Implementation of an area of freedom, security and justice : action plan

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PURPOSE: to make recommendations on "how best to implement the provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam on an area of freedom, security and justice". CONTENT: The Communication expresses the Commission's determination to ensure that the opportunity offered by the Treaty of Amsterdam to make significant progress in this area is not wasted. It firstly indicates transitional issues to be addressed: - on the Schengen acquis, the Commission stresses the need for corrective measures over time, in the event that it is decided that the whole of the acquis be situated in the future Title VI; - in terms of pre-Amsterdam draft instruments currently on the Council table, the Commission wishes to introduce Amsterdam language, or failing that replacement texts as soon as the Treaty has been ratified. Similarly, with Commission initiatives currently on the Council table, the Commission proposes introducing replacement Amsterdam versions; - for the existing third pillar acquis as transmitted to the applicant countries, the need for Amsterdam versions will also have to be examined, Acknowledging the need to coordinate these with the Council, the Commission then sets out its future priorities in the areas of freedom, security and justice, with the aim of bringing the Union closer to the people: Freedom: - to establish a wider concept of freedom, by combatting those who abuse it, providing a full range of human rights, as well as ensuring the protection of personal data; - to ensure the smooth operation of the frontier-free area provided by the integration of the Schengen acquis; - to develop closer cooperation on immigration at a Union level, with the fight against trafficking in human beings a major priority; - on asylum policy, to complement the Geneva Convention with instruments to deal with mass influx, set minimum standards for asylum procedures, and make provision for people not covered by the Geneva Convention, who nonetheless need protection; - to systematically tackle integration of non-Union nationals. Security: - as soon as possible, to implement the new powers accorded to Europol by the new Treaty; - to continue the Union's fight against organised crime through the Action Plan endorsed by the Amsterdam European Council; - in the light of the new powers accorded by the new Treaty, to elaborate the Union's action plan against drugs for 2000 - 2005. Justice: - to continue to ensure legal certainty and equal access to justice; - to promote the setting of minimum common judicial rules in criminal matters, particularly for areas covered by Union level policy, or with strong cross-border implications; - to harmonise rules of judicial procedure; - to neutralise difficulties of cross-border litigation.