Crossing at external borders of the States, Schengen cooperation. Annual reports 1998

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PURPOSE : The presentation of the 1998 Annual Report on the implementation of the Schengen Convention. CONTENT : The Schengen message is as follows: the abolition of internal border checks to permit the free movement of persons in Europe is justified provided it is accompanied by efficient compensatory measures to safeguard security. 10 Contracting States have brought it into force (but with only partial enforcement in Greece). The report concludes that it is a valuable instrument that has performed a historic service, in contributing decisively to the fact that Europe is perceived as a security community, as well as in achieving free movement. Schengen achievements are not yet complete and can be built upon. The report looks at several areas of operation, including the abolition of internal border checks, the use of the Schengen Information System (SIS), the movement of persons, measures to combat drug trafficking and police and judicial co-operation. Some of the main points are as follows: The operation and use of the SIS were judged to be positive in 1998. There was a marked increase in the number of alerts. Furthermore, a comparison of the number of hits with the number of alerts shows that the efficiency of the SIS in connection with Article 95 of the Convention (arrest for the purpose of extradition) is particularly high. Arrangements were being made for the transfer of the SIS to the European Union, following the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty. - Considerable progress was made in the harmonisation of the common visa policy - Drug tourism as a regional problem in the Schengen States is a phenomenon that must be countered with stronger measures, particularly by using proven forms of co-operation and guidelines on the regional routes projects.