

1. The European Council discussed in particular
 - preparation of the Mid-Term Review of the Lisbon Strategy
 - an area of Freedom, Security and Justice: the Hague Programme
 - communicating EuropeIt also held discussions with the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr Allawi.
2. The meeting of the European Council was preceded by an exposé by the President of the European Parliament, Mr Josep Borrell, followed by an exchange of views.
3. The European Council took note of the outcome of the European Parliament debate on the investiture of the designated Commission. It welcomed the new list of Members-designate of the Commission presented by the nominee for President, Mr José Manuel Barroso. The Council, by common accord with the President-designate, adopted this list. The European Council expressed its hope that this Commission can be approved and enter into office as soon as possible.
4. The European Council noted with deep satisfaction that the "Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe" was solemnly signed in Rome on 29 October 2004 on behalf of all Member States.

I. THE LISBON STRATEGY: PREPARING FOR THE MID-TERM REVIEW

5. The European Council confirmed the validity and relevance of the process it set in motion in Lisbon in March 2000 aimed at enhancing substantially the competitiveness of European economies through a balanced strategy with an economic, social and environmental dimension. It encouraged the Council to build on the progress made since the Spring meeting and to maintain the momentum of its work. It reiterated the importance of the implementation of agreed measures by the Member States.

6. The European Council stressed the importance of the Mid-Term Review at the 2005 Spring European Council for providing renewed impetus to the Lisbon Strategy. In this connection it welcomed a presentation by Mr Wim Kok, Chairman of the High-Level Group advising the Commission on its preparations for the Mid-Term Review. The presentation was followed by an exchange of views.
7. The European Council welcomed the European Commission's intention to continue to make implementation of the Lisbon Strategy a key component of its policy. In this connection it invited the Commission to bring forward the necessary proposals for the Mid-Term Review in the light of new challenges by the end of January 2005. Those comprehensive proposals should pay regard to the report by the High-Level Group chaired by Mr Kok and take into account the views of Member States. They will also take into account the forthcoming review of the Sustainable Development Strategy. The European Council invited the Council to examine these proposals in good time and looks forward to further concrete contributions with a view to the successful implementation of the Lisbon Strategy in all its dimensions.
8. The European Council took note of the exchange of views at the Tripartite Social Summit and, recognising the key role social partners play at all levels, in particular in relation to modernisation of the labour market and anticipation of change, invited them to commit to the Mid-Term Review on a more effective implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.
9. The European Council noted with satisfaction that a programme of actions was undertaken to drive forward the joint initiative on better regulation. EU institutions have made good progress towards developing a common methodology for impact assessments and adapting working methods for the simplification programme, as provided for in the Inter-institutional Agreement on Better Lawmaking.

10. The European Council welcomed the conclusions of the Council (ECOFIN) on 21 October. In this connection it noted, in particular,
- the support given to the development of a common methodology for measuring administrative burdens;
 - the Commission's intention to present shortly a communication on this issue;
 - the cooperation between the Commission and Member States in pilot projects aiming at the further determination of such a methodology, to be completed as soon as possible in 2005.

The European Council called on the Commission to implement the methodology in its guidelines for impact assessments and working methods for simplification after finalisation of the pilots.

11. The European Council, acknowledging the important role played by the European Parliament in this area, welcomed the progress made by the Commission and the Council towards establishing Council priorities for simplification of existing Community legislation while respecting the *acquis communautaire*. It invited the Commission to include these priorities in its rolling simplification programme. It noted that the priorities are likely to be identified in the environment, transport and statistics sectors. It invited the Council to pursue work primarily within these selected sectors and to identify, at its November meeting, agreed priorities in the form of a shortlist of 10-15 legal acts.
12. The 2005 Spring European Council will discuss better regulation in the context of the Lisbon Mid-Term Review.
13. Finally, in the context of the preparation of the Mid-Term Review the European Council took note of the letter of the Heads of State or Government of France, Germany, Spain and Sweden pointing out the importance of demographic factors in shaping the future economic and social development of Europe and calling for the elaboration of a "European Pact for Youth".

II. AREA OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE: THE HAGUE PROGRAMME

14. The security of the European Union and its Member States has acquired a new urgency, especially in the light of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 and in Madrid on 11 March 2004.

The citizens of Europe rightly expect the European Union, while guaranteeing respect for fundamental freedoms and rights, to take a more effective, joint approach to cross-border problems such as illegal migration and trafficking in and smuggling of human beings, as well as to terrorism and organised crime.

15. Five years after the European Council's meeting in Tampere, when it agreed on a programme which laid the foundation for important achievements in the area of freedom, security and justice, it is time for a new programme to enable the Union to build on these achievements and effectively meet the new challenges it will face. To this end, it adopted a new multi-annual programme for the next five years, to be known as the Hague Programme, which is attached to these conclusions. This programme reflects the ambitions as expressed in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. It takes account of the evaluation by the Commission as welcomed by the European Council in June 2004 as well as of the Recommendation on the use of qualified majority voting and the co-decision procedure adopted by the European Parliament on 14 October 2004.
16. The Hague Programme deals with all aspects of policies relating to the area of freedom, security and justice, including their external dimension, notably fundamental rights and citizenship, asylum and migration, border management, integration, the fight against terrorism and organised crime, justice and police cooperation, and civil law, while a drugs strategy will be added in December 2004. In conjunction, the European Council considers that creating appropriate European legal instruments and strengthening practical and operational cooperation between relevant national agencies, as well as timely implementation of agreed measures, are of vital importance.

17. In the light of this Programme, the European Council invites the Commission to present an Action Plan in 2005 with proposals for concrete actions and a timetable for their adoption and implementation. Furthermore, it invites the Commission to present to the Council an annual report on implementation of Union measures ("scoreboard"). Member States shall provide the relevant information to this end. In this context, the European Council emphasised the importance of transparency and the involvement of the European Parliament.
18. The European Council called on the Council to ensure that the timetable for each of the various measures is observed.
19. Without prejudice to the Financial Framework 2007-2013, the European Council noted that due account should be taken of the financial implications of the multi-annual agenda for the area of freedom, security and justice.
20. The European Council will review progress on the Hague Programme in the second half of 2006.

III. COMMUNICATING EUROPE

21. The European Council reiterated the need to strengthen awareness among citizens of the importance of the work of the Union and welcomes the outcome of the meeting of the Ministers for European Affairs dedicated to this subject. It also encourages future presidencies to continue discussion of this matter, including examination of possibilities for televised public debates on European issues prior to European Council meetings. The citizens of Europe hold essential values in common and politicians both at the national and the European level have a responsibility to communicate the relevance of the European project and to involve Europeans, through public debate and active citizenship, in decision-making.

22. The European Council welcomed the special emphasis that the Commission continues to place on communication as well as the Commission's intention to present its communication strategy in good time before the June 2005 European Council.
23. The European Council reiterated that the process of ratification of the Constitutional Treaty provides an important opportunity to inform the public about European issues. Member States may share information and experiences relating to this process, notwithstanding the fact that campaigns relating to ratification remain the national responsibility of each Member State.

IV. ENLARGEMENT

24. The European Council heard a presentation by the President of the European Commission on the Progress Reports, the Strategy Paper on Enlargement and Recommendations regarding the four candidate States as well as the study on issues arising from Turkey's membership perspective published by the Commission on 6 October 2004.
25. The European Council confirmed that, in line with previous conclusions, it will address outstanding enlargement issues at its meeting in December 2004.

V. EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

US Presidential election

26. The European Council warmly congratulated President George W. Bush on his re-election as President of the United States of America. Our close transatlantic partnership, based on shared values, is fundamental for Europe's approach to building international peace, security and prosperity. Our deep political, economic and cultural ties make us each other's natural and indispensable partners.

27. The European Union and the United States of America share a responsibility in addressing key threats and challenges, such as regional conflicts, in particular the Middle East; terrorism; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; AIDS; the fight against poverty. The European Union and the United States should also continue to cooperate closely to contribute to a successful outcome of the Doha Round of trade negotiations.
28. The EU and its Member States look forward to working very closely with President Bush and his new Administration to combine efforts, including in multilateral institutions, to promote the rule of law and create a just, democratic and secure world.

Sudan

29. The European Council expressed its grave concern about the situation in Sudan/Darfur and emphasised the importance of respect for human rights and improvement of security conditions. It called upon the Government of Sudan and on the other parties to meet the demands set out by the international community. The European Council reaffirmed its continued support to the African Union and its readiness to provide assistance and expertise to the expansion of the African Union's mission in Darfur. In this context, the European Council endorsed the Council conclusions of 2 November and encouraged the Council and the Commission to take the necessary action for their implementation, not excluding the use of sanctions, as a matter of urgency.

Iraq

30. The European Council met Iraqi Prime Minister Allawi to discuss the situation in Iraq and reiterated its strong support for the political process in Iraq and the Iraqi Interim Government. It welcomed the Iraqi determination to continue the political process and assured the Prime Minister that the European Union will continue to support the brave and difficult course the people of Iraq are steering towards the restoration of security, democracy and the rule of law. In this context, the European Council adopted the attached declaration and encouraged the Council and the Commission to take the necessary action for its implementation as a matter of urgency.

Middle East

31. The European Council expresses its solidarity with the Palestinian people in this difficult moment. It encourages the Palestinian leadership to demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility in ensuring the regular functioning of Palestinian institutions. The European Council considers that it is essential that a legitimate leadership continues to resolutely pursue the path towards peace in the Middle East.
32. The European Council, recalling the established EU positions, remains committed to the two-State solution as laid out in the Roadmap and agreed between the parties, which would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with an Israel living within recognised and secure borders.
33. The European Council welcomes the Knesset vote on 26 October to support an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip and part of the northern West Bank. The European Council expresses its willingness to support such a withdrawal as a first step in the overall process, in accordance with the conditions laid out by the European Council in March 2004, amongst which, that it takes place in the context of the Roadmap. The European Council also recalls the Quartet statement of 22 September.
34. The European Council endorses the short-term programme of action in the fields of security, reforms, elections and economy proposed by the High Representative. It underlines in particular its readiness to support the electoral process in the Palestinian Territories. The European Council calls on the Palestinian Authority to organise elections in accordance with international standards under the authority of an independent electoral commission and calls upon Israel to facilitate these elections.

35. The European Council stresses that these initiatives will need full cooperation from and between the parties, as well as coordination with other partners involved, especially in the region - in particular with Egypt - and within the Quartet. The European Council reiterates its readiness to support the Palestinian Authority in taking responsibility for law and order. The European Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to present regular progress reports on the implementation of these initiatives.
36. At the same time, with a view to relaunching a meaningful political process of negotiations, the European Council considers that support for these short-term proposals would be enhanced if they could be placed within a broader political perspective. It invites the High Representative to conduct consultations to that effect, with the parties, the international community, and, especially, the other members of the Quartet.
37. The European Council reiterates its condemnation of violence and terrorism, and urges the resumption of a ceasefire embracing all parties and groups.

Iran: nuclear issues

38. The European Council discussed the current exchanges with Iran on its nuclear programme. It reaffirmed that it will work to open the way for a durable and cooperative long-term relationship with Iran, including political, commercial and technological dimensions.
39. It underlined the importance it attached to building confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme and the need for transparency and compliance with IAEA Board of Governors' resolutions. A full and sustained suspension of all enrichment and reprocessing activities, on a voluntary basis, would open the door for talks on long-term cooperation offering mutual benefits.

40. It confirmed that the European Union and its Member States would remain actively engaged - notably through the efforts of France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the High Representative - with the objective of achieving progress on the Iranian nuclear issue before the IAEA Board of Governors meeting starting on 25 November 2004.
41. If the present exchanges resulted in a successful conclusion, the European Council agreed that the negotiations on a Trade and Cooperation Agreement should be resumed as soon as suspension was verified.

Ukraine

42. The European Council values Ukraine as a key neighbour and partner. Against this background, it regrets that the first round of the presidential elections in Ukraine on 31 October did not meet international standards for democratic elections.
43. The EU welcomed the high turnout of voters as a positive element.
44. The European Council calls on the Ukrainian authorities to address the noted deficiencies in time before the second round of the elections and to create conditions allowing for free and fair elections, in particular by ensuring equal access to state media for both contenders.

Common Strategy on the Mediterranean

45. The European Council took note of the report on the implementation of the Common Strategy on the Mediterranean region and agreed to extend the period of its application by 18 months until 23 January 2006.

THE HAGUE PROGRAMME

**STRENGTHENING FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

I. INTRODUCTION

The European Council reaffirms the priority it attaches to the development of an area of freedom, security and justice, responding to a central concern of the peoples of the States brought together in the Union.

Over the past years the European Union has increased its role in securing police, customs and judicial cooperation and in developing a coordinated policy with regard to asylum, immigration and external border controls. This development will continue with the firmer establishment of a common area of freedom, security and justice by the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, signed in Rome on 29 October 2004. This Treaty and the preceding Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice have progressively brought about a common legal framework in the field of justice and home affairs, and the integration of this policy area with other policy areas of the Union.

Since the Tampere European Council in 1999, the Union's policy in the area of justice and home affairs has been developed in the framework of a general programme. Even if not all the original aims were achieved, comprehensive and coordinated progress has been made. The European Council welcomes the results that have been achieved in the first five-year period: the foundations for a common asylum and immigration policy have been laid, the harmonisation of border controls has been prepared, police cooperation has been improved, and the groundwork for judicial cooperation on the basis of the principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions and judgments has been well advanced.

The security of the European Union and its Member States has acquired a new urgency, especially in the light of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 and in Madrid on 11 March 2004. The citizens of Europe rightly expect the European Union, while guaranteeing respect for fundamental freedoms and rights, to take a more effective, joint approach to cross-border problems such as illegal migration, trafficking in and smuggling of human beings, terrorism and organised crime, as well as the prevention thereof. Notably in the field of security, the coordination and coherence between the internal and the external dimension has been growing in importance and needs to continue to be vigorously pursued.

Five years after the European Council's meeting in Tampere, it is time for a new agenda to enable the Union to build on the achievements and to meet effectively the new challenges it will face. To this end, the European Council has adopted this new multi-annual programme to be known as the Hague Programme. It reflects the ambitions as expressed in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and contributes to preparing the Union for its entry into force. It takes account of the evaluation by the Commission¹ as welcomed by the European Council in June 2004 as well as the Recommendation adopted by the European Parliament on 14 October 2004², in particular in respect of the passage to qualified majority voting and co-decision as foreseen by Article 67(2) TEC.

The objective of the Hague programme is to improve the common capability of the Union and its Member States to guarantee fundamental rights, minimum procedural safeguards and access to justice, to provide protection in accordance with the Geneva Convention on Refugees and other international treaties to persons in need, to regulate migration flows and to control the external borders of the Union, to fight organised cross-border crime and repress the threat of terrorism, to realise the potential of Europol and Eurojust, to carry further the mutual recognition of judicial decisions and certificates both in civil and in criminal matters, and to eliminate legal and judicial obstacles in litigation in civil and family matters with cross-border implications. This is an objective that has to be achieved in the interests of our citizens by the development of a Common Asylum System and by improving access to the courts, practical police and judicial cooperation, the approximation of laws and the development of common policies.

¹ COM (2004) 401 final

² P6_TA-PROV (2004) 0022 A6-0010/2004

A key element in the near future will be the prevention and suppression of terrorism. A common approach in this area should be based on the principle that when preserving national security, the Member States should take full account of the security of the Union as a whole. In addition, the European Council will be asked to endorse in December 2004 the new European Strategy on Drugs 2005-2012 that will be added to this programme.

The European Council considers that the common project of strengthening the area of freedom, security and justice is vital to securing safe communities, mutual trust and the rule of law throughout the Union. Freedom, justice, control at the external borders, internal security and the prevention of terrorism should henceforth be considered indivisible within the Union as a whole. An optimal level of protection of the area of freedom, security and justice requires multi-disciplinary and concerted action both at EU level and at national level between the competent law enforcement authorities, especially police, customs and border guards.

In the light of this Programme, the European Council invites the Commission to present to the Council an Action Plan in 2005 in which the aims and priorities of this programme will be translated into concrete actions. The plan shall contain a timetable for the adoption and implementation of all the actions. The European Council calls on the Council to ensure that the timetable for each of the various measures is observed. The Commission is invited to present to the Council a yearly report on the implementation of the Hague programme ("scoreboard").

II. GENERAL ORIENTATIONS

1. General principles

The programme set out below seeks to respond to the challenge and the expectations of our citizens. It is based on a pragmatic approach and builds on ongoing work arising from the Tampere programme, current action plans and an evaluation of first generation measures. It is also grounded in the general principles of subsidiarity, proportionality, solidarity and respect for the different legal systems and traditions of the Member States.

The Treaty establishing a Constitution of Europe (hereinafter "the Constitutional Treaty") served as a guideline for the level of ambition, but the existing Treaties provide the legal basis for Council action until such time as the Constitutional Treaty takes effect. Accordingly, the various policy areas have been examined to determine whether preparatory work or studies could already commence, so that measures provided for in the Constitutional Treaty can be taken as soon as it enters into force.

Fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights in Part II of the Constitutional Treaty, including the explanatory notes, as well as the Geneva Convention on Refugees, must be fully respected. At the same time, the programme aims at real and substantial progress towards enhancing mutual confidence and promoting common policies to the benefit of all our citizens.

2. Protection of fundamental rights

Incorporating the Charter into the Constitutional Treaty and accession to the European Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms will place the Union, including its institutions, under a legal obligation to ensure that in all its areas of activity, fundamental rights are not only respected but also actively promoted.

In this context, the European Council, recalling its firm commitment to oppose any form of racism, antisemitism and xenophobia as expressed in December 2003, welcomes the Commission's communication on the extension of the mandate of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia towards a Human Rights Agency.

3. Implementation and evaluation

The evaluation by the Commission of the Tampere programme¹ showed a clear need for adequate and timely implementation and evaluation of all types of measures in the area of freedom, security and justice.

¹ COM(2004) 401 final

It is vital for the Council to develop in 2005 practical methods to facilitate timely implementation in all policy areas: measures requiring national authorities' resources should be accompanied by proper plans to ensure more effective implementation, and the length of the implementation period should be more closely related to the complexity of the measure concerned. Regular progress reports by the Commission to the Council during the implementation period should provide an incentive for action in Member States.

Evaluation of the implementation as well as of the effects of all measures is, in the European Council's opinion, essential to the effectiveness of Union action. The evaluations undertaken as from 1 July 2005 must be systematic, objective, impartial and efficient, while avoiding too heavy an administrative burden on national authorities and the Commission. Their goal should be to address the functioning of the measure and to suggest solutions for problems encountered in its implementation and/or application. The Commission should prepare a yearly evaluation report of measures to be submitted to the Council and to inform the European Parliament and the national parliaments.

The European Commission is invited to prepare proposals, to be tabled as soon as the Constitutional Treaty has entered into force, relating to the role of the European Parliament and national parliaments in the evaluation of Eurojust's activities and the scrutiny of Europol's activities.

4. Review

Since the programme will run for a period during which the Constitutional Treaty will enter into force, a review of its implementation is considered to be useful. To that end, the Commission is invited to report by the entry into force of the Constitutional Treaty (1 November 2006) to the European Council on the progress made and to propose the necessary additions to the programme, taking into account the changing legal basis as a consequence of its entry into force.

III. SPECIFIC ORIENTATIONS

1. STRENGTHENING FREEDOM

1.1 Citizenship of the Union

The right of all EU citizens to move and reside freely in the territory of the Member States is the central right of citizenship of the Union. Practical significance of citizenship of the Union will be enhanced by full implementation of Directive 2004/38¹, which codifies Community law in this field and brings clarity and simplicity. The Commission is asked to submit in 2008 a report to the Council and the European Parliament, accompanied by proposals, if appropriate, for allowing EU citizens to move within the European Union on similar terms to nationals of a Member State moving around or changing their place of residence in their own country, in conformity with established principles of Community law.

The European Council encourages the Union's institutions, within the framework of their competences, to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society and to promote and facilitate citizens' participation in public life. In particular, the European Council invites the Council and the Commission to give special attention to the fight against anti-semitism, racism and xenophobia.

1.2 Asylum, migration and border policy

International migration will continue. A comprehensive approach, involving all stages of migration, with respect to the root causes of migration, entry and admission policies and integration and return policies is needed.

¹ Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC
JO L 158 of 30.04.2004, p. 77

To ensure such an approach, the European Council urges the Council, the Member States and the Commission to pursue coordinated, strong and effective working relations between those responsible for migration and asylum policies and those responsible for other policy fields relevant to these areas.

The ongoing development of European asylum and migration policy should be based on a common analysis of migratory phenomena in all their aspects. Reinforcing the collection, provision, exchange and efficient use of up-to-date information and data on all relevant migratory developments is of key importance.

The second phase of development of a common policy in the field of asylum, migration and borders started on 1 May 2004. It should be based on solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility including its financial implications and closer practical cooperation between Member States: technical assistance, training, and exchange of information, monitoring of the adequate and timely implementation and application of instruments as well as further harmonisation of legislation.

The European Council, taking into account the assessment by the Commission and the strong views expressed by the European Parliament in its Recommendation¹, asks the Council to adopt a decision based on Article 67(2) TEC immediately after formal consultation of the European Parliament and no later than 1 April 2005 to apply the procedure provided for in Article 251 TEC to all Title IV measures to strengthen freedom, subject to the Nice Treaty, except for legal migration.

1.3 A Common European Asylum System

The aims of the Common European Asylum System in its second phase will be the establishment of a common asylum procedure and a uniform status for those who are granted asylum or subsidiary protection. It will be based on the full and inclusive application of the Geneva Convention on Refugees and other relevant Treaties, and be built on a thorough and complete evaluation of the legal instruments that have been adopted in the first phase.

¹ P6_TA-PROV (2004) 0022 A6-0010/2004

The European Council urges the Member States to implement fully the first phase without delay. In this regard the Council should adopt unanimously, in conformity with article 67(5) TEC, the Asylum Procedures Directive as soon as possible. The Commission is invited to conclude the evaluation of first-phase legal instruments in 2007 and to submit the second-phase instruments and measures to the Council and the European Parliament with a view to their adoption before the end of 2010. In this framework, the European Council invites the Commission to present a study on the appropriateness, the possibilities and the difficulties, as well as the legal and practical implications of joint processing of asylum applications within the Union. Furthermore a separate study, to be conducted in close consultation with the UNHCR, should look into the merits, appropriateness and feasibility of joint processing of asylum applications outside EU territory, in complementarity with the Common European Asylum System and in compliance with the relevant international standards.

The European Council invites the Council and the Commission to establish in 2005 appropriate structures involving the national asylum services of the Member States with a view to facilitating practical and collaborative cooperation. Thus Member States will be assisted, inter alia, in achieving a single procedure for the assessment of applications for international protection, and in jointly compiling, assessing and applying information on countries of origin, as well as in addressing particular pressures on the asylum systems and reception capacities resulting, inter alia, from their geographical location. After a common asylum procedure has been established, these structures should be transformed, on the basis of an evaluation, into a European support office for all forms of cooperation between Member States relating to the Common European Asylum System.

The European Council welcomes the establishment of the new European Refugee Fund for the period 2005-2010 and stresses the urgent need for Member States to maintain adequate asylum systems and reception facilities in the run-up to the establishment of a common asylum procedure. It invites the Commission to earmark existing Community funds to assist Member States in the processing of asylum applications and in the reception of categories of third-country nationals. It invites the Council to designate these categories on the basis of a proposal to be submitted by the Commission in 2005.

1.4 Legal migration and the fight against illegal employment

Legal migration will play an important role in enhancing the knowledge-based economy in Europe, in advancing economic development, and thus contributing to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy. It could also play a role in partnerships with third countries.

The European Council emphasizes that the determination of volumes of admission of labour migrants is a competence of the Member States. The European Council, taking into account the outcome of discussions on the Green Paper on labour migration, best practices in Member States and its relevance for implementation of the Lisbon strategy, invites the Commission to present a policy plan on legal migration including admission procedures capable of responding promptly to fluctuating demands for migrant labour in the labour market before the end of 2005.

As the informal economy and illegal employment can act as a pull factor for illegal immigration and can lead to exploitation, the European Council calls on Member States to reach the targets for reducing the informal economy set out in the European employment strategy.

1.5 Integration of third-country nationals

Stability and cohesion within our societies benefit from the successful integration of legally resident third-country nationals and their descendants. To achieve this objective, it is essential to develop effective policies, and to prevent the isolation of certain groups. A comprehensive approach involving stakeholders at the local, regional, national, and EU level is therefore essential.

While recognising the progress that has already been made in respect of the fair treatment of legally resident third-country nationals in the EU, the European Council calls for the creation of equal opportunities to participate fully in society. Obstacles to integration need to be actively eliminated.

The European Council underlines the need for greater coordination of national integration policies and EU initiatives in this field. In this respect, the common basic principles underlying a coherent European framework on integration should be established.

These principles, connecting all policy areas related to integration, should include at least the following aspects. Integration:

- is a continuous, two-way process involving both legally resident third-country nationals and the host society;
- includes, but goes beyond, anti-discrimination policy;
- implies respect for the basic values of the European Union and fundamental human rights;
- requires basic skills for participation in society;
- relies on frequent interaction and intercultural dialogue between all members of society within common forums and activities in order to improve mutual understanding;
- extends to a variety of policy areas, including employment and education.

A framework, based on these common basic principles, will form the foundation for future initiatives in the EU, relying on clear goals and means of evaluation. The European Council invites Member States, the Council and the Commission to promote the structural exchange of experience and information on integration, supported by the development of a widely accessible website on the Internet.

1.6 The external dimension of asylum and migration

1.6.1 Partnership with third countries

Asylum and migration are by their very nature international issues. EU policy should aim at assisting third countries, in full partnership, using existing Community funds where appropriate, in their efforts to improve their capacity for migration management and refugee protection, prevent and combat illegal immigration, inform on legal channels for migration, resolve refugee situations by providing better access to durable solutions, build border-control capacity, enhance document security and tackle the problem of return.

The European Council recognises that insufficiently managed migration flows can result in humanitarian disasters. It wishes to express its utmost concern about the human tragedies that take place in the Mediterranean as a result of attempts to enter the EU illegally. It calls upon all States to intensify their cooperation in preventing further loss of life.

The European Council calls upon the Council and the Commission to continue the process of fully integrating migration into the EU's existing and future relations with third countries. It invites the Commission to complete the integration of migration into the Country and Regional Strategy Papers for all relevant third countries by the spring of 2005.

The European Council acknowledges the need for the EU to contribute in a spirit of shared responsibility to a more accessible, equitable and effective international protection system in partnership with third countries, and to provide access to protection and durable solutions at the earliest possible stage. Countries in regions of origin and transit will be encouraged in their efforts to strengthen the capacity for the protection of refugees. In this regard the European Council calls upon all third countries to accede and adhere to the Geneva Convention on Refugees.

1.6.2 Partnership with countries and regions of origin

The European Council welcomes the Commission Communication on improving access to durable solutions¹ and invites the Commission to develop EU-Regional Protection Programmes in partnership with the third countries concerned and in close consultation and cooperation with UNHCR. These programmes will build on experience gained in pilot protection programmes to be launched before the end of 2005. These programmes will incorporate a variety of relevant instruments, primarily focused on capacity building, and include a joint resettlement programme for Member States willing to participate in such a programme.

¹ COM (2004) 410 def.

Policies which link migration, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance should be coherent and be developed in partnership and dialogue with countries and regions of origin. The European Council welcomes the progress already made, invites the Council to develop these policies, with particular emphasis on root causes, push factors and poverty alleviation, and urges the Commission to present concrete and carefully worked out proposals by the spring of 2005.

1.6.3. Partnership with countries and regions of transit

As regards countries of transit, the European Council emphasises the need for intensified cooperation and capacity building, both on the southern and the eastern borders of the EU, to enable these countries better to manage migration and to provide adequate protection for refugees. Support for capacity-building in national asylum systems, border control and wider cooperation on migration issues will be provided to those countries that demonstrate a genuine commitment to fulfil their obligations under the Geneva Convention on Refugees.

The proposal for a Regulation establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument¹ provides the strategic framework for intensifying cooperation and dialogue on asylum and migration with neighbouring countries amongst others around the Mediterranean basin, and for initiating new measures. In this connection, the European Council requests a report on progress and achievements before the end of 2005.

1.6.4 Return and re-admission policy

Migrants who do not or no longer have the right to stay legally in the EU must return on a voluntary or, if necessary, compulsory basis. The European Council calls for the establishment of an effective removal and repatriation policy based on common standards for persons to be returned in a humane manner and with full respect for their human rights and dignity.

¹ COM (2004) 628 final

The European Council considers it essential that the Council begins discussions in early 2005 on minimum standards for return procedures including minimum standards to support effective national removal efforts. The proposal should also take into account special concerns with regard to safeguarding public order and security. A coherent approach between return policy and all other aspects of the external relations of the Community with third countries is necessary as is special emphasis on the problem of nationals of such third countries who are not in the possession of passports or other identity documents.

The European Council calls for:

- closer cooperation and mutual technical assistance;
- launching of the preparatory phase of a European return fund;
- common integrated country and region specific return programmes;
- the establishment of a European Return Fund by 2007 taking into account the evaluation of the preparatory phase;
- the timely conclusion of Community readmission agreements;
- the prompt appointment by the Commission of a Special Representative for a common readmission policy.

1.7 Management of migration flows

1.7.1 Border checks and the fight against illegal immigration

The European Council stresses the importance of swift abolition of internal border controls, the further gradual establishment of the integrated management system for external borders and the strengthening of controls at and surveillance of the external borders of the Union. In this respect the need for solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility including its financial implications between the Member States is underlined.

The European Council urges the Council, the Commission and Member States to take all necessary measures to allow the abolition of controls at internal borders as soon as possible, provided all requirements to apply the Schengen acquis have been fulfilled and after the Schengen Information System (SIS II) has become operational in 2007. In order to reach this goal, the evaluation of the implementation of the non SIS II related acquis should start in the first half of 2006.

The European Council welcomes the establishment of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders, on 1 May 2005. It requests the Commission to submit an evaluation of the Agency to the Council before the end of 2007. The evaluation should contain a review of the tasks of the Agency and an assessment of whether the Agency should concern itself with other aspects of border management, including enhanced cooperation with customs services and other competent authorities for goods-related security matters.

The control and surveillance of external borders fall within the sphere of national border authorities. However, in order to support Member States with specific requirements for control and surveillance of long or difficult stretches of external borders, and where Member States are confronted with special and unforeseen circumstances due to exceptional migratory pressures on these borders, the European Council:

- invites the Council to establish teams of national experts that can provide rapid technical and operational assistance to Member States requesting it, following proper risk analysis by the Border Management Agency and acting within its framework, on the basis of a proposal by the Commission on the appropriate powers and funding for such teams, to be submitted in 2005;
- invites the Council and the Commission to establish a Community border management fund by the end of 2006 at the latest;
- invites the Commission to submit, as soon as the abolition of controls at internal borders has been completed, a proposal to supplement the existing Schengen evaluation mechanism with a supervisory mechanism, ensuring full involvement of Member States experts, and including unannounced inspections.

The review of the tasks of the Agency envisaged above and in particular the evaluation of the functioning of the teams of national experts should include the feasibility of the creation of a European system of border guards.

The European Council invites Member States to improve their joint analyses of migratory routes and smuggling and trafficking practices and of criminal networks active in this area, inter alia within the framework of the Border Management Agency and in close cooperation with Europol and Eurojust. It also calls on the Council and the Commission to ensure the firm establishment of immigration liaison networks in relevant third countries. In this connection, the European Council welcomes initiatives by Member States for cooperation at sea, on a voluntary basis, notably for rescue operations, in accordance with national and international law, possibly including future cooperation with third countries.

With a view to the development of common standards, best practices and mechanisms to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, the European Council invites the Council and the Commission to develop a plan in 2005.

1.7.2 Biometrics and information systems

The management of migration flows, including the fight against illegal immigration should be strengthened by establishing a continuum of security measures that effectively links visa application procedures and entry and exit procedures at external border crossings. Such measures are also of importance for the prevention and control of crime, in particular terrorism. In order to achieve this, a coherent approach and harmonised solutions in the EU on biometric identifiers and data are necessary.

The European Council requests the Council to examine how to maximise the effectiveness and interoperability of EU information systems in tackling illegal immigration and improving border controls as well as the management of these systems on the basis of a communication by the Commission on the interoperability between the Schengen Information System (SIS II), the Visa Information System (VIS) and EURODAC to be released in 2005, taking into account the need to strike the right balance between law enforcement purposes and safeguarding the fundamental rights of individuals.

The European Council invites the Council, the Commission and Member States to continue their efforts to integrate biometric identifiers in travel documents, visa, residence permits, EU citizens' passports and information systems without delay and to prepare for the development of minimum standards for national identity cards, taking into account ICAO standards.

1.7.3 Visa policy

The European Council underlines the need for further development of the common visa policy as part of a multi-layered system aimed at facilitating legitimate travel and tackling illegal immigration through further harmonisation of national legislation and handling practices at local consular missions. Common visa offices should be established in the long term, taking into account discussions on the establishment of an European External Action Service. The European Council welcomes initiatives by individual Member States which, on a voluntary basis, cooperate at pooling of staff and means for visa issuance.

The European Council:

- invites the Commission, as a first step, to propose the necessary amendments to further enhance visa policies and to submit in 2005 a proposal on the establishment of common application centres focusing inter alia on possible synergies linked with the development of the VIS, to review the Common Consular Instructions and table the appropriate proposal by early 2006 at the latest;
- stresses the importance of swift implementation of the VIS starting with the incorporation of among others alphanumeric data and photographs by the end of 2006 and biometrics by the end of 2007 at the latest;
- invites the Commission to submit without delay the necessary proposal in order to comply with the agreed time frame for implementation of the VIS;
- calls on the Commission to continue its efforts to ensure that the citizens of all Member States can travel without a short-stay visa to all third countries whose nationals can travel to the EU without a visa as soon as possible;

- invites the Council and the Commission to examine, with a view to developing a common approach, whether in the context of the EC readmission policy it would be opportune to facilitate, on a case by case basis, the issuance of short-stay visas to third-country nationals, where possible and on a basis of reciprocity, as part of a real partnership in external relations, including migration-related issues.

2. STRENGTHENING SECURITY

2.1 Improving the exchange of information

The European Council is convinced that strengthening freedom, security and justice requires an innovative approach to the cross-border exchange of law-enforcement information. The mere fact that information crosses borders should no longer be relevant.

With effect from 1 January 2008 the exchange of such information should be governed by conditions set out below with regard to the principle of availability, which means that, throughout the Union, a law enforcement officer in one Member State who needs information in order to perform his duties can obtain this from another Member State and that the law enforcement agency in the other Member State which holds this information will make it available for the stated purpose, taking into account the requirement of ongoing investigations in that State.

Without prejudice to work in progress¹ the Commission is invited to submit proposals by the end of 2005 at the latest for implementation of the principle of availability, in which the following key conditions should be strictly observed:

- the exchange may only take place in order that legal tasks may be performed;
- the integrity of the data to be exchanged must be guaranteed;
- the need to protect sources of information and to secure the confidentiality of the data at all stages of the exchange, and subsequently;

¹ The Draft framework decision on simplifying the exchange of information and intelligence between law enforcement authorities of the Member States of the European Union, in particular as regards serious offences including terrorist acts, doc. COM(2004) 221 final.

- common standards for access to the data and common technical standards must be applied;
- supervision of respect for data protection, and appropriate control prior to and after the exchange must be ensured;
- individuals must be protected from abuse of data and have the right to seek correction of incorrect data.

The methods of exchange of information should make full use of new technology and must be adapted to each type of information, where appropriate, through reciprocal access to or interoperability of national databases, or direct (on-line) access, including for Europol, to existing central EU databases such as the SIS. New centralised European databases should only be created on the basis of studies that have shown their added value.

2.2 Terrorism

The European Council underlines that effective prevention and combating of terrorism in full compliance with fundamental rights requires Member States not to confine their activities to maintaining their own security, but to focus also on the security of the Union as a whole.

As a goal this means that Member States:

- use the powers of their intelligence and security services not only to counter threats to their own security, but also, as the case may be, to protect the internal security of the other Member States;
- bring immediately to the attention of the competent authorities of other Member States any information available to their services which concerns threats to the internal security of these other Member States;
- in cases where persons or goods are under surveillance by security services in connection with terrorist threats, ensure that no gaps occur in their surveillance as a result of their crossing a border.

In the short term all the elements of the European Council's declaration of 25 March 2004 and the EU action plan on combating terrorism must continue to be implemented in full, notably that enhanced use of Europol and Eurojust should be made and the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator is encouraged to promote progress.

In this context the European Council recalls its invitation to the Commission to bring forward a proposal for a common EU approach to the use of passengers data for border and aviation security and other law enforcement purposes¹.

The high level of exchange of information between security services shall be maintained. Nevertheless it should be improved, taking into account the overall principle of availability as described above in paragraph 2.1 and giving particular consideration to the special circumstances that apply to the working methods of security services, e.g. the need to secure the methods of collecting information, the sources of information and the continued confidentiality of the data after the exchange.

With effect from 1 January 2005, SitCen will provide the Council with strategic analysis of the terrorist threat based on intelligence from Member States' intelligence and security services and, where appropriate, on information provided by Europol.

The European Council stresses the importance of measures to combat financing of terrorism. It looks forward to examining the coherent overall approach that will be submitted to it by the Secretary General/High Representative and the Commission at its meeting in December 2004. This strategy should suggest ways to improve the efficiency of existing instruments such as the monitoring of suspicious financial flows and the freezing of assets and propose new tools in respect of cash transactions and the institutions involved in them

The Commission is invited to make proposals aimed at improving the security of the storage and transport of explosives as well as at ensuring traceability of industrial and chemical precursors.

¹ Declaration on Combating terrorism adopted on 25 March 2004, doc. 7906/04, point 6.

The European Council also stresses the need to ensure adequate protection and assistance to victims of terrorism.

The Council should, by the end of 2005, develop a long-term strategy to address the factors which contribute to radicalisation and recruitment for terrorist activities.

All the instruments available to the European Union should be used in a consistent manner so that the key concern – the fight against terrorism – is fully addressed. To that end the JHA Ministers within the Council should have the leading role, taking into account the task of the General Affairs and External Relations Council. The Commission should review Community legislation in sufficient time to be able to adapt it in parallel with measures to be adopted in order to combat terrorism.

The European Union will further strengthen its efforts being directed, in the external dimension of the area of freedom, security and justice, towards the fight against terrorism. In this context, the Council is invited to set up in conjunction with Europol and the European Border Agency a network of national experts on preventing and combating terrorism and on border control, who will be available to respond to requests from third countries for technical assistance in the training and instruction of their authorities.

The European Council urges the Commission to increase the funding for counter-terrorism related capacity-building projects in third countries and to ensure it has the necessary expertise to implement such projects effectively. The Council also calls on the Commission to ensure that, in the proposed revision of the existing instruments governing external assistance, appropriate provisions are made to enable rapid, flexible and targeted counter-terrorist assistance.

2.3 Police cooperation

The effective combating of cross-border organised and other serious crime and terrorism requires intensified practical cooperation between police and customs authorities of Member States and with Europol and better use of existing instruments in this field.

The European Council urges the Member States to enable Europol in cooperation with Eurojust to play a key role in the fight against serious cross-border (organised) crime and terrorism by:

- ratifying and effectively implementing the necessary legal instruments by the end of 2004¹;
- providing all necessary high quality information to Europol in good time;
- encouraging good cooperation between their competent national authorities and Europol.

With effect from 1 January 2006, Europol must have replaced its "crime situation reports" by yearly "threat assessments" on serious forms of organised crime, based on information provided by the Member States and input from Eurojust and the Police Chiefs Task Force. The Council should use these analyses to establish yearly strategic priorities, which will serve as guidelines for further action. This should be the next step towards the goal of setting up and implementing a methodology for intelligence-led law enforcement at EU level.

Europol should be designated by Member States as central office of the Union for euro counterfeits within the meaning of the Geneva Convention of 1929.

The Council should adopt the European law on Europol, provided for in Article III-276 of the Constitutional Treaty, as soon as possible after the entry into force of the Constitutional Treaty and no later than 1 January 2008, taking account of all tasks conferred upon to Europol.

Until that time, Europol must improve its functioning by making full use of the cooperation agreement with Eurojust. Europol and Eurojust should report annually to the Council on their common experiences and about specific results. Furthermore Europol and Eurojust should encourage the use of and their participation in Member States' joint investigation teams.

¹ Europol Protocols: the Protocol amending Article 2 and the Annex to the Europol Convention of 30 November 2000, OJ C 358 13.12.00, p. 1, the Protocol on the privileges and immunities of Europol, the members of its organs, its Deputy Directors and its members of 28 November 2002 OJ C 312 16.12.2002, p.1 and the Protocol amending the Europol Convention of 27 November 2003, OJ C 2 6.1.2004. The Convention of 29 May 2000 on mutual assistance in criminal matters between the Member States, OJ C 197, 12.7.00, p. 1 and its accompanying Protocol of 16 October 2001 OJ C 326, 21.11.01, p. 2 and Framework Decision 2002/465/JHA of 13 June 2002 on Joint Investigation Teams, OJ L 162, 20.6.02, p. 1.

Experience in the Member States with the use of joint investigation teams is limited. With a view to encouraging the use of such teams and exchanging experiences on best practice, each Member State should designate a national expert.

The Council should develop cross-border police and customs cooperation on the basis of common principles. It invites the Commission to bring forward proposals to further develop the Schengen-acquis in respect of cross border operational police cooperation.

Member States should engage in improving the quality of their law enforcement data with the assistance of Europol. Furthermore, Europol should advise the Council on ways to improve the data. The Europol information system should be up and running without delay.

The Council is invited to encourage the exchange of best practice on investigative techniques as a first step to the development of common investigative techniques, envisaged in Article III-257 of the Constitutional Treaty, in particular in the areas of forensic investigations and information technology security.

Police cooperation between Member States is made more efficient and effective in a number of cases by facilitating cooperation on specified themes between the Member States concerned, where appropriate by establishing joint investigation teams and, where necessary, supported by Europol and Eurojust. In specific border areas, closer cooperation and better coordination is the only way to deal with crime and threats to public security and national safety.

Strengthening police cooperation requires focused attention on mutual trust and confidence-building. In an enlarged European Union, an explicit effort should be made to improve the understanding of the working of Member States' legal systems and organisations. The Council and the Member States should develop by the end of 2005 in cooperation with CEPOL standards and modules for training courses for national police officers with regard to practical aspects of EU law enforcement cooperation.

The Commission is invited to develop, in close cooperation with CEPOL and by the end of 2005, systematic exchange programmes for police authorities aimed at achieving better understanding of the working of Member States' legal systems and organisations.

Finally experience with external police operations should also be taken into account with a view to improving internal security of the European Union.

2.4 Management of crises within the European Union with cross-border effects

On 12 December 2003 the European Council adopted the European security strategy, which outlines global challenges, key threats, strategic objectives and policy implications for a secure Europe in a better world. An essential complement thereof is providing internal security within the European Union, with particular reference to possible major internal crises with cross-border effects affecting our citizens, vital infrastructure and public order and security. Only then can optimum protection be provided to European citizens and vital infrastructure for instance in the event of a CBRN accident.

Effective management of cross-border crises within the EU requires not only strengthening of current actions on civil protection and vital infrastructure but also addressing effectively the public order and security aspects of such crises and coordination between these areas.

Therefore the European Council calls for the Council and the Commission to set up within their existing structures, while fully respecting national competences, integrated and coordinated EU crisis-management arrangements for crises with cross-border effects within the EU, to be implemented at the latest by 1 July 2006. These arrangements should at least address the following issues: further assessment of Member States' capabilities, stockpiling, training, joint exercises and operational plans for civilian crisis management

2.5 Operational cooperation

Coordination of operational activities by law enforcement agencies and other agencies in all parts of the area of freedom, security and justice, and monitoring of the strategic priorities set by the Council, must be ensured.

To that end, the Council is invited to prepare for the setting up of the Committee on Internal Security, envisaged in Article III-261 of the Constitutional Treaty, in particular by determining its field of activity, tasks, competences and composition, with a view to its establishment as soon as possible after the Constitutional Treaty has entered into force.

To gain practical experience with coordination in the meantime, the Council is invited to organise a joint meeting every six months between the chairpersons of the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA) and the Article 36 Committee (CATS) and representatives of the Commission, Europol, Eurojust, the EBA, the Police Chiefs' Task Force, and the SitCEN .

2.6 Crime Prevention

Crime prevention is an indispensable part of the work to create an area of freedom, security and justice. The Union therefore needs an effective tool to support the efforts of Member States in preventing crime. To that end, the European Crime Prevention Network should be professionalised and strengthened. Since the scope of prevention is very wide, it is essential to focus on measures and priorities that are most beneficial to Member States. The European Crime Prevention Network should provide expertise and knowledge to the Council and the Commission in developing effective crime prevention policies.

In this respect the European Council welcomes the initiative of the Commission to establish European instruments for collecting, analysing and comparing information on crime and victimisation and their respective trends in Member States, using national statistics and other sources of information as agreed indicators. Eurostat should be tasked with the definition of such data and its collection from the Member States.

It is important to protect public organisations and private companies from organised crime through administrative and other measures. Particular attention should be given to systematic investigations of property holdings as a tool in the fight against organised crime. Private/public partnership is an essential tool. The Commission is invited to present proposals to this effect in 2006.

2.7. Organised crime and corruption

The European Council welcomes the development of a strategic concept with regard to tackling cross-border organised crime at EU-level and asks the Council and the Commission to develop this concept further and make it operational, in conjunction with other partners such as Europol, Eurojust, the Police Chiefs Task Force, EUCPN and CEPOL. In this connection, issues relating to corruption and its links with organised crime should be examined.

2.8 European strategy on drugs

The European Council underlines the importance of addressing the drugs problem in a comprehensive, balanced and multidisciplinary approach between the policy of prevention, assistance and rehabilitation of drug dependence, the policy of combating illegal drug trafficking and precursors and money laundering, and the strengthening of international cooperation.

The European Strategy on Drugs 2005-2012 will be added to the programme after its adoption by the European Council in December 2004.

3. STRENGTHENING JUSTICE

The European Council underlines the need further to enhance work on the creation of a Europe for citizens and the essential role that the setting up of a European Area for Justice will play in this respect. A number of measures have already been carried out. Further efforts should be made to facilitate access to justice and judicial cooperation as well as the full employment of mutual recognition. It is of particular importance that borders between countries in Europe no longer constitute an obstacle to the settlement of civil law matters or to the bringing of court proceedings and the enforcement of decisions in civil matters.

3.1 European Court of Justice

The European Council underlines the importance of the European Court of Justice in the relatively new area of freedom, security and justice and is satisfied that the Constitutional Treaty greatly increases the powers of the European Court of Justice in that area.

To ensure, both for European citizens and for the functioning of the area of freedom, security and justice, that questions on points of law brought before the Court are answered quickly, it is necessary to enable the Court to respond quickly as required by Article III-369 of the Constitutional Treaty.

In this context and with the Constitutional Treaty in prospect, thought should be given to creating a solution for the speedy and appropriate handling of requests for preliminary rulings concerning the area of freedom, security and justice, where appropriate, by amending the Statutes of the Court. The Commission is invited to bring forward - after consultation of the Court of Justice - a proposal to that effect.

3.2 Confidence-building and mutual trust

Judicial cooperation both in criminal and civil matters could be further enhanced by strengthening mutual trust and by progressive development of a European judicial culture based on diversity of the legal systems of the Member States and unity through European law. In an enlarged European Union, mutual confidence shall be based on the certainty that all European citizens have access to a judicial system meeting high standards of quality. In order to facilitate full implementation of the principle of mutual recognition, a system providing for objective and impartial evaluation of the implementation of EU policies in the field of justice, while fully respecting the independence of the judiciary and consistent with all the existing European mechanisms, must be established.

Strengthening mutual confidence requires an explicit effort to improve mutual understanding among judicial authorities and different legal systems. In this regard, networks of judicial organisations and institutions, such as the network of the Councils for the Judiciary, the European Network of Supreme Courts and the European Judicial Training Network, should be supported by the Union.

Exchange programmes for judicial authorities will facilitate cooperation and help develop mutual trust. An EU component should be systematically included in the training of judicial authorities. The Commission is invited to prepare as soon as possible a proposal aimed at creating, from the existing structures, an effective European training network for judicial authorities for both civil and criminal matters, as envisaged by Articles III-269 and III-270 of the Constitutional Treaty.

3.3 Judicial cooperation in criminal matters

Improvement should be sought through reducing existing legal obstacles and strengthening the coordination of investigations. With a view to increasing the efficiency of prosecutions, while guaranteeing the proper administration of justice, particular attention should be given to possibilities of concentrating the prosecution in cross-border multilateral cases in one Member State. Further development of judicial cooperation in criminal matters is essential to provide for an adequate follow up to investigations of law enforcement authorities of the Member States and Europol.

The European Council recalls in this context the need to ratify and implement effectively - without delay - the legal instruments to improve judicial cooperation in criminal matters, as referred to already in the paragraph on police cooperation.

3.3.1 Mutual recognition

The comprehensive programme of measures to implement the principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions in criminal matters, which encompasses judicial decisions in all phases of criminal procedures or otherwise relevant to such procedures, such as the gathering and admissibility of evidence, conflicts of jurisdiction and the ne bis in idem principle and the execution of final sentences of imprisonment or other (alternative) sanctions¹, should be completed and further attention should be given to additional proposals in that context.

¹ OJ C 12, 15.1.2001, pages 10-22.

The further realisation of mutual recognition as the cornerstone of judicial cooperation implies the development of equivalent standards for procedural rights in criminal proceedings, based on studies of the existing level of safeguards in Member States and with due respect for their legal traditions. In this context, the draft Framework Decision on certain procedural rights in criminal proceedings throughout the European Union should be adopted by the end of 2005.

The Council should adopt by the end of 2005 the Framework Decision on the European Evidence Warrant ¹. The Commission is invited to present its proposals on enhancing the exchange of information from national records of convictions and disqualifications, in particular of sex offenders, by December 2004 with a view to its adoption by the Council by the end of 2005. This should be followed in March 2005 by a further proposal on a computerised system of exchange of information.

3.3.2 Approximation of law

The European Council recalls that the establishment of minimum rules concerning aspects of procedural law is envisaged by the treaties in order to facilitate mutual recognition of judgments and judicial decisions and police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters having a cross-border dimension. The approximation of substantive criminal law serves the same purposes and concerns areas of particular serious crime with cross border dimensions. Priority should be given to areas of crime that are specifically mentioned in the treaties.

To ensure more effective implementation within national systems, JHA Ministers should be responsible within the Council for defining criminal offences and determining penalties in general.

3.3.3 Eurojust

Effective combating of cross-border organised and other serious crime and terrorism requires the cooperation and coordination of investigations and, where possible, concentrated prosecutions by Eurojust, in cooperation with Europol.

¹ COM(2003) 688.

The European Council urges the Member States to enable Eurojust to perform its tasks by:

- effectively implementing the Council Decision on Eurojust by the end of 2004¹ with special attention to the judicial powers to be conferred upon their national members; and
- ensuring full cooperation between their competent national authorities and Eurojust.

The Council should adopt on the basis of a proposal of the Commission the European law on Eurojust, provided for in Article III-273 of the Constitutional Treaty, after the entry into force of the Constitutional Treaty but no later than 1 January 2008, taking account of all tasks referred to Eurojust.

Until that time, Eurojust will improve its functioning by focusing on coordination of multilateral, serious and complex cases. Eurojust should include in its annual report to the Council the results and the quality of its cooperation with the Member States. Eurojust should make maximum use of the cooperation agreement with Europol and should continue cooperation with the European Judicial Network and other relevant partners.

The European Council invites the Council to consider the further development of Eurojust, on the basis of a proposal from the Commission.

3.4 Judicial cooperation in civil matters

3.4.1 Facilitating civil law procedure across borders

Civil law, including family law, concerns citizens in their everyday lives. The European Council therefore attaches great importance to the continued development of judicial cooperation in civil matters and full completion of the programme of mutual recognition adopted in 2000. The main policy objective in this area is that borders between countries in Europe should no longer constitute an obstacle to the settlement of civil law matters or to the bringing of court proceedings and the enforcement of decisions in civil matters.

¹ OJ L 63, 6.3.2002, pages 1-3.

3.4.2 Mutual recognition of decisions

Mutual recognition of decisions is an effective means of protecting citizens' rights and securing the enforcement of such rights across European borders.

Continued implementation of the programme of measures on mutual recognition¹ must therefore be a main priority in the coming years to ensure its completion by 2011. Work concerning the following projects should be actively pursued: the conflict of laws regarding non-contractual obligations ("Rome II") and contractual obligations ("Rome I"), a European Payment Order and instruments concerning alternative dispute resolution and concerning small claims. In timing the completion of these projects, due regard should be given to current work in related areas.

The effectiveness of existing instruments on mutual recognition should be increased by standardising procedures and documents and developing minimum standards for aspects of procedural law, such as the service of judicial and extra-judicial documents, the commencement of proceedings, enforcement of judgments and transparency of costs.

Regarding family and succession law, the Commission is invited to submit the following proposals:

- a draft instrument on the recognition and enforcement of decisions on maintenance, including precautionary measures and provisional enforcement in 2005;
- a green paper on the conflict of laws in matters of succession, including the question of jurisdiction, mutual recognition and enforcement of decisions in this area, a European certificate of inheritance and a mechanism allowing precise knowledge of the existence of last wills and testaments of residents of European Union in 2005; and
- a green paper on the conflict of laws in matters concerning matrimonial property regimes, including the question of jurisdiction and mutual recognition in 2006;
- a green paper on the conflict of laws in matters relating to divorce (Rome III) in 2005.

Instruments in these areas should be completed by 2011. Such instruments should cover matters of private international law and should not be based on harmonised concepts of "family", "marriage", or other. Rules of uniform substantive law should only be introduced as an accompanying measure, whenever necessary to effect mutual recognition of decisions or to improve judicial cooperation in civil matters.

¹ OJ C 12, 15.1.2001, page 1-9.

Implementation of the programme of mutual recognition should be accompanied by a careful review of the operation of instruments that have recently been adopted. The outcome of such reviews should provide the necessary input for the preparation of new measures.

3.4.3 Enhancing cooperation

With a view to achieving smooth operation of instruments involving cooperation of judicial or other bodies, Member States should be required to designate liaison judges or other competent authorities based in their own country. Where appropriate they could use their national contact point within the European Judicial Network in civil matters. The Commission is invited to organise EU workshops on the application of EU law and promote cooperation between members of the legal professions (such as bailiffs and notaries public) with a view to establishing best practice.

3.4.4 Ensuring coherence and upgrading the quality of EU legislation

In matters of contract law, the quality of existing and future Community law should be improved by measures of consolidation, codification and rationalisation of legal instruments in force and by developing a common frame of reference. A framework should be set up to explore the possibilities to develop EU-wide standard terms and conditions of contract law which could be used by companies and trade associations in the Union.

Measures should be taken to enable the Council to effect a more systematic scrutiny of the quality and coherence of all Community law instruments relating to cooperation on civil law matters.

3.4.5 International legal order

The Commission and the Council are urged to ensure coherence between the EU and the international legal order and continue to engage in closer relations and cooperation with international organisations such as The Hague Conference on Private International Law and the Council of Europe, particularly in order to coordinate initiatives and to maximise synergies between these organisations' activities and instruments and the EU instruments. Accession of the Community to the Hague Conference should be concluded as soon as possible.

4. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The European Council considers the development of a coherent external dimension of the Union policy of freedom, security and justice as a growing priority.

In addition to the aspects already addressed in the previous chapters, the European Council calls on the Commission and the Secretary-General / High Representative to present, by the end of 2005, a strategy covering all external aspects of the Union policy on freedom, security and justice, based on the measures developed in this programme to the Council. The strategy should reflect the Union's special relations with third countries, groups of countries and regions, and focus on the specific needs for JHA cooperation with them.

All powers available to the Union, including external relations, should be used in an integrated and consistent way to establish the area of freedom, security and justice. The following guidelines¹ should be taken into account: the existence of internal policies as the major parameter justifying external action; need for value added in relation to projects carried out by the Member States; contribution to the general political objectives of the foreign policies of the Union; possibility of achieving the goals during a period of reasonable time; the possibility of long-term action.

¹ established at the European Council meeting in Feira in 2000.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL DECLARATION
ON THE RELATION BETWEEN THE EU AND IRAQ

1. The European Council discussed the developments in Iraq since the restoration of sovereignty of Iraq on 28 June 2004.
2. The European Council reaffirmed its objective of a secure, stable, unified, prosperous and democratic Iraq that will make a positive contribution to the stability of the region; an Iraq that will work constructively with its neighbours and with the international community to meet shared challenges. It agreed that the EU as a whole should work in partnership with the Iraqi Interim Government, the Iraqi people and participants at the Sharm el Sheikh Conference on 23 November 2004, with the aim of realising these objectives.
3. The European Council warmly welcomed the restoration of sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government that took place on 28 June 2004. It reaffirmed its commitment to support the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1546 and to support the UN in its activities in Iraq. The European Council expressed the EU's full support for the political transition leading to a constitutionally elected Iraqi Government. It welcomes any steps taken by the Interim Iraqi Government to achieve broader participation of the political spectrum in Iraq, thus contributing to the success of the political process and providing solutions to the problems of Iraq. The elections planned for January 2005 are an important step in this process, and the European Council noted the importance of the EU's continued support for these, as well as for the elections scheduled to take place in December 2005.

4. The EU will use its dialogue with Iraq and its neighbours to encourage continuous regional engagement and support for improved security and for the political and reconstruction process in Iraq based on inclusiveness, democratic principles, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as support for security and cooperation in the region. In this respect, the European Council welcomed the International Conference that will be held in Sharm el Sheikh in which the EU will participate, as a further step in efforts to support the political and reconstruction process in accordance with UNSCR 1546. The EU will support this process and underlines the necessity of holding elections in January 2005.

5. The European Council reiterates its condemnation of terrorist attacks, the taking of hostages and the murders which have been committed in Iraq. The EU regrets that the campaign of terrorist violence in Iraq is prolonging the suffering of the Iraqi people and posing difficulties for political progress and economic reconstruction in Iraq and welcomes the commitment under UNSCR 1546 for all parties to act in accordance with international law, including the effective protection and promotion of human rights.

6. The European Council recalled the Commission Communication "The EU and Iraq - A framework for Engagement", endorsed by the European Council in June, that sets out medium-term objectives for the development of EU-Iraq relations and the letter by High Representative Solana and Commissioner Patten. The European Council noted that significant progress on engagement with Iraq has been made.

7. The European Council recalled the contribution of more than € 300 million that the Community has committed to humanitarian and reconstruction support in 2003-2004. Such a contribution has focused on rehabilitation of essential services - water, sanitation, education and health -, boosting employment and reducing poverty and support to governance, the political process, civil society and human rights. Several Member States also contributed to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI).

8. The European Council welcomed the joint Fact Finding Mission for a possible integrated Police and Rule of Law operation for Iraq and considered its report. The European Council recognised the importance of strengthening the criminal justice system, consistent with the respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. It noted the wish of the Iraqi authorities for the EU to become more actively involved in Iraq and that strengthening the criminal justice sector would respond to Iraqi needs and priorities.
9. The European Council agreed that the EU could usefully contribute to the reconstruction and the emergence of a stable, secure and democratic Iraq through an integrated police, rule of law and civilian administration mission, which could inter alia promote closer collaboration between the different actors across the criminal justice system and strengthen the management capacity of senior and high-potential officials from the police, judiciary and penitentiary and improve skills and procedures in criminal investigation in full respect for the rule of law and human rights. Such a mission should be secure, independent and distinct but would be complementary and bring added value to ongoing international efforts as well as develop synergies with ongoing Community and Member States' efforts. While judging that activities outside Iraq with a presence of liaison elements in Iraq would be feasible at this point in time, the European Council agreed that with regard to a mission inside Iraq all security concerns need to be appropriately addressed before any decision could be taken.
10. Prime Minister Allawi's meeting with the European Council has presented the Union with an opportunity to further its political dialogue with Iraq and to discuss Iraq's future and the strengthening of EU's engagement with Iraq.
11. The European Council presented Mr Allawi with a comprehensive package of EU assistance to Iraq. This package, comprised of elements provided by both the Community and Member States, includes the following elements:

- Iraq will be given the perspective of an agreement between the EU and Iraq to reflect the mutual interest in developing a partnership and to promote political and trade cooperation between the EU and Iraq. The European Council asked the Commission to start preparations and work with the Iraqi Government on focused assistance programmes aimed at developing the conditions for such an agreement. In that respect the European Council invited the Commission to enhance as appropriate and with due regard to security its presence in Baghdad.
- In conformity with the July and September GAERC conclusions on EU financial and personnel support for the preparation of elections in close coordination with the UN, the Community will provide a further € 30 million to the elections cluster of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) and intends to provide further support to the electoral process through specific measures, such as the provision of election experts to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq as well as the training of domestic observers. Member States are also providing assistance to the preparations for elections through bilateral contributions. Given the January deadline for elections, it is crucial that this support will be disbursed immediately in order to play a part in the pre-election process.
- As the EU attaches great importance to an active UN presence in Iraq and supports the UN's leading role in promoting the political process and reconstruction of Iraq, EU Member States are ready to contribute substantially to the financing of the middle ring of the UN Protection Force in Iraq, following the request made by the UN Secretary General. The Commission continues to discuss with the UN a possible financial contribution of the Community to the inner ring.
- An expert team should be sent by the end of November 2004 to continue the dialogue with the Iraqi authorities, to start initial planning for a possible integrated police, rule of law and civilian administration mission which is expected to start after the January 2005 elections and in particular assess the urgent security needs for such a mission. A dialogue with other countries in the region on these and other matters should also be encouraged.

- On-going implementation of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance; the majority of funds of the Community and Member States will continue to be directed to the IRFFI.
- Iraq is a beneficiary of the EU Generalized System of Preferences and should be encouraged to do the necessary to benefit from those preferences. The European Council recalled the Commission's offer to the Interim Iraqi Government to implement GSP preferences with Iraq. As soon as conditions allow, the European Commission should work together with the Iraqi administration to set up the administrative cooperation system which is a requirement for the system to operate.
- Continued efforts of the Member States to exchange views on debt and related economic policy conditionality. Several EU Member States are involved in the current Paris Club negotiations on Iraq's debt. The European Council welcomed the upcoming visit of a mission of the Iraqi Ministry of Finance to the Paris Club in November.

