting ID documents

- Always follow the procedures in the same order.
- Pay careful attention to details (make it a routine).
- Do not accept ID documents that are presented inside a holder - get the person presenting the ID document to remove it from the holder.
- Check the date of issue and the expiry date of the document.
- Check how the photograph has been attached and inspect the security features on the biographical data page.
- Ensure that the original foil/laminate has not been covered by a second layer.
- Inspect the watermark and compare it to the watermarks found in any of the remaining pages of the document.
- Pay particular attention to visible alterations on, and damage to, the biographical data page.
- Hold the document under a UV lamp, particularly the page containing the biographical data.
- Remember : a watermark should never fluoresce, and never be printed on the back of a document!

If You Think Something is Wrong?

If you believe that you've been given a document which might be forged or a counterfeit, or if you are unsure, there are a number of things you can do, and some things you should not :

Do :

- ☑ fully check the document for all security devices and tampering ;
- ☑ ask open questions of the person about the document ;
- ☑ take a photocopy of the document ;
- ☑ note down everything you suspect to be wrong with it ;
- ☑ get third party verification of the document ; and / or
- ☑ pass the details to your investigation section.

Don't :

- ☒ be worried – take your time checking ;
- ☒ become complacent about the documents you receive ;
- ☒ let the person know that you are suspicious – this may cause them to run away ;
- ☒ confiscate the document – you do not normally have these powers ;
- ☒ be afraid to get a second opinion.

Verification

If you are trying to authenticate a document which you have been given, you could :

- Contact the issuing authority. This is the most effective way of confirming whether a document is genuine. If the customer has asked for the document to be returned, make sure you have taken a copy so that you are able to quote full details and a reference number.
- Visit www.consilium.europa.eu/prado/EN/prado-start-page.html. This website is dedicated to prevention of identity fraud and contains details of the security devices that should be present for (mostly) EU identity documents. You may view document updates and information about document checking.
- If the document is a United Kingdom Passport, you can contact the Identity and Passport Service. Email oiu@ips.gsi.gov.uk with details of the passport and what you think is wrong with it (including scanned images if you have them). Include your contact details with your email.
- Pass the document to investigations for verification. Explain to the customer that checks are to be made, if they wish to wait they can.

Always report a 'dodgy' document to your investigations team, so that they can alert other interested parties.

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