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LIMITE

CIREFI 1

NOTE

From: The Presidency

To: CIREFI

No. prev. docs : 13379/97 CIREFI 63
11465/97 CIREFI 49
10295/1/97 ASIM 162 REV 1
7341/5/97 ASIM 73 REV 5

Subject **CIREFI STATISTICS**

The purpose of this note is to set out the UK Presidency's proposals as to how it intends to take forward further work on the gathering, processing and analysis of statistics relevant to CIREFI's field of enquiry.

Background

2. Following on from the review of CIREFI's working methods undertaken during the Irish Presidency, which raised the issue of how CIREFI's existing arrangements for the collection and analysis of statistics might be improved, the Dutch Presidency initiated further work in this area. A broad strategy for exchanging information in the immigration and asylum field was discussed and developed in document 7341/5/97 ASIM 73 Rev 5. On the basis of this document the Luxembourg Presidency prepared the recommendations to the Council contained in document 10295/1/97 ASIM 162 Rev 1. These included the recommendation that the Council invite the Commission to ask its statistical service to collect and process the statistical data in the fields of immigration and asylum which are currently exchanged in CIREFI and CIREA. Agreement on this proposal remains outstanding.

3. The Dutch Presidency also convened an ad hoc CIREFI Statistical Experts' Group, involving representatives from a small number of interested Member States, for the purpose of examining CIREFI's existing arrangements for gathering and analysing immigration statistics. This review considered both the definitions employed by CIREFI and the scope for analysis which the resulting data yielded as well as looking at how the practical arrangements for collecting and analysing data could be improved. The Group met under both the Dutch and Luxembourg Presidencies and produced two documents. The first, 11465/97 CIREFI 49, set out Common Principles on Information Exchange and set out guiding principles for the submission and interpretation of data as well as identifying deficiencies in existing practical arrangements and possible means for their improvement.
4. The second document, 13379/97 CIREFI 63, set out a number of recommendations drawn up by the Netherlands delegation on the basis of the CIREFI Statistical Experts Group's work. These included the recommendation that CIREFI take forward collection of data on the basis of the Common Principles referred to above in order that CIREFI can be provided with an analysis of data. It also recommended that CIREFI acknowledge the need to delegate the collection and processing of data to an institution with the expertise and resources necessary to achieve the best results and proposed that EUROSTAT was in a position to meet CIREFI's requirements.

Proposed work under the UK Presidency

a. EUROSTAT's role

6. It has yet to be agreed that EUROSTAT should be invited by the Council to collect and process the statistics presently gathered by CIREFI. While this remains unresolved the Presidency nevertheless considers that it would be of considerable advantage to address further the practical implementation issues in the event of such a transfer of responsibilities taking place. The Presidency's view is that EUROSTAT would have responsibility for collecting the data presently supplied by Member States for Tables I - VI. EUROSTAT would also process this data and provide, on the quarterly basis suggested at recommendation 4 of 13379/97 CIREFI 63, an initial executive analysis for the attention of CIREFI, which would be

restricted to a presentation of key trends, developments and observations on the quality of the data in a user-friendly format. The interpretation of this data would be reserved to national experts working to CIREFI (possibly a small ad hoc group) who would prepare, once during each Presidency, a strategic analysis identifying the causes of particular developments and, where possible, proposing remedial action.

7. The possible involvement of EUROSTAT in this work is regarded by the Presidency as an opportunity to improve the practical arrangements for the exchange of data. The Common Principles document sets out the minimum requirements for an effective data exchange but goes on to propose that the existing arrangement, under which the compilation of Member States' statistics is made available to Member States only in a paper format, be modified so as to enable Member States to receive a copy of the complete updated database on diskette each quarter. This would not only obviate the need for the wide circulation of large documents: it would also enable recipient Member States to more readily make use of the data.
 8. The Presidency seeks the approval of CIREFI to liaise with EUROSTAT with a view to examining further the practical implications and requirements of their involvement in CIREFI's statistical function along the lines set out above. This liaison will inevitably involve further attention to formats for the recording of data, the timescale for submission of data etc. The UK Presidency would undertake to report to CIREFI on progress and seek the group's agreement to any further changes to existing arrangements which may be required.
- b. Analysis of CIREFI statistics
9. It is possible that, even in the event of agreement on the issue of principle, it will take some time to implement EUROSTAT's involvement in this exchange of statistics. It is therefore unlikely that data processed by EUROSTAT will be available for the purpose of an expert analysis, as suggested at paragraph 6 above, during the course of the UK Presidency. The Presidency nevertheless believes that an attempt to analyse existing CIREFI data is overdue and therefore proposes to arrange such an analysis during the first half of 1998. This analysis would examine

the data presently available to CIREFI for 1997 (Tables I - VI) and the Presidency would propose to proceed as follows:

- i. complete data for 1997 should be available by end of March;
 - ii. the Presidency will, in conjunction with the Council Secretariat, process this data (tables, graphs etc) into a format which will facilitate a further analysis;
 - iii. the Presidency will then put this data to an ad hoc group of national experts from interested Member States for discussion and interpretation;
 - iv. a report of this discussion, with any recommendations, would be put to the last meeting of CIREFI during the UK Presidency in June.
10. It is hoped that such an exercise would provide some useful insights both on existing data and the possibilities for future analysis of data . The Presidency would welcome the views of delegations on this proposal.

c. False documents/trafficking routes

11. The review of CIREFI's existing arrangements initiated under the Dutch Presidency focused on Tables I - VI, which formed the core of CIREFI's original arrangements for collecting statistics. There was not opportunity to examine Table VII (on false documents) and Table VIII (on trafficking routes). The Presidency has the following observations on these tables:

i. Table VII

The Presidency's view is that this table unnecessarily duplicates work undertaken by the False Documents Group. Moreover the Presidency's experience is that, because statistics for holders of false documents are compiled at which the false documents are detected, in many cases holders are recorded as 'nationality unknown'. The resulting data is not readily comparable with CIREFI data for Tables I - VI where nationality has generally been established. Consideration might be given to deletion of this table.

ii. Table VIII

This table does not take the form of a statistical return and, in the Presidency's view, should not form part of the arrangements for which EUROSTAT may be given responsibility. Consideration might be given as to whether this table should continue to be compiled as a separate exercise administered by the Secretariat and whether this table might be further improved.

12. The Presidency would welcome delegations' views on these points.

d. Exchange of information with third countries

13. The draft recommendations set out in document 10295/1/97 ASIM 162 Rev 1 include a recommendation that the Council confirm the desirability of including in an appropriate manner in the information exchange system the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus in the context of the pre-accession strategy. However document 7341/5/97 ASIM 73 Rev 5 made no particular recommendation as to whether such an exchange should include statistics on illegal immigration collected by CIREFI. The CIREFI Statistical Experts Group did not make recommendations on this particular point.

14. CIREFI has, in the context of the Budapest Group, made its existing definitions available to the associated states. It has not, however, contemplated the establishment of formal arrangements for the exchange of statistical data. The Presidency would welcome an initial exchange of views on this issue.