

7631/97

LIMITE

ASIM 83

NOTE

from : the General Secretariat

to : the False Documents Group

Subject : Completion of the feasibility study on the setting up of a harmonized image archiving system

At the meeting of the False Documents Working Party, on 22 January 1997, it was decided, at the Presidency's suggestion, to ask the German, French, British and Dutch delegations to meet informally in order to prepare a full and up-to-date summary of the user requirements and the needs which must be met by a European computerized system for the archiving and transmission of document images.

On 7 March 1997, the four aforementioned delegations, and a Commission representative were invited to a meeting presided by the General Secretariat. The starting point of the discussions was a 1994 compilation (Doc. 7156/94 ASIM 106) of the replies of 8 delegations (D, ES, F, GR, IT, NL, PORT, UK) as completed by the Belgian (Doc. 5037/95 ASIM 48) and Luxembourg (Doc. 5286/95 ASIM 62) replies to a questionnaire (Doc. 4826/94 ASIM 34) on the requirements of a European system. Therefore, as yet , 5 delegations have not expressed their views on the subject (AUT, DK, FIN, IRL, SUE). Finally, all aspects of Document n°11337/96 ASIM 150, that had been approved under the Irish Presidency, were also taken into consideration and incorporated in this document.

The results will then be submitted to the full False Documents Working Party for discussion so that work can resume.

I. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of a computerized image archiving system is to improve border controls so that persons with false documents (passport, visa or other means of identification) are prevented from entering and moving within the territory of the European Union. There is a need to combat illegal immigration and promote police cooperation.

To do this, border officials and other competent users need easier access to large numbers of documents specimen (false and genuine) so that they can quickly identify false ones.

The proliferation of documents (both genuine and false) calls for frequent updating, and the techniques used to produce authentic documents and counterfeits of them are becoming more and more sophisticated, hence the need for a high-quality medium.

The two requirements of speed and accurate reproduction are not fully met by the European Fraud Bulletin and the Manual of genuine documents, and so the use of a computerized image archiving system is, together with training, an essential element of an overall strategy to fulfil the needs of Member States.

II. REQUIREMENTS

1. Chief users, security and training

The need for information on travel documents is felt most keenly at points of entry in EU member states. Therefore, the material carried by any system should be geared, first and foremost, to assisting the border control officer. It is agreed that the content might usefully reflect existing European Bulletin and Manual type material, but individual states should be left to decide for themselves who the users should be.

The computerized image archiving system would be accessible to the Member States' central offices concerned with document forgery who will disseminate the information, as appropriate, to border officials, or other competent authorities.

It is essential to guarantee the security of the information contained in the computerized system, regarding both access to the system and transmission of data. There again Member States will be responsible for ensuring that only authorised users have access to the information and that any mode of transmission from the national central offices is secure.

Regarding the transmission of data, it is of paramount importance to ensure that the information can be transmitted quickly to the national central units. However, it goes without saying that the speed with which the information can circulate depends on many factors such as the frequency of the exchanges and translation problems.

The system should be "user-friendly" and, if possible, include a help function so that users can teach themselves how to use the system.

When choosing or designing a system, due consideration should be given to the possibility of introducing a "flash" system which would entail sending a warning to all Member States about a particular false document via E.mail and inviting interested authorised users to ask for a copy of the fraudulent document to be sent to them.

Moreover, although it does not appear to be useful to develop an additional level containing more detailed information on forgery for experts for the sake of keeping the system simple, the possibility of including such information at a later stage, maybe by adding a window, should be borne in mind from the outset.

2. Type of information

The computerized image archiving system should contain the data contributed by individual Member States, both in connection with the European handbook of genuine documents and with the notification of false documents via the "Fraud Bulletin", of which the European Union is the depositary. The system would not replace or cancel the normal paper exchanges until all Member States are able to use the computerized system.

Therefore, the type of information in the database generally deemed necessary is as follows:

- (a) images of counterfeit and forged documents;
- (b) images of genuine documents.
- (c) summary information on falsification techniques
- (d) summary information on security techniques

The presentation would entail the juxtaposition of images depicting of counterfeit and forged documents with images of genuine documents for comparison purposes, and a text illustrating the main detection points;

Then there is the question of the origin of documents. Although ultimately the aim is to include all the authentic documents in the world and as many relevant counterfeits and forgeries, "Risk" documents either from the Member States or third countries should be entered in the system first. "Risk" documents are those statistically the most numerous as regards processing and as regards falsification. When starting the databank a list of such "risk" documents will be drawn up on the basis of the E.U statistical exchanges on fraudulent documents.

3. Main characteristics

Given the users and the type of information required, the characteristics retained for any computerized image archiving system are:

- (a) high quality of image and colour; It should be possible to show up the watermark and fluorescent features of reproductions of authentic documents. Failing that, such features could be described in a text.
- (b) easy access for authorized persons;
- (c) flexibility of updating;
- (d) rapid distribution;
- (e) locking facility to prevent unauthorized access;

- (f) reasonable initial investment for the equipment;
- (g) clear texts in the user's language;
- (h) possibility of enlarging details on screen;
- (i) system of cross-references.
- (j) safety when transmitting the information

4. Organisation

Each Member State will remain free to develop and use a national system of its own capable of meeting the needs of frontier offices and offices responsible for checking documents. Flexibility of this kind is required because each Member State experiences different migration flows and has specific problems with particular documents.

However, the Member States also recognize the need to ensure that the various softwares have certain common features and norms so as to avoid the mere juxtaposition of different systems and/or the extra workload relating to the conversion of images. Moreover there should be some kind of standardization of iconographic data so as to simplify the users' task of consulting and identifying data.

At some stage, it might be advisable for the four Member States represented in the Informal Study Group to devise common norms on the basis of the existing systems so that any future system can also adhere to such norms.

Although exchanges between Member States would be organized through the Member States' central offices concerned with document forgery, the False Document Working Party should continue to play a coordinating role. In particular, its role should be to control entry, firstly, so as to avoid the risk of overload by entering the same information under a different form, secondly, to check the quality and the relevance of the data entered. The Working Party should then ensure coordination for the translation of data.

III. CONCLUSION

This document contains a summary of the users' requirements and needs which must be met by the European computerised system for the archiving and transmission of images. It will then have to be approved by the False documents working party before moving on to the next step.

As decided under the Irish Presidency (Doc. 12754/96 ASIM 175), the Working Party, or a group of experts, should study what is available in the marketplace, seeing what systems are available, what facilities they offer and to what extent they meet the needs of Member States. If necessary either needs can be adapted to what is available or an already available system can be modified to suit the needs or a combination of both.

The study will examine these possibilities from the following points of view:

1. How and to what extent each meet the criteria set out in the present document.
2. What are the likely cost and benefits of each.
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each.