Fight against organized crime: a European action plan

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OBJECTIVE: to present an action programme in the field of Justice and Internal Affairs on the fight against organized crime. CONTENT: the document presented by the high-level panel (experts from the Member States in the field of policing, justice and customs) sets out 15 political guidelines and some thirty recommendations in a detailed programme to be implemented in accordance with a specific timetable. The establishment of a European network between the judicial authorities of the fifteen Member States and the transformation of EUROPOL into a Federal Police Office with investigative powers is one of the most far-reaching measures. The main recommendations include: - adopting a multi-annual training and research programme on organized crime; - strengthening the directive on money laundering; - a study of high-technology crime; - implementing an anti-corruption policy; - mobilizing the potential offered by the structural funds (ESF and URBAN) in order to prevent cities from becoming the favoured haunt of organized crime; - compiling a black list of operators implicated in organized crime; - protecting means of payment against fraud and counterfeiting; - making better use of the potential of PHARE and TACIS in the fight against crime. The programme does not, however, institute a European judicial area. It merely represents the first step in this direction. The high-level panel notes in this respect that some Member States are still most reluctant to see criminal harmonization. However, a number of priorities have been consolidated, such as: - the effective implementation of instruments already adopted; - the implementation of judicial cooperation at a level comparable to that which exists between police forces; - closer cooperation with third countries (especially associated countries) and the international and other organizations involved; - the development of new preventive instruments. The implementation of this programme will be regularly monitored by the heads of state and government, who will hold an initial meeting in 1998.