

# The Stockholm Programme

**The Stockholm Programme is the new five-year programme designed to strengthen the area of freedom, security and justice in the European Union. It is being delivered through an Action Plan setting out a series of initiatives (Commission reports, communications, directives and regulations). This is an important facet of European construction, delivering added value that is felt directly and on a daily basis by citizens in their freedom of movement, their private relations and business dealings and their safety and security. The Belgian Presidency has defined a series of priorities in this domain.**

## General context

The European Council adopted the Stockholm Programme in December 2009, during the Swedish Presidency of the EU. This new five-year programme is designed to strengthen the area of freedom, security and justice in the European Union.

The programme is being implemented through a Commission Action Plan setting out a series of initiatives (Commission reports, communications, directives and regulations) covering the following domains in particular:

- Home affairs, the fight against crime at EU level;
- cooperation between judicial authorities in civil, commercial and criminal matters;
- access to EU territory and immigration and asylum issues;
- enhanced external action in these domains.

The Belgian Presidency's agenda covers issues in all these domains. Here are some examples.

## Home affairs

The Treaty of Lisbon established a Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI). By common agreement with the Commission, this committee was to be in charge of the implementation and operational monitoring of the internal security strategy for the European Union. This important new EU body held its first meetings under the Spanish Presidency. The Belgian Presidency will continue this work.

In the fight against terrorism and organised crime, security requirements need to be reconciled with the individual freedoms and rights of European citizens. Within this context, an agreement between the European Union and the United States on data transfers under the US Terrorist Finance Tracking Program (TFTP) needs to be approved by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Negotiations will also need to be started with the United States on a global agreement

on data protection and discussions will need to be continued on the use made of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data within the European Union.

The drafting of a general analysis of the crime situation will mark the first step in bringing together the various levels of government (European and national). An initiative will be taken to strengthen regional cross-border cooperation between police forces and customs authorities with a view to achieving a better-targeted analysis of the crime situation.

As regards terrorism, particular attention will be paid to preventing radicalisation, both in terms of action taken by local police in the fight against crime and with respect to 'administrative' prevention. The Belgian Presidency will also launch projects targeting problems like itinerant criminal gangs, illegal dealing in large-calibre firearms in major European cities, identity fraud, safety and security at football matches and in car parks along European motorways.

## Justice

In judicial cooperation on criminal matters, one priority of the Belgian Presidency will be to set up a European system for obtaining evidence, as provided for in the Stockholm Programme.

Another priority will be to design instruments firstly to prevent trafficking in human beings, to fight this phenomenon and to protect the victims and secondly to prevent both the exploitation and sexual abuse of children and child pornography.

The Belgian Presidency also intends to stimulate practical cross-border cooperation between magistrates and judges in border areas, primarily as part of the fight against fraud, especially in the domains of taxation, social security and justice.

Civil law negotiations will aim to determine which court has jurisdiction and which law shall apply in cases concerning inheritance, and which law applies to cross-border divorces. The Belgian Presidency will pay special attention to mediation in cases of parental abduction.

## Asylum and immigration

On the subject of asylum, the Stockholm Programme reaffirms the objective of adopting a common asylum procedure and uniform status for persons granted international protection between now and 2012. Implementing a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) based on respect for fundamental rights, with high standards of protection in keeping with the Geneva Convention, is still the top priority. Proposals for regulations and directives in this domain are already being discussed

(reception conditions for asylum seekers, asylum procedures, minimum criteria to qualify for refugee status or some other international protection status and the so-called 'Dublin Regulation' for determining which State is responsible for processing an asylum application). The Belgian Presidency will ensure that maximum progress is made in all these areas. Finally, strengthening Frontex, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the European Union remains a priority item on its agenda.

To encourage legal immigration, work will start on drafting new proposals regarding seasonal migrant workers and other forms of migration.

The problem and protection of foreign unaccompanied minors will be another priority, as will the implementation of the Action Plan approved under the Spanish Presidency.

### **The external dimension**

Neither immigration issues nor the fight against organised crime, traf-

ficking in human beings, drug trafficking or terrorism can be divorced from the EU's foreign policy. This external dimension will be a focal point for the Belgian Presidency.

### **Calendar of events**

#### **15-16 July 2010**

*Informal meeting of Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)*

#### **7-8 October 2010**

*JHA Council (Luxembourg)*

#### **8-9 November 2010**

*JHA Council (Brussels)*

#### **2-3 December 2010**

*JHA Council (Brussels)*