

Note from the Council Presidency on the role of the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (22 February 2000)

Caption: Following the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam and the incorporation of visas, asylum and immigration issues into the Community system, the K4 Committee becomes the Article 36 Committee, and a new committee, the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA), is established in order to ensure the coordination of the preparatory work of the Council in this policy area, henceforth falling under the first pillar. In a note dated 22 February 2000, the Council of the European Union considers the role and future activities of this Committee.

Source: Note from Presidency to Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum. Subject: Role and future activities of the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA), 6370/00. Brussels: Council of the European Union, 03.03.2000. 3 p. <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/00/st06/06370en0.pdf>.

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Note from the Presidency to the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (3 mars 2000)

Role and future activities of the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA)

The Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum met with the objective of carrying out a joint reflection exercise on its role and future activities.

The fundamental stages in the development of the JHA acquis in the European Union framework were recalled, as were the Union's various working institutional structures in that field.

On the basis of the SCIFA's existing terms of reference and the outcome and content of meetings already held, several questions were raised as a starting point for reflection.

From the discussion the following views emerged:

It is for the Presidency to determine when the meetings to be held ought to take place taking account, in particular, of how matters progress in working parties, the possible need to deal with them horizontally where they concern more than one working party and preparation for Council meetings on Justice and Home Affairs.

The SCIFA must direct working parties' proceedings in such a way that they carry out their tasks while resolving any technical difficulties that arise. Only when the possibilities for technical solutions have been exhausted within the working parties should those problems be referred to the SCIFA, together with the necessary explanations and any explanatory notes.

So that that objective may be achieved, it must be guaranteed that the Member States' delegations to working parties include technically highly qualified experts.

The SCIFA ought also to adopt a technical approach, resolving outstanding problems in particular by defining alternative solutions and preparing explanations that enable the Permanent Representatives Committee to take decisions.

The SCIFA can also take on the role of a body whose function it is to pass on political strategy defined either at JHA Council level or as a result of the close links with the various capitals that the officials on the Committee represent.

The State representatives on the SCIFA must have adequate status and technical competence to implement the objectives that guide the Committee, and be backed up, if necessary, by experts in fields under consideration.

It is desirable that policy discussions be promoted in the SCIFA on matters of particular importance in the fields of immigration, frontiers and asylum, that deserve early consideration, with the objective of defining guidelines for the development of the working parties' proceedings. In this connection the Commission can make a significant contribution. Such discussions will make a major contribution to the dynamics of the working parties, which will certainly influence the performance of the SCIFA.

The SCIFA can constitute an excellent forum for exchanges of information amongst the Member States in the fields of asylum, immigration and frontiers, especially through the analysis of reports requested from the working parties in those fields.

In relations with the High-Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration it was felt that the terms of reference of the two bodies were clearly different, as the High-Level Working Group was an inter-pillar body with objectives, approaches and manner of operation different from those of the SCIFA, notwithstanding a mutual interest in several of the fields covered.

Bearing that objective in mind, the SCIFA will have to keep itself constantly informed of the proceedings going on under the ægis of the High-Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration.

To sum up, it was unanimously emphasised that the SCIFA was of fundamental importance on account of the contribution it made to the implementation of a European Union strategic approach to matters of asylum, immigration and frontiers, as its name indicated.