Asylum and migrations: collection and analysis of Community statistics, action plan

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PURPOSE : to present an Action Plan for the collection of Community statistics on matters relating to migration and asylum. CONTENT : the background to this Communication lies in Commission proposals on Community and asylum migration policy. The policy is based on a two-step approach: the adoption of a common legal framework as outlined in the Treaty and the development of an open co-ordination method to work in synergy with other EU policies. In the field of asylum, the aim is the establishment of a Common European Asylum System. These proposals are accompanied by additional measures to combat illegal immigration, in particular the smuggling and trafficking of human beings and to develop a readmission policy and a return policy. There is therefore a need for a comprehensive framework for future action on improving statistics. This paper presents the Action Plan and goes on to propose a discussion about the form and main principles of possible future legislation to underpin all statistical work in this field. At the heart of the Action Plan is the political objective that national asylum and migration figures should become widely available once produced as Community statistics and that there shall be a common analysis at Community level. As this objective pre-supposes the availability of reliable and comparable statistics, delivered in time and processed in accordance with a common statistical methodology, a considerable number of changes to current practice are required in the transitional period. The measures will apply to all statistical data collection, processing and dissemination in the field of asylum and migration, including those actions taking place on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. The Action Plan envisages: - the adoption of new practices, common statistical methods and new forms of cooperation; - activities to enhance information exchange and promote decision-making. This will include annual meetings and ad hoc seminars bringing together under the aegis of the Commission the Member States and other providers (the Candidate Countries, Norway and Iceland), other relevant actors (UNHCR, UNSD, UNPD, UNECE, OECD, ILO, Council of Europe, IOM, IGC) and potential new providers; - changes in the current data collection or database. This includes the extension of the data collection to include data on legal entry and stay; second instance asylum decisions and data on the implementation of procedures, criteria and mechanisms for deciding which Member State is responsible for the examination of asylum applications; - production of user-friendly statistical outputs by the Commission. This implies the production of a variety of statistical outputs with the aim of meeting the needs of all groups of users of the statistics; - action relating to the legal and political framework, which includes the adoption of Community legislation on statistics and the evaluation of the implementation of this Action Plan. The Commission emphasised that the success of these measures is, to a large part, dependent on the active co-operation of the authorities in the Member States and other countries.