Judicial cooperation: creation of a European judicial network

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OBJECTIVE: presentation of a joint action programme to create a European Judicial Network with the aim of establishing direct contact between judicial authorities and other authorities responsible for judicial cooperation in the Member States, to help combat forms of serious crime within the Union.
SUBSTANCE: the European Judicial Network comprises judicial contact points between the Member States and is made up of the central authorities responsible for international judicial cooperation and the judicial authorities with responsibilities in this field, with the aim of combating certain forms of serious crime, such as organized crime, corruption and drug trafficking. To establish the network, each Member State designates one or more contact points and notifies the Council and the other Member States of its decision. Liaison magistrates could be linked to the judicial network by each Member State, where they would have similar duties to those allocated to the contact points. To ensure that the network works efficiently, bilateral contacts between the contact points in the Member States have been established, as have periodic meetings. The network supplies a certain amount of permanently updated background information, by means of an appropriate telecommunications network. It will provide the following information: - full details of the contact points in each Member State, - a simplified list of the judicial authorities and a directory of the local authorities in each Member State, - legal information concerning the judicial and procedural systems in the 15 Member States, - the texts of relevant legal instruments. Technical arrangements are defined in the draft joint action determining the objectives and purpose of bilateral contact and periodic meetings. The primary objective is to strengthen cooperation and encourage the exchanges between the relevant bodies. In its initial phase, the network will meet every three months in Brussels (seat of the Council) or in the capitals of the Member States, and then on an ad hoc basis as its members felt the need and at the invitation of the Presidency. The European Judicial Network will be evaluated one year after its implementation, and then once every three years.