

Setting up of a Centre for Information, Discussion and Exchange on the Crossing of Borders and Immigration (CIREFI)

Introduction

Setting up of a Centre for Information, Discussion and Exchange on the Crossing of Borders and Immigration (CIREFI) (adopted London, 30 November and 1 December 1992 by the meeting of immigration ministers. SN 4816/92 WGI 1277. An immigration clearing house to parallel that set up for asylum (CIREA), as a "regular, permanent vehicle for the exchange of information .. for the purpose of combatting illegal immigration". To gather information on lawful and unlawful immigration "flows", unlawful immigration methods, genuine and false travel documents, rejected asylum-seekers and illegal immigrants who abuse the asylum procedure, expulsion, carrier liability.

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Reference:

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Ad Hoc Group Immigration

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Subject: Setting up of a Centre for Information, Discussion and Exchange on the Crossing of Borders and Immigration (CIREFI)

Establishment of a centre for information. discussion and exchange on the crossing of borders and immigration (CIREFI)

1. At their meeting in Lisbon on 11 and 12 July 1992, the Ministers with responsibility for immigration called upon the ad hoc Group on Immigration to submit a feasibility study for the establishment of a Centre of Information, Discussion and Exchange (Clearing House) for their meeting in December 1992. The ad hoc Group on Immigration hereby submits to Ministers its conclusions on this matter.

2. The ad hoc Group considers that the setting up of such a centre for information concerning the crossing of borders and immigration (CIREFI) would be beneficial.

Reasons for the establishment of CIREFI

3. The immigration work programme endorsed by Ministers at Maastricht in December 1991 (WGI 930) encompasses a wide range of topics - admission policies, common approaches to the problems of illegal immigration, analysis of the causes of immigration pressure - on which close and detailed co-operation between Member States is called for. Successful developments in these areas will require

reliable data and information flows.

4. Information on a number of issues is already made available and exchanged between Member States on an ad hoc basis as required on any particular occasion. Experience has, however, shown that the exchange and collation of information have not always been particularly effective or rapid; questionnaires tend to be given low priority and need to be carefully drafted to elicit appropriate information. The ad hoc Group considers that there would be benefit in having a permanent mechanism for the regular exchange of information, supported, as the equivalent clearing house on asylum (CIREA) already is, by staff from the General secretariat of the Council of the European Communities.

5. Unlike the current Sub-Groups, which under the arrangements contemplated for the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty are intended to be temporary and to be disbanded once they have fulfilled their mandate, such a body would provide a regular, permanent vehicle for the exchange of information, with a dedicated staff. Under the Maastricht Treaty arrangements this would be the primary institutional arrangement for exchange of information on an ongoing basis between Member States.

Recommendation

6. The ad hoc Working Group on Immigration accordingly invites Ministers responsible for immigration to endorse the establishment of such a Centre for Information, Discussion and Exchange on the crossing of Borders and Immigration (CIREFI), as a forum for exchanges of information and consultations, during the first half of 1993. ministers are also invited to endorse the following broad tasks and operating methods for the Centre.

Functions

7. The function of the clearing house would be to gather, exchange and disseminate information and compile documentation on matters relating to immigration and the crossing of borders, with a view to the development of greater informal consultation, close co-operation and consultation of competent bodies and increased dissemination of information to Member States. It would aid the rapid exchange of practical information between officials responsible for controls at the external borders for the purpose of combatting illegal immigration. If agreed, the clearing house will, in due course, provide a focal point under the institutional arrangements established by the Maastricht Treaty, for information on matters taken under consideration in the course of implementing the work programme adopted by Ministers. It will also serve as the mechanism for consultation and collaboration on practical matters between the relevant departments of the Member States.

8. The clearing house will not seek to duplicate or replace other arrangements which are already in place for co-operation between the Member States. In particular, it will not seek to assume the role or functions of the Rapid consultation Centre, established following an informal Ministerial meeting held in March 1991, or to duplicate work undertaken by the Centre for Information, Discussion and Exchange on Asylum (CIREA). It may, however, work

in conjunction with the Asylum Clearing House on matters which fall within the sphere of interest of both.

Gathering of Information

9. Information on the following matters would be exchanged within the clearing house.

- authorized immigration flows;
- unlawful immigration flows (country of origin, routes, means of transport);
- unlawful immigration methods (with a view to preventing and halting attempts at unlawful immigration);
- genuine, forged or falsified travel documents;
- control procedures;
- legislation bearing on immigration control procedures and information on immigration policies generally;
- the question of rejected asylum applicants and illegal immigrants who abuse the asylum procedure. in conjunction with the clearing house on asylum (CIREFI);
- information on the expulsion of illegally present third-country nationals;
- information on carriers, liability legislation and practice, including data on inadmissible passenger arrivals and routings; and
- statistics.

10. The clearing house would also have, as one of its functions, practical co-operation by experts on operational matters, including in the field of forged documents, and would supersede the existing forged documents Sub-Group as the forum for such work. Such co-operation might include the organization and oversight of relevant training seminars.

Access to information

11. The clearing house would report to the ad hoc Working Group on Immigration and to its Sub-Groups (or to the successor bodies under the Union Treaty arrangements) on any matter on which its assistance was required or which it felt should be brought to notice.

12. Ministers, national authorities participating in the work of the clearing house, their officials (including officials responsible for border control) and the Commission would also have access to the information held by the clearing house.

Constitution

13. The clearing house would operate under the direction of the

ad hoc Working Group on Immigration or its successor body. It would not itself have any decision-making powers, but could draw attention to specific problems and make proposals.

14. The Member States would designate to participate in the clearing house appropriate national experts, who might be officials responsible in the Member States for implementing laws and regulations on those matters set out above, together with other suitable individuals whose particular experience or expertise (e.g. statisticians) might be beneficial.

15. The clearing house would be supported by suitably qualified staff of the General Secretariat of the Council. In all probability, and in order to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy, such staff would be those also employed in connection with the clearing house dealing with asylum matters (CIREA).

The details of the organization of CIREFI are to be discussed by the Sub-Group "External Frontiers" on the basis of WGI 1240 and in the light of proposals submitted by the German delegation. Detailed proposals should be submitted to the ad hoc Group on Immigration as quickly as possible.