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Press Releases

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High-level group on the future of European home affairs policy after 2010 meets for the first time

At the invitation of Federal Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble, the high-level advisory group on the future of European home affairs policy (Future Group), proposed by the German EU Presidency in January at the Informal Meeting of Home Affairs Ministers in Dresden, met for the first time in Eltville, Hesse, on 20-21 May 2007.

The group consists of Vice-President Frattini, the six interior ministers of the current and upcoming trio presidencies (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia as well as France, the Czech Republic and Sweden), one representative from the subsequent trio presidency (Spain, Belgium or Hungary), and experts from individual Member States as needed.

The group is to draft recommendations on European home affairs policy starting in 2010, after the Hague Programme ends, for options to increase the Council's efficiency and to improve or simplify existing EU regulations. In addition, the group is supposed to address the issue of cooperation at EU level, i.e., in which fields greater cooperation would be beneficial, and in which fields more discretion should be given to the Member States. This is intended to make European home affairs policy more efficient, understandable and responsive to citizens' needs. However, the high-level group is explicitly not supposed to address issues of primary law, decision-making or other matters that might affect the further treatment of the EU Constitutional Treaty. The group is to produce a report with recommendations intended to serve as the basis for a proposal on the post-Hague programme to be presented to the Commission.

In Eltville, Federal Minister Schäuble stated,

“We want to provide impetus for the future of European home affairs policy. The Hague Programme expires at the end of 2009. By then at the latest we will need a new programme to examine and set the priorities of European home affairs policy in view of new challenges. We would like to initiate this discussion during the German Presidency. In 2007 and 2008, we will have the opportunity to debate the future orientation of European home affairs policy ahead of the negotiations on the new multi-annual programme.”

Since 2004, the Hague Programme on strengthening freedom, security and justice in the European Union has defined the aims and guidelines for European home affairs policy. The Hague Programme expires at the end of 2009.

At the group's constitutive meeting in Eltville, Vice-President Frattini and the ministers discussed in particular options for the future of the European border management agency FRONTEX, of joint Schengen border and visa management and of border police cooperation with third countries.

Federal Minister Schäuble stated: “The free movement of persons and goods, and Europe's economic might and democratic stability have also made the EU – especially in its relations to its

eastern and southern neighbours – a target of illegal migration, organized crime, the international drug trade and Islamic terrorism. This means that, despite existing and constantly updated tools such as the Schengen Information System, the Prüm Treaty on cross-border police cooperation, Europol and common visa regulations, we must continue to think about how to further develop the mechanisms and strategies that have existed since the Schengen regime was created in order to face the challenges of the future. We had an initial discussion of these issues, and they will be included in the group's final report, which is to be presented in the second half of 2008 and is intended to assist the Commission in drawing up its official proposal for the post-Hague programme.”

The second meeting of the Future Group will be held in Brussels on 25 June, also during the German Presidency. This meeting will focus on the increasing overlap of internal and external security. Discussions are planned on general legal principles in the area of terrorism and security, on expanding cooperation with third countries on security issues, and on a comprehensive approach for EU missions in third countries, in order to better coordinate military, law enforcement and civil protection operations.

The Future Group is supposed to work in a transparent way. Each Member State is invited to submit input to the group. Reports on the group's progress will be published regularly on the websites of the European Commission (VP Frattini) and the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The group will also report on the progress of its discussions, in a suitable form and at regular intervals, to the ministers responsible for home affairs. Establishing the Future Group was one of the key aims of the German EU Presidency in the field of home affairs.

Further information:

For more information and a link to the Hague Programme, please visit the homepage of the Federal Ministry of the Interior at www.bmi.bund.de

