Schengen: activities programme by June 1999, 1997-1998 activities. Recommendation

1998/2217(INI) - 14/01/1999 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The Parliament adopted the proposal for a recommendation to the Council of the Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs on the programme of activities to be conducted under the Schengen co-operation arrangements up to June 1999, drafted by Anne Van Lancker (B, PES). The Parliament considers it essential for the Schengen Member States to make further progress in the drive for integration and closer co-operation within the Union framework. It considers, nonetheless, that, during the transitional phase preceding the entry into force of the new treaty, the Schengen States should base themselves on the Union's working methods. It expressed its concern that, with little more than a year to go until the Amsterdam Treaty enters into force, the Schengen States have not yet defined their acquis or the parts of the acquis which have become redundant, and that questions will in future arise regarding the scope of the instructions used daily by the various services. It considered it to be of vital importance for the Schengen acquis to be defined in good time so as to enable the EU Member States to divide that acquis between the first and the third pillars as soon as the Treaty enters into force, since any recourse to the safeguard clause, would have to be seen as an extremely serious failure. The EP expressed concern at the establishment of a 'standing committee on Schengen implementation' a few months before the entry into force of the Treaty since this is likely to undermine the efforts by the institutions to implement policies at European and national levels; it considered that the Commission should take over such powers when the Amsterdam Treaty enters into force. It called on the Commission to propose an initiative aimed at integrating the Schengen acquis into the Treaty. It considered that the EP should be informed of the substance of the Schengen acquis and consulted on the draft decision integrating that acquis into the Treaty. The EP called on the Council and the Commission to negotiate with Parliament an inter-institutional agreement on the latter's involvement in the formulation of strategies and in the legislative measures to be taken under the third pillar. It considered thazt, although the texts of the decisions and statements of the Executive Committee and the Schengen Central Group will remain within the sphere of competence of the Schengen States until the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty, those States should base their approach on the principle of information and access to documents established by the Treaty. Consideration should be given to reviewing and publishing the rules governing the classification of documents and declassifying all documents which do not meet objective criteria. More comprehensive and relevant information on the impact of the agreement's implementation should be made available to citizens. The Parliament welcomed the progress made on integrating Italy and Austria into the Schengen system and hopes that Greece will be able to join in the near future.It also invited the UK and Ireland to involve themselves in the policies provided for in Title IV of the Treaty. Lastly, the Parliament welcomed the German Presidency's undertaking to improve cross-border co-operation in cases of criminal prosecution.