Justice and home affairs: priorities for cooperation from 01/01/1998

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OBJECTIVE: laying down the priorities for the Union for cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs (from 1 January 1998 to the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam). SUBSTANCE: the Union's priorities were: (1) combating terrorism: strengthening cooperation; (2) combating organized crime: implementation of an action programme in the field (COS0548); (3) combating drugs: implementation of various action plans, including a plan for judicial and customs cooperation aimed at reducing supply and a combat programme concerning synthetic drugs (COS0566); (4) improving police and customs cooperation: implementation of the Europol Convention, strengthened technical cooperation, particularly among national intelligence services, a draft 'Naples II' Convention, combating counterfeiting, etc.; (5) improving judicial cooperation: - in civil matters: finalization of the draft 'Brussels II' Convention on matrimonial matters and custody of children, implementation of the Convention on the service of judicial and extrajudicial documents in civil and commercial matters (CNS97901), examination of the future of judicial cooperation in civil matters in the light of the Treaty of Amsterdam, etc., - in criminal matters: draft Convention on mutual assistance on criminal matters, Convention on the enforcement of driving disqualifications, - in civil and criminal matters: implementation of the joint action concerning the establishment of a European Judicial Network (CNS97911), study of the cooperation possibilities afforded in this field, etc.; (6) improving cooperation with regard to immigration and asylum: implementation of the Dublin Convention, harmonization of national procedures for granting the right to asylum and conditions for the reception of asylum applicants, examination of the legal status of third-country nationals residing legally in Member States, combating illegal immigration, cooperation in detecting false documents, combating 'marriages of convenience', support programmes for refugees, etc.; (7) stepping up checks on persons at external frontiers: draft Convention on the crossing of external frontiers, increased operational cooperation between authorities carrying out checks at external frontiers, harmonizing visa policies; (8) combating racism and xenophobia: continuation of efforts, both at judicial and police level; (9) combating corruption and fraud affecting the Community's financial interests: implementation of the communication on combating corruption, etc.; (10) horizontal actions: preventing crime, combating trafficking in human beings, combating the use of new technologies for criminal purposes. At the same time, the Council would incorporate the Schengen 'acquis' into the new Treaty and would examine the work structures involved in setting up an area of freedom, security and justice, as defined in Amsterdam. It would also strengthen measures aimed at creating a 'pre-accession strategy' when deciding on its priorities for enlargement in terms of justice and home affairs. Other work programmes would incorporate cooperation with other third countries. The priorities determined on by the Council could be revised, particularly at the beginning of each new Council Presidency.