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“Living Europe Safely”

Work programme of the Federal Ministry of the Interior for the German EU Presidency in the first half of 2007

European unification has brought us freedom and prosperity. We can travel largely without having to show our passports, and we can live and work in other EU countries. Thanks to European unification and to technological progress, we face fewer borders today than ever before. People, goods and services have become more mobile.

But freedoms can also be misused. In the interests of Europe's citizens, we must therefore make sure that terrorists, human smugglers and criminals do not take advantage of open borders. To do this, we in Europe must work closely together. Our most pressing task is safeguarding freedom and security.

In this effort, our domestic security is inseparably linked to foreign security. Attacks in New York, Madrid and London have shown that terrorists may select targets anywhere in the world. For this reason, it is in the EU's own interest to engage in a dialogue with its neighbours and other countries around the world.

Against this background, the Federal Ministry of the Interior has chosen “Living Europe Safely” as its motto during the German EU Presidency in the first half of 2007. This motto is intended to convey the challenge we have set for ourselves and the expectations Europe's citizens have of Europe.

Our policy focuses on the interests of citizens. Our programme thus concentrates on the following issues:

We want to fight international terrorism and cross-border crime more effectively, manage migration together, and make progress on integration and intercultural dialogue.

To achieve this, we want to strengthen cooperation on home affairs, continue ongoing projects and achieve practical results. We are guided by implementing the Hague Programme, which has defined the goals for home affairs since 2004.

Further, we want to provide impetus for the future of European internal policy. The Hague Programme ends in 2009. Then we will need a new programme to examine and set the priorities of European domestic policy in view of new challenges. We would like to initiate this discussion during the German Presidency. We find it very important for the Member States and the Union to agree on who will act and who will bear political responsibility. Only in this way can European domestic policy become more understandable, coherent and responsive to citizens' needs. Our goal is to link unity with diversity in a meaningful way.

Fighting international terrorism and cross-border crime

International terrorism threatens the European Union; it threatens peace and the international order. We will win the fight against terrorism only if we in Europe work closely together.

Our law enforcement and security agencies must share their information with each other. For them to do so, we need a European information network and the rapid introduction of the new Schengen Information System.

Our police officers and border guards must also work more closely with each other. We need joint patrols and investigative teams in order to achieve practical results. In these teams, officers from other Member States must be able to exercise executive powers.

The 2006 World Cup in Germany is one example of how much we can profit from cooperation among our police forces. More than 500 police officers from 12 EU Member States helped us organize a safe World Cup.

Strengthening Europol

We want to strengthen the European police office Europol so that it can better support the police forces of the Member States in fighting serious international crime. To this end, we need to give Europol more authority and more staff. Some changes may require amendments to the legislative framework. For example, we would like to make Europol responsible for fighting all forms of serious, cross-border crime, such as serious violations of public security caused by hooligans and other violent persons while travelling, or murders by a serial killer acting in more than one Member State.

All the changes concerning Europol are intended to help us do a better job of catching criminals. National police officers need to know that they can turn to Europol for help with fighting cross-border crime, for example Internet monitoring or assessing data on terrorist organizations.

We are doing everything in our power to break up terrorist networks at an early stage. To prevent attacks, we need to share information about Islamist groups, for example. This is why all national law enforcement agencies should have access to Europol's data.

Joint investigative teams made up of officers from Europol and the Member States are essential to fighting international terrorism. We are therefore pushing for the Member States to implement the necessary amending protocols to the Europol Convention during our presidency.

Transposing the Treaty of Prüm into European legislation

Criminals must not have a chance to escape prosecution simply by crossing a border. This is why we are working to have the provisions of the Treaty of Prüm on fighting terrorism, cross-border crime and illegal migration, which were adopted by seven Member States in 2005, transposed into EU law. This would give all Member States access to DNA and fingerprint data and vehicle registries, for example, and would allow them to ask other Member States for reinforcements in case of major events such as international sport competitions.

During the 2006 World Cup, giving guest officers executive powers (for example to check identities or take persons into temporary custody) proved particularly effective. Foreign officers were able to intervene with fans from their own country, thereby providing real assistance to the German police. We would therefore like to have this possibility introduced Europe-wide for all major events and for joint patrols along the internal borders.

Fighting threats on the Internet

We would like deeper cooperation on monitoring and analysing Internet activity by terrorist organizations ("Check the Web"). To this end, the Member States should coordinate their efforts more closely with an eye to the various language and technical skills of their security authorities. At Europol, an Internet portal is to be set up where the Member States can share information.

Making information systems more secure

It is impossible to imagine modern life without the Internet, e-mail or mobile telephones. They help make information available anywhere, anytime. The European economy depends on the secure transmission of such information. Together, the state, the private sector and individual citizens are responsible for the security of information technology (IT). The division of responsibility between the state and the private sector will be one emphasis of the European IT security conference during the German presidency. Together with the European Commission, we will also work to make sure we have a comprehensive system to warn users and producers in Europe of computer viruses and other security risks.

Connecting new Member States to the Schengen Information System

We know that for the new Member States, closing down the last checkpoint on the internal border symbolizes EU membership. We therefore consider it very important to be able to travel soon between the old and new Member States without border checks. To open the borders, all Member States need to be connected to the Schengen Information System (SIS). This system allows law enforcement agencies to identify persons wanted on arrest warrants and persons subject to entry bans, as well as stolen vehicles. We are therefore in favour of "SIS I for all", which would allow the new Member States access as quickly as possible. In the interest of security for our citizens, we will continue to work hard to introduce the expanded SIS II, with its additional capacity for features such as fingerprint and photograph data.

Using biometrics to make identity documents more secure

Biometric features such as digitized photos or fingerprints make it harder to forge or falsify identity documents. They make it possible to check databases quickly, so that the identity of document holders can be reliably verified. We want to harmonize the use of biometrics in visas, passports, residence permits and identity documents in the EU. We will also work to see that third countries include biometric features in their travel documents.

Protecting critical infrastructures

We need better protection for critical infrastructures in Europe. Our supply of key utilities, such as electricity, is increasingly interconnected. And on more than one occasion, we have discovered that a blackout in one European country can shut down the power grids in neighbouring countries. This is why we want to supplement current EU measures to protect aviation and maritime traffic by adding special measures for protecting critical infrastructures. We hope during our presidency to encourage progress on the European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection put forward by the Commission and the proposed directive. First, we need to analyse the threats and costs and then decide which infrastructures should have priority. When choosing protection measures, we must take into account the particularities of certain infrastructures and the likely expenses.

Enhancing disaster management and civil protection

In case of disaster, it is imperative to provide rapid and unbureaucratic assistance. We will work to enhance the role of the EU monitoring and information centre (MIC) in coordinating relief missions within and beyond the EU. We also want to promote cooperation and experience-sharing between the Member States in dealing with chemical accidents. Due to the need for decontamination, such

threats place special demands on emergency personnel and can easily develop into major disasters with cross-border impacts.

Transferring airline passenger data

The agreement with the United States on transferring airline passenger data expires on 31 July 2007. The German Presidency will strive to achieve a new and lasting pact.

Managing migration together

The European Union and its Member States face enormous pressure from illegal immigration, as people from third countries seek to enter the EU, often at risk to their lives and by relying on human smugglers who take advantage of them. The images of migrants and refugees in flimsy vessels heading for the Canary Islands or Lampedusa have made us aware of this situation in a dramatic way. Illegal immigrants are trying to get in not only via the EU's southern sea borders, however, but also at its eastern and south-eastern land borders. Our measures against illegal immigration can be effective only if we in Europe work together. This is why it is important to actively design a Europe-wide migration policy and work together on managing migration. In doing so, we must pay attention to the Member States' different needs. We must find a way for Member States to meet their immigration needs without causing problems for other states, while forming a common front against illegal migration.

A common European approach to managing migration must analyse the reasons for migration and flight, fight poverty in the migrants' countries of origin and provide humanitarian aid. It is also important to do a better job of protecting migrants in transit countries. At the same time, the countries of origin must fulfil their obligations under international law to re-admit their nationals.

Fighting illegal migration; preventing visa fraud

Visa policy is a key instrument in managing and controlling migration. In this effort, it is especially important for the Schengen partners to adhere to a uniform practice for issuing visas. For this reason, we would like to actively push the reform of the common visa law by means of a "visa code". Further, the legal prerequisites for closer cooperation between consulates of the Schengen partners need to be created.

The Visa Information System (VIS) makes it possible to record and compare data of visa applicants, including fingerprints and photographs. The VIS should therefore become a key element in fighting

illegal migration and “visa shopping” as well as international terrorism and organized crime. We will work to make progress on the legal basis for the VIS and to make sure that the technical prerequisites are fulfilled for the VIS central unit in Strasbourg to begin operations, that the Member States are connected without delay and that police and security authorities have access to the VIS.

Improving returns

We want to improve returns of third-country nationals obligated to leave the country. Here the EU needs to work closely with the third countries. We will also evaluate the European Commission’s negotiations so far on readmission agreements with third countries. We want to continue the practice of Member States’ joint return flights. FRONTEX should provide support for these flights.

Protecting refugees – expanding cooperation

Our goal is to protect refugees and prevent fraud. This is why we want to see the Member States apply provisions regarding law on asylum and refugees uniformly; in order to make sure this happens, we want to expand practical cooperation among the Member States’ asylum authorities. We will support the European Commission in evaluating the legal acts of the first phase of harmonization and initiate the discussion on what form the second phase of harmonization should take with the Commission’s presentation of its Green Paper on harmonizing asylum law.

Managing legal immigration

The planned strategy presented by the European Commission provides the basis for further discussion of the necessity, extent and contents of European regulations in the field of legal migration. Although the European Commission will not present its initial proposals until the first half of 2007, we will continue to contribute actively to the discussion of possible EU measures with regard to a European strategy on legal immigration. This includes our proposal to build on and promote circular migration as an instrument of migration and development policy. In the field of labour migration, the Member States must be guaranteed comprehensive flexibility so that differing labour market conditions in the various Member States can be taken into account.

Protecting the external borders – strengthening FRONTEX

Effective protection of the EU’s common external borders is essential in order to deal effectively with illegal immigration and human trafficking. The individual Member States are responsible for protecting the external borders. But the European border management agency FRONTEX also plays a key role in this effort. This is why we would like to significantly strengthen FRONTEX. This

means quickly adopting and implementing the legal basis for setting up rapid intervention teams and giving guest officers executive powers when serving in joint border patrols.

More joint teams of border policing specialists should be deployed wherever there is a high incidence of attempted illegal entry and at all larger border checkpoints. To this end, the Member States must provide the agency with more staff.

Shaping the dimension of external relations

Terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid and London have shown that the boundaries between internal and external security are disappearing. The threats we face often have roots outside the European Union. As a result, the Member States must work even more closely together, particularly in the field of external relations in order to safeguard the security of their citizens in the future. Maintaining a dialogue with its neighbours, with the United States, Russia and the remaining countries of the world lies in the basic security interest of the European Union.

When dealing with security issues of international significance, it is especially important to cooperate with the US closely and on the basis of mutual trust. Challenges such as fighting international terrorism affect the US and Europe equally, and we can only deal with them together. The German Presidency would therefore like to strengthen further the strategically important transatlantic relationship. Partnership with Russia is to be deepened within the context of the Road Map to the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice adopted in 2005. We want to begin negotiations on the successor to the partnership and cooperation agreement without delay. We will seek close trilateral cooperation in areas where the US, Russia and the EU have common interests.

Another priority for Germany will be cooperation with Ukraine and Moldova, which will move closer to the EU following Romania's accession. Counter-terrorism and combating illegal migration will play an important role in cooperation with our East European partners, as will close collaboration in the fields of border management, police, refugee protection and document security.

Further, we want to strengthen domestic policy collaboration with all the remaining states involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy. We hope in this way to make a significant contribution to implementing the European Security Strategy. This strategy aims in particular at creating a ring of responsibly governed states stretching from the eastern borders of the European Union to the

Mediterranean Sea. The German Presidency therefore remains committed to the EUROMED meeting of immigration ministers that was planned during the Portuguese Presidency for the purpose of cooperation in the Mediterranean region, and will push for progress on the preparatory efforts.

To this end, we will also continue consistently to pursue the Global Approach to Migration. Illegal migration and human smuggling can be combated effectively only through real partnership between the countries of origin, transit and destination.

Strengthening administrative cooperation

We place great importance on our public administrations working closely together also on domestic policy issues that go beyond the Hague Programme.

Efficient administration which is responsive to citizens' needs

We want to expand the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN). Within this forum, we want to examine the impact of demographic change on the public service, share experience on performance orientation and mobility, and develop guidelines on measuring client satisfaction. We also strive to intensify the dialogue between public service employers and employees in Europe.

Projects affecting the internal market, such as the recent implementation of the Services Directive, demand greater European administrative cooperation and European administrative services. We therefore support the European Commission in implementing the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan. In addition to creating a European framework for secure electronic identification, we will especially focus on promoting open and standard document formats for file-sharing in Europe.

Taking action against doping

We want to strengthen cooperation among the national anti-doping agencies in Europe by building a network to create minimum standards for anti-doping efforts.

Data protection, European elections and statistics

The German Presidency hopes to simplify the application of the EU Data Protection Directive and will examine its provisions on reporting requirements and the independence of the supervisory

authorities. We will work to make the costs of European statistics more transparent. New statistics should be ordered only when reporting does not exceed the ability of the national agencies.

We want to significantly reduce the administrative effort required by elections to the European Parliament. To achieve this, the time-consuming exchange of information between the Member State of origin and of residence needs to be reduced.

We want to press ahead with the consultations on the European census planned for 2010/11 so that the Member States can fulfil the EU requirements in time. We want to find a solution that meets the Community's needs for basic statistical data while allowing the Member States to choose the census method that is appropriate for them.

Promoting integration and intercultural dialogue

Good and peaceful coexistence depends on the successful integration of immigrants to Europe. Most immigrants are well-integrated. But in recent years it has become apparent that in some Member States, second- and third-generation immigrants have serious problems. We will work on behalf of a policy to assist immigrants while placing certain demands on them: Integration will be a lasting success only when all migrants are able to learn the language of their country of residence, to complete their education, and to accept the basic rules of coexistence in our countries.

The situation of immigrants differs in the various Member States with regard to origin, education and language skills. But intercultural dialogue concerns all of us. This is why we can also encourage this dialogue at European level. Intercultural dialogue can help us live together in peace for the long term.

Sport can also make an important contribution to integration and intercultural dialogue. We will fulfil our responsibilities also in this area.

Further developing integration policy

We want to continue and intensify the dialogue and sharing of experience among the Member States. To do so, we will follow up on the conclusions of the JHA Council of 1-2 December 2005 regarding the Common Agenda on Integration. Our goal is to implement the European and national measures outlined there in order to provide migrants in our countries the chance to participate

equally in economic and social terms. We must learn to regard migration and integration as an opportunity for our societies.

The German Presidency will carry on the debate initiated at the conference in Groningen in November 2004 and will invite the EU Member States' ministers responsible for integration to a meeting in Potsdam. This meeting is intended to further develop European cooperation and to share experience.

Promoting intercultural dialogue

Sharing views on a regular basis is crucial for different cultures and religions to be able to live together in peace and understanding. We can contribute at European level to national efforts.

The Muslim population will continue to grow in many Member States. It is therefore especially important to engage in an open dialogue with Islam in Europe. Our aim is to promote mutual understanding and increase acceptance for our liberal democratic societies.

Our intention is that the Member States will regularly share their experiences regarding their successes, strategies and difficulties in living with Muslims, for example discussing the practice of religion in public buildings such as schools, other educational institutions or in the public administration. Several Member States have already initiated a structured dialogue with representatives of their Muslim communities. Their experiences could be incorporated into an intercultural dialogue at European level.

The future of European domestic policy

First covered in part by the 1992 Treaty on European Union, domestic policy cooperation has since expanded considerably. It now includes law enforcement, border management, freedom of movement and visa, asylum and migration issues, among others. Within a short time, European internal policy has become so complex that citizens can hardly understand it.

Since 2004, the aims and guidelines for European internal policy have been dealt with in the Hague Programme on strengthening freedom, security and justice in the European Union. The Hague Programme ends in 2009.

In 2007 and 2008, we will have the opportunity to debate the future of European domestic policy ahead of the negotiations on the new multi-annual programme. This debate needs to be transparent, to cover all aspects of European domestic policy and draw on external expertise. The newly formed team presidencies ensure that this discussion will be conducted within a long-term framework.

We are not interested in a discussion of primary legislation; the European Constitutional Treaty provides improvements with regard to procedures and competences precisely in the area of domestic policy. The treaty calls for reducing the number of procedures and making the majority of decisions via majority; it also systematically defines competences of the European Union for the first time.

Independent of what happens with the consultations on the Constitutional Treaty and below the level of primary legislation, therefore, we would like to initiate a policy debate on improvements.

We are aiming for a European domestic policy that is more efficient, coherent and easier to understand. First, in an open, informal forum we want to explore where we can work together more closely in Europe, because doing so provides added value to national measures. Second, we would like to analyse where national measures are sufficient and where Member States should retain policy discretion. And third, we hope to determine what can be managed more simply and clearly at European level.

At the informal ministerial meeting in Dresden we will jointly address this issue and decide on a framework for discussion.