

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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Summary of replies by Member States to the questionnaire (WGI
835) on migratory flows

(Commission Staff Working Paper)

Subject: Summary of replies by Member States to the questionnaire (WGI 835) on migratory flows
Commission services' working paper.

1. At the General Affairs Council of 4 December 1990 the Commission was requested to undertake studies to determine what means are needed to obtain a harmonized view of migratory flows.

This decision came in response to Mr Delors' suggestion that a migration monitoring unit should be set up to quantify migratory flows in a comparable terms without involving the creation of a new structure. The Member States approved the initiative since it would provide them with a mechanism for identifying the latest trend in immigration through informal exchanges of information.

2. The Commission's departments followed up this initiative with the help of the Statistical Office and in close collaboration with the Immigration Group. On 3 March 1991 a draft questionnaire (WGI 755) was submitted to the Group on Immigration and the Member States were asked to give their comments and suggest any improvements they felt were needed.

The final questionnaire incorporating the Member States' suggestions (WGI 835), was broken down into 10 tables designed to make it possible to quantify the number of nationals from non-member countries entering the Member States every six months and to provide a breakdown of them by nationality and legal category.

3. The questionnaire was sent out to the Member States on 22 July 1991, and they had undertaken to send in the data for the first six months of 1991 by 15 October 1991. The Commission departments assumed that thanks to the close cooperation of national experts in drawing up the questionnaire it would be possible for the required information to be supplied. However, despite the renewed interest of the Council (General Affairs), the fact is that the information provided does not enable the Commission departments to present a harmonized summary of migratory flows.

4. An initial examination of the replies to the questionnaire (WGI 835) shows that despite repeated reminders at Immigration Group meetings only 8 Member States have sent in their replies to the Commission so far (though not by 15 October). The figures from Italy, Ireland, Spain and

In spite of the effort made by the Member States that have responded to the questionnaire, a study of the replies prompts two fundamental observations:

(a) Failure to respect the reporting period requested

The reporting period for this first questionnaire exercise was supposed to be the first half of 1991, but the replies sent disregarded this in terms of both the length of time (six months) and the actual period covered (first half of the calendar year). The Dutch figures, for example, cover the twelve months from 1 October 1990 to 31 September 1991, while the British figures (also annual) are for 1990.

(b) Partial or incomplete data

The lack of homogeneity in the replies makes comparison difficult or even impossible when certain information is not given; for instance the number of visas refused, which reflects migratory pressure, appears to be unavailable in France, Greece, Luxembourg, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium.

5. The attached summary table shows the situation in terms of the replies received so far. The vertical columns represent the 10 tables of the questionnaire (WGI 835). The horizontal columns show the character of the replies provided by the Member States and the period covered.

Looking at the table shows that the data given are mostly partial or incomplete, making it impossible to collate them into an overall summary. The information is too disparate to provide a harmonized picture of migratory flows, and was sent in too late to serve for early warning purposes. These, however, were the two main aims behind the Council's request.

6. The Commission, together with the Member States, therefore needs to analyse the problems they ran up against in furnishing the appropriate information despite the careful work that went into preparing the questionnaire. Three lines of reflection should be pursued:

(a) Awareness of the implications of the Council's request

Given that the two aims of the Council's request were to obtain a harmonized view of migratory flows and to provide an early warning system, can the Member States:

- i provide all the information requested (by completing each of the tables; failing this their composition would have to be revised, although it was agreed with the Immigration Group);
- ii for each six-monthly period (failing this the reporting period would have to be changed, although that too was agreed with the Immigration Group); and
- iii send it in on time (3 months after the end of the reporting period).

(b) Improved collation of the data supplied

The various statistics involved may come from different national authorities. Internal collation should therefore be carried out by the national "contact points" that the Immigration Group decided to set up at its meeting of 15 February 1992, which should also be responsible for the quality and timely submission of information.

(c) Absence of certain national statistics

Some Member States appear unable to provide specific information where it does not tally with their national nomenclature. Thought therefore needs to be given to whether this information is necessary and whether the Member States can make an effort to collect it in future.

7. The foregoing shows that the Commission is at present unable to complete the task assigned to it and will have to report this fact to the Council. There will have to be discussions with the Immigration Group to decide the thrust of the message which the Commission should pass on to the General Affairs Council, with the following two options:

(a) The Commission is unable to fulfil this remit

If the Member States confirm that they are unable to provide the Commission with the data it needs to obtain a harmonized view of migratory flows, the General Affairs Council will have to be informed at one of its forthcoming meetings when immigration is on the agenda.

(b) Completion of the remit requires greater cooperation between Member States and the Commission

If, after joint reflection on the ways and means of cooperation between the Member States and the Commission, it proves possible to determine more precisely the nature of the information that the Member States could and should send regularly to the Commission, the terms of the remit could be redefined more tightly to allow the monitoring exercise to fulfil the two purposes for which it was intended.

8. In deciding which option to choose, it should perhaps be noted that the European Parliament attaches growing importance to the establishment of a migration monitoring centre. The report on immigration produced by the Committee on Civil Liberties expressly calls for such action and the Committee on Social Affairs has proposed that specific appropriations be made available for this purpose.

SUMMARY TABLE

Table	FR 6/91	D 6/91	UK 90	LUX 6/91	DK 6/91	NL 90-91	I	IRE	GR 6/91	P	B 6/91	ESP
Table 1A	C	P	P	P	-	P	-	-	C	-	P	-
Table 1B	C	-	C	P	-	C	-	-	C	-	-	-
Table 2A	C	P	P	-	P	I	-	-	P	-	C	-
Table 2B	C	P	P	-	P	-	-	-	P	-	P	-
Table 2C	C	P	P	-	P	I	-	-	P	-	-	-
Table 2D	-	P	P	-	P	I	-	-	P	-	-	-
Table 3A	-	-	P	P	-	P	-	-	-	-	-	-
Table 3B	-	-	P	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Table 4	P	-	P	P	P	P	-	-	C	-	P	-
Table 5	C	C	P	P	P	P	-	-	C	-	C	-

Key:

C: Full reply matching the period requested.

P: Partial reply, providing usable information.

I: Incomplete reply, global total, or reply covering a different period, providing information that cannot be used.

.: No reply.

6/91 : First half of 1991.

90 : Whole of 1990.

90-91 : Straddling 1990 and 1991.