

Eurodac system for the comparison of the fingerprints of applicants for asylum and certain other aliens for the effective application of the Dublin Convention

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Council Regulation 2725/2000/EC stipulates that the Commission is obliged to submit an annual Report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the activities of EURODAC's Central Unit. This is the third such Report prepared by the Commission and includes information on the management and performance of the system in 2005. It assesses the outputs and the cost-effectiveness of EURODAC as well as the quality of its service. The main findings of the Report are as follows:

Management of the system

The Management of the EURODAC Central Unit by the Commission continued in 2005 without major changes although some studies indicate that it may need to be developed in the coming years to take account of the new Member States. In addition, the Commission held several meetings and informal contacts with the European Data Protection Supervisor, which is the competent authority to monitor the activities of the Central Unit.

Figures and findings

EURODAC statistics are based on records of fingerprints from all individuals aged 14 years or over who have made applications for asylum in the Member States, who were apprehended when crossing a Member States' external border irregularly or who were found illegally present on the territory of a Member State. In 2005, the Central Unit received a total of 258 684 successful transactions, which reveals only a slight decrease compared to the previous year of 287 938. The other statistics for 2005 reveal that the Central Unit received the following sub-division of categories:

- 187 223 asylum seekers (category 1);
- 25 162 crossing the border illegally (category 2); and
- 46 299 persons apprehended when illegally residing on the territory of a Member State (category 3).

This shows that whilst category 1 transactions have decreased by 20%, category 2 transactions have increased by 36% and category 3 transactions have increased by 15%.

Average time between the date of the prints and the date of sending

Some Member States are much faster than others in sending fingerprints to the Central Unit. Greece, Iceland and Italy take on average more than 10 days before sending their mandatory transactions. Germany, the UK, Spain, France and Estonia take more than 2 days, whilst it took only from two hours to one and a half days for the other Member States to forward the Central Unit their finger prints. The Commission urges the Member States to forward their data promptly and in accordance with Article 4 and 8 of the Regulation.

Cost effectiveness.

After three years of operations, Community expenditure on all externalised activities specific to EURODAC, totalled EUR 7.8 million. The executed payments for maintaining and operating the Central Unit amounted to EUR 132 675 82 in 2005.

Quality of service

There was no unscheduled Central Unit down-times in 2005. In January 2005 the CU was unreachable for about nine hours owing to a technical problem linked to a failure on one of the power supplies on the Disk Array Subsystem. No Member State has notified the Commission of a false hit.

Data Protection Issues

As was the case in 2004, the Commission services have become aware of the surprisingly high number of “special searches”. The number of such transactions varies from zero in some Member States to 781 in another Member State. The Commission has alerted the EDPS and contacted, on a bilateral basis, the Member States concerned.

Conclusions

The 2005 annual report concludes that the EURODAC Central Unit has, once again, performed highly satisfactorily in terms of speed, output, security and cost-effectiveness. EURODAC has established itself as an essential tool for a faster and more efficient application of the Dublin Regulation. It also provides good indicators regarding the phenomenon of “asylum shopping” in the Member States.

The excessive delay for the transmission of data to the EURODAC Central Unit, as well as the low quality of the data sent by some Member States, remains a matter of concern within the Commission. After three years of operations, the national administrations should now make an all out effort to transmit their data in a reasonable time. The Commission continues to insist upon the proper application of Article 18 of the EURODAC Regulation and reiterates that this provisions should be used for data protection purposes only.