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A more secure and open Europe



The Swedish Presidency of the EU

The priorities of the Swedish Presidency for the Justice and Home Affairs Council

The Presidency of the Council of Ministers rotates among EU Member States. The country holding the Presidency leads the EU legislative and political decision-making process for six months. Sweden will hold the Presidency from 1 July until 31 December 2009.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

The Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA Council) brings together the EU Member States' justice, interior and migration ministers. Justice and home affairs covers areas such as police and customs cooperation, rescue services, criminal and civil law cooperation, asylum, migration, visas and external border control.

During the Swedish Presidency, Minister for Justice Beatrice Ask and Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy Tobias Billström will chair the JHA Council, which will convene four times during this six-month period. The first meeting is an informal ministerial meeting in Stockholm on 15–17 July 2009. The ministers will then discuss a new five-year programme

for justice and home affairs cooperation, called the Stockholm Programme.

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Stockholm Programme

The focus of EU work in the area of justice and home affairs is determined in a five-year programme. The present programme, the Hague Programme, expires in 2009. Setting guidelines for continued work by negotiating a new work programme in the area of justice and home affairs – the Stockholm Programme – will therefore be a major and important task of the Swedish Presidency.

The Stockholm Programme is to define the framework for EU police and customs cooperation,

rescue services, criminal and civil law cooperation, asylum, migration and visa policy for the period 2010–2014. The Programme will be discussed at the informal ministerial meeting in Stockholm in July 2009 and ultimately adopted by EU Heads of State and Government at the Summit in December 2009.

Civil law

Creating greater legal certainty is of major importance to the everyday lives of many citizens. If civil law problems arise for people who move within the EU or who have property in another Member State, this can in practice interfere with free movement. The Presidency will give priority to work on reviewing the Brussels I Regulation concerning court jurisdiction and recognition and enforcement of judgments in the area of civil law.

eJustice

eJustice is an EU project that aims at increasing the use of modern technology within the justice sector, including setting up a common European Internet portal. The project is to simplify cross-border judicial cooperation and make it easier for everyone to search for

information on laws and legal procedures in the Member States. The ambition of the Presidency is to launch the portal before the end of the year and to further develop cooperation with eJustice.

Combating crime

A number of opinion polls over the years have shown that combating crime in particular is an area in which EU citizens feel that increased and effective cooperation is necessary.

European cooperation is crucial in combating cross-border organised crime. It is a matter of developing cooperation among law enforcement actors, i.e. the Member States' police services, customs authorities and public prosecutors, as well as with Eurojust, the European Union body for prosecution cooperation and Europol, the European law enforcement organisation. The Member States' border control is also an important tool in the fight against cross-border crime.

It is particularly important to remove the practical obstacles that still exist among the different Member States regarding cooperation in investigating and

preventing crime. The Presidency will present proposals on a strategy for better information exchanges among law enforcement authorities. It is also important to develop knowledge exchanges about crime and methods of preventing it, particularly the kind of crime that affects the daily lives of citizens. The Presidency will therefore introduce an initiative to strengthen work in the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN).

Crime victim perspective

The Swedish Presidency will promote a section on the rights of crime victims in the upcoming Stockholm Programme. The aim is to increase opportunities for promoting efforts to strengthen support to crime victims in the EU. As part of these efforts, the Presidency also plans to draft and negotiate Council conclusions on a coordinated strategy and practical measures to support crime victims. The Council conclusions will create a framework for various measures that are intended to strengthen support to crime victims and to specify the focus of future work.

Rights of a crime suspect

Cooperation within the EU in the area of criminal law is based on the trust of the Member States' in each another's legal systems. The principle of mutual recognition and enforcement of each other's judgments and decisions is of fundamental importance to this cooperation. Confidence-building measures are necessary for cooperation to develop and become more effective. For example, the rights of a person suspected of a crime must be strengthened. The Swedish Presidency will arrange a conference in Stockholm on judicial cooperation from the individual's perspective.

EU border control and customs cooperation

EU border control is an important tool in the fight against cross-border crime. This work will continue during the Swedish Presidency. Since 2003, cooperation has been built on a joint action plan. This has led to better cooperation between customs authorities and other law enforcement authorities within the EU. Several joint operations are therefore conducted every year targeting activities such as drug smuggling.

Transfer of proceedings

The Presidency will take the initiative for a proposal on transfer of proceedings, which means that a person suspected of a crime in one country is brought to trial in another country. The reason for transferring a proceeding is that it should be conducted where it is most appropriate, such as in the country where the suspect lives or in the country where the suspect is on trial for other crimes.

EU cooperation against terrorism

The terrorist attacks in recent years both in Europe and around the world have led to increased EU cooperation against terrorism. The Swedish Presidency will continue to work on the basis of existing EU action plans. EU dialogue with, and support to, countries that serve as recruiting grounds for terrorism will be strengthened so as to be able to prevent terrorism.

Action against trafficking in human beings

A high priority issue for the Swedish Presidency is to strengthen action against trafficking in human beings within the framework of EU cooperation with countries

outside the EU. The Presidency will produce a special action plan for cooperation with countries of origin and transit. A conference on these issues will be organised in Brussels during the Swedish Presidency. Action against trafficking in human beings will also be a recurring theme at many of the meetings held with countries outside the EU, including Russia and the USA.

Asylum policy

Work is in progress in the EU on creating a common asylum system. It must be legally secure and transparent, and must safeguard the opportunity to seek asylum and respect human rights. It is also important to guarantee that an asylum application is assessed in an equivalent and legally secure manner in all Member States, and to achieve a fairer distribution among EU countries regarding responsibility and costs for asylum seekers. The common asylum system should include the creation of a common resettlement scheme so that the EU, together with the UNHCR, can offer protection to those who are in the greatest need.

Migration policy

The EU should take steps to become more attractive for labour migration. The work on establishing common rules for labour migration will continue during the Swedish Presidency. The positive effects of migration for both countries of origin and destination, and for migrants themselves, will be promoted in cooperation with countries outside the EU. The Swedish Presidency will arrange a conference in Malmö on labour migration and the development potential of migration.

When developing a common visa policy, a key element is to use new technologies that make it easier for travellers to move across borders without compromising on security.

It is important to continue exploring negotiation opportuni-

ties with the EU's neighbours for simplifying visa procedures.

Cooperation with countries outside the EU

The Swedish Presidency will promote the preparation of a new strategic document for the EU's cooperation with countries outside the EU in the area of justice and home affairs.

In the area of migration, the Swedish Presidency wants to increase cooperation with nearby partner countries and to strengthen the capacity in countries outside the EU to manage migration and refugee flows. Migration issues will also be given extensive scope in EU cooperation with Africa.

The Swedish Presidency also wants to work for deeper cooperation with Russia in the fight against organised crime.



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Beatrice Ask, Minister for Justice, and Tobias Billström, Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy

Beatrice Ask and Tobias Billström will chair the Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA Council) during the Swedish Presidency in autumn 2009.