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Swedish EU Presidency: first draft of the Stockholm Programme

On 16 October, the Swedish Presidency of the EU presented its first draft of the Stockholm Programme, the EU's next five-year plan for the area of freedom, security and justice for the period 2010-2014. The new multiannual programme, which will replace the Hague Programme from 2004, is expected to be adopted by the European Council in December 2009. The Presidency draft, based on the discussions with Member States that have been held so far, specifies the frameworks for EU police and customs cooperation, rescue services cooperation, criminal and civil law cooperation, and asylum, migration and visa policy. The new priority is to put the citizen in the heart of the programme. In its note the Presidency tries to strike a balance between measures to ensure the EU's common security and measures that ensure the rule of law and the rights of the individual.

Background:

The Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) stated that the EU should become an Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. Appropriate measures should be implemented to assure the free movement of persons, to control external borders, to tackle asylum and immigration issues and to combat crime. A roadmap for these policy areas had been set up with the Tampere Programme¹, which was adopted by the European Council in October 1999. In 2004, the European Council adopted the Hague Programme² setting objectives for the period 2005-2010. Under the Tampere and Hague Programme, progress has been made in the field of freedom, security and justice: Internal border controls have been removed in the Schengen area, a number of measures have been introduced towards the creation of a European Asylum System, and European agencies such as Europol, Eurojust, the Fundamental Rights Agency and Frontex have reached operational maturity in their respective fields of activity. But Europe still faces challenges and further efforts seem to be necessary in order to improve coherence between policy areas and intensify cooperation with partner countries. In view of the adoption of the Stockholm Programme under the Swedish Presidency, the European Commission had issued in June 2009 a Communication entitled "An area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen. Wider freedom in a safer environment"³.

¹ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/tam_en.htm

² http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/doc_centre/doc/hague_programme_en.pdf

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0262:FIN:EN:PDF>