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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND  
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**External Actions through Thematic Programmes under  
the Future Financial Perspectives 2007-2013**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the next Financial Perspectives 2007 – 2013, the Commission proposed a simplified structure for the delivery of the Community's external assistance geared towards facilitating coherence and consistency, and achieving better and more with resources available. In place of the existing range of geographical and thematic instruments, which have grown in an ad hoc manner over time, six instruments have been proposed for the future. Three of them are designed as horizontal instruments to respond to particular needs (humanitarian aid instrument, stability instrument, instrument for macro-financial assistance) and three are designed with a defined geographical coverage to implement particular policies (instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA), European neighbourhood and partnership instrument (ENPI) and development cooperation and economic cooperation instrument (DCECI)). For four of the six instruments, the Commission adopted new legislative proposals on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2004; for the two others (macro-financial assistance and humanitarian aid) the existing legal bases are considered adequate in their current form. In the meaning of the Financial Regulation, these six regulations will provide the 'basic acts' for the relevant budget appropriations under Heading 4 'The EU as a Global Player' of the future Financial Perspectives.

The future of thematic programmes with a global geographical coverage has been of considerable concern to the European Parliament and the Council, but also to European non-governmental organisations, which traditionally implement a significant part of those programmes under 'grant agreements' with the Commission. In response to these concerns, President Barroso announced to the Parliament on 12<sup>th</sup> April that the Commission will present its proposals to this end in the form of the present Communication. In drawing up its proposals, the Commission consulted civil society and, to the extent possible, took their views and concerns already into account.

The proposed simplification has indeed a substantial impact on the way thematic programmes will be defined and managed in future. The significant number of existing specific thematic regulations such as those for the "European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights"<sup>1</sup> or on "aid to fight poverty diseases in developing countries"<sup>2</sup> will be integrated into these new enabling regulations, which will therefore provide the legal bases for future thematic programmes. The Commission will define thematic programmes, which will cut across the geographical coverage of the three policy driven instruments (DCECI, IPA, ENPI), and adopt strategy papers, which contain multi-annual indicative financial allocations. In addition, the DCECI makes explicit provisions for global initiatives and for the support to the provision of global public goods, in order to have a clear and unique legal base for Community contributions. This may mean that in exceptional circumstances programmes will benefit non-developing countries. The three horizontal instruments provide mechanisms for responding to specific situations and are therefore implemented through specific strategies and, in the cases of long-term cooperation, through multi-annual programming.

Overall, while recognizing the added value of thematic programmes, the new architecture of instruments for external actions provides an opportunity to rethink the scope and content of thematic programmes including the respective budget appropriations and to extend to them

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<sup>1</sup> EC No. 975/1999 of 29 April 1999.

<sup>2</sup> EC No 1568/2003 of 15 July 2003.

the concept of simplification by consolidating and rationalising them with a view to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. The present document sets out the Commission's proposal on the criteria for thematic programmes, the scope and rationale for the programmes envisaged and critical aspects of the management procedures foreseen for their programming, budgeting and adoption. This takes into account lessons learned from evaluations (see annex). The full contents of each thematic programme including the respective strategies and precise delineation will be subject to further detailed proposals by the Commission.

## 2. PROPOSAL FOR THEMATIC PROGRAMMES UNDER THE NEXT FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

### 2.1. Concepts and scope

For the purpose of this Communication, the following definition shall be used:

A **thematic programme** encompasses a specific area of activity of interest to a group of partner countries not determined by geography, or cooperation activities addressed to various regions or groups of partner countries, or an international operation that is not geographically specific, including multilateral or global initiatives<sup>3</sup> to promote the Union's internal policies abroad.

An important principle underlying the concept for thematic programmes is "subsidiarity". Geographical programmes are the privileged instrument for cooperation with third countries. However, in some circumstances, programmes of a geographic nature (country, multi-country and regional) are not the best instrument for interventions in a particular domain. This is where thematic programmes, which need to be coherent with and provide added value to geographical programmes, come in.

The Framework for Country Strategy Papers agreed between the Commission and the Council in November 2000 emphasises that geographic programming should be 'comprehensive' and that country and regional strategy papers are indeed the right tool to ensure the appropriate policy and instrument mix in the relations with third countries, thereby contributing to the coherence of Community policies. This means that country and regional strategies should consider the implications of the EU's relevant internal policies. Moreover, cross-cutting issues such as gender and environment are to be addressed through both geographic and thematic programmes in an integrated fashion. In the context of the simplification of instruments for external actions, the Commission has reiterated its commitment to these principles".<sup>4</sup>

In principle, country and regional strategies are implemented with the financial resources allocated to national and regional programmes. The latter should reflect bilateral or regional cooperation priorities in the light of partner countries' development strategies and the complementary interventions of other donors. As part of the policy and instrument mix, cooperation programmes funded under the national and regional programmes are supplemented by thematic programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this communication, "Global Initiatives" are defined as political initiatives in the area of sustainable development or supply of Global Public Goods endorsed and supported by the international community and implemented through multilateral mechanisms, including global funds.

<sup>4</sup> Commission Communication on the Financial Perspectives of 14 July 2004, COM(2004) 487 final.

Programmes implementing Community policies targeting a specific region under a common theme will be considered ‘regional programmes’. Therefore, certain existing programmes will be continued under a geographical rather than thematic framework and will not be dealt with in this Communication.<sup>5</sup>

## 2.2. Definition criteria

Based on the above concepts, thematic programmes will be defined on the basis of their **distinctive added value** and their compliance with the principle of **subsidiarity** set out above. The following criteria, which are not mutually exclusive, will help to define the thematic programmes and the type of activities they could cover. Thematic programmes may be established, if

- (1) The EU policy objectives **can not be achieved through the country and regional programmes** and the programme is implemented by or through an intermediary organisation, such as non-governmental organisations or other types of non-state actors and international organisations or multilateral mechanisms, i.e.
  - (a) Global initiatives in the area of sustainable development or in support of global public goods (or in the fight against global public “bads”)
  - (b) Actions in EU Member States and candidate countries (e.g. co-financing of public awareness by NGOs)

and/or

- (2) The programme leads to actions in partner countries and regions, which are additional to and coherent with actions funded under the country and regional programmes, where they exist. In those cases, it is more **effective** (i.e. the expected results of the thematic actions are superior to those achieved through country or regional programmes) or more **efficient** (the management cost is less) to use thematic programmes, i.e.
  - (a) The action is multi-regional and/or cross-cutting (including pilots and innovations)
  - (b) There is no agreement on the action with the partner government(s)
  - (c) The action is in response to a unilateral policy priority or an international obligation or commitment of the EC
  - (d) There is no CSP and NIP or these have been suspended

## 2.3. Proposed thematic programmes

In drawing up thematic programmes under the next Financial Perspectives, the Commission is proposing a more efficient and rational framework for creating and managing them in order to

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<sup>5</sup> This is notably the case for the programme of assistance to ACP banana suppliers, which will expire in 2008; any future assistance to ACP sugar producing countries; aid to up-rooted people in Asia; et. al.

avoid unnecessary fragmentation and to improve priority setting within them. This requires that the proposed programmes need to be internally coherent and comprehensive.

In addition to actions for implementing external policies, external aspects of internal policies shall also be covered by the new Regulations<sup>6</sup>. Where relevant, they have been taken into account in this framework.<sup>7</sup>

Thematic programmes are proposed in the areas set out below. Their broad outlines are described, but the detailed Communications to be presented on each thematic programme will determine the final proposals of the Commission.

### **(1) Democracy and human rights**

The Commission intends to propose a thematic programme for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide, replacing the current European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights. Following the specific objectives of the Treaties<sup>8</sup>, the thematic programme would promote the founding values of the European Union in its external relations by channelling financial support to activities aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the furtherance of democracy and democratic processes. It would cover global, regional and country-specific financial support to actions, which are primarily implemented by non-state actors, civil society-based, and regional and international organisations. The programme would support the high political visibility of the EU in the field of human rights and democratisation, particularly in global issues such as the international criminal justice system and the International Criminal Court, the abolition of the death penalty, the fight against torture and racism, discrimination against minorities and indigenous peoples, and democratisation and election observation. The granting of financial support through the thematic programme would be independent of approval by the authorities of the beneficiary country and the existence of a country strategy or national programme.

### **(2) Human and social development**

The Commission intends to propose a single thematic programme for human and social development that would be based on a coherent and comprehensive strategy to support the achievement of the development policy goals regarding human and social development and to fulfil the EC's international commitments in this area.

The thematic programme could address appropriate aspects of health, AIDS, population, education and training, gender equality, decent work<sup>9</sup>, social cohesion and culture and promote the related international agendas, based on the Millennium Declaration, the Cairo, Beijing and Copenhagen agendas, the Education for All initiative etc. It would cover the EC's

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<sup>6</sup> Commission Communication the Instruments for External Assistance of 29.9.2004, COM(2004) 626 final. See also SEC(2004) 1203/2 of 29.9.2004.

<sup>7</sup> Programmes in the areas of taxation and customs (Customs/Fiscalis Programme), education and training and (TEMPUS Plus) will be covered under the geographical programmes. In the case of TEMPUS Plus, the ENPI and ECDCI will establish one multi-annual allocation per instrument within the appropriate multi-country or regional programmes. A mechanism on a country by country basis ensuring a predictable budgetary framework will be implemented for the IPA countries for as long as they participate in TEMPUS Plus

<sup>8</sup> Articles 11(1) TEU, 177(2), 181a(1) TEC.

<sup>9</sup> The concept of "decent work" is defined by the ILO. It covers employment, social protection, fundamental rights at work including core labour standards, social dialogue and gender equality.

approach to strategic partnerships with related UN agencies and institutions, international partnerships and global funds and initiatives dedicated to promote and implement these agendas as well as work with international or regional networks of civil society active in the areas covered.

### **(3) Environment and sustainable management of natural resources including energy**

The Commission intends to propose a single thematic programme in the area of environment and natural resources. It would address the environmental dimension of development and help promote the European Community's environmental and energy policy abroad.

The thematic strategy could:

- Provide support for global and EU initiatives as well as international organisations (including NGOs) targeting the environmental dimension of sustainable development, environmental global public goods and the sustainable management of natural resources, which could inter alia include appropriate aspects of climate change, environmental challenges to health, chemicals and wastes management, biodiversity, forests, land management, marine resources, freshwater and sustainable patterns of consumption and production, as well as the strengthening of international environmental governance, monitoring and assessment;
- Support efforts and strengthen the capacity of developing country governments and civil society to integrate the environmental dimension into development cooperation and to meet their obligations and commitments under, and strengthen their participation in, global or regional environmental conventions, initiatives or processes; support the strengthening of natural resources management in developing countries;
- Provide operational support – through voluntary contributions – to Multilateral Environmental Agreements and for other international environmental initiatives, processes and organisations (including NGOs);
- Promote EC's environmental policy abroad including inter alia through supporting and contributing to public and/or private initiatives

A distinct strand is envisaged for “**energy for sustainable development**”, which would provide an appropriate link with the future Intelligent Energy – Europe Programme II, would complement sustainable energy actions in the components above, and would be coherent with the other elements of the thematic programme. The overall objective of this strand would be poverty alleviation. It could support access to sustainable, high quality, reliable and affordable energy services in developing countries by helping to integrate sustainable energy in development strategies, to strengthen administrative and regulatory capacity, to establish adequate financing arrangements in order to attract investment, and to encourage regional cooperation to establish interconnection infrastructure.

### **(4) Non-State Actors in development**

The Commission intends to propose a thematic programme aimed at providing support to civil society organisations and other non-state actors active in development and originating from the EU and partner countries. Support to local authorities in partner countries could also

be considered in this framework. More specifically, this programme could have the threefold objectives of seeking to support (i) non-state actors contributions to the development process, both at partner country and regional level, including by means of confidence building measures, fostering advocacy, networking and dialogue capabilities, facilitation of greater grassroots participation and and promotion of development synergies between state and non-state actors; (ii) better understanding, partnership and solidarity between European citizens and civil societies in developing countries by promoting awareness raising and information for development issues amongst the citizens of the EU and candidate countries (iii) cooperation and coordination between civil society networks and between these networks and EU institutions.

#### **(5) Food security**

The Commission envisages a thematic programme that could i) support the delivery of international public goods contributing directly to food security (e.g. agricultural research) and the financing of global programmes (e.g. early warning systems), ii) address food insecurity in countries or regions where either governments are not in place, or not in control of parts of a country, or no country strategic framework is operational, and iii) promote innovative policies and strategies in the field of food security.

#### **(6) Cooperation with industrialised countries**

This thematic programme would cover cooperation with a selected number of those countries defined as countries other than developing countries for the purpose of the DCECI and would aim to provide a specific and rational response to the need to cooperate and engage further with such often highly important political and trading partners in both bilateral and multilateral settings. Cooperation activities would be intended to support the objectives laid down in the various bilateral instruments (agreements, political declarations, action plans) governing relations between the European Community and the partner countries, with the overall objective of creating a more favorable environment for the conduct and further development of these relations. More specific cooperation objectives would notably encompass: the reinforcement of linkages between socio-economic actors in the EU and the partner countries; the enhancement of the understanding and of the influence of the EU in partner countries; and the broadening and deepening of partnerships and collaborative projects in a diversified range of areas.

#### **(7) Migration and asylum**

For several years now, the European Union has developed the concept of partnership with third countries in the area of migration, emphasising the need to adopt a comprehensive approach to migration in association with the countries and regions concerned. In order to give concrete expression to this concept, the Aeneas programme for cooperation with third countries in the areas of migration and asylum was created in 2004. It aims to provide specific and complementary financial and technical assistance to third countries in support of their efforts to address all aspects of migration issues.

The Aeneas programme is envisaged to continue as a thematic programme, designed to strengthen the integration of migration and asylum issues in the Community's external relations, as internal EU cross-cutting priorities. The instrument would also provide a horizontal Community framework that helps strengthen cooperation between EU actors, third countries and international actors concerned by the migration phenomenon, with a view to

encouraging greater understanding of the challenges and contributing to the quest for balanced and mutually satisfactory solutions.

### **3. INVOLVEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

The Commission recognises that there is a need for a political debate with and guidance by the European Parliament and the Council on the strategic direction of thematic programmes preceding the annual budgetary process. Therefore, the Commission proposes that before it prepares and adopts thematic strategies, it will enter into discussions with the European Parliament and the Council on the scope, objectives, and political priorities for each thematic programme, based on a formal communication to the institutions. In drawing up thematic strategies, it will take into account the political will of the European Parliament and the Council as expressed in their respective conclusions and resolutions.

The Commission will provide an indication on the overall amount of funding foreseen for each thematic programme within the instruments concerned under heading 4 (external actions) of the Financial Perspectives, on the basis of a multi-annual indicative framework, presented to the European Parliament and the Council in year n-2, before the start of the budgetary process for year n. This would enable the Parliament and the Council to pronounce themselves on the strategic choices and priorities before the Commission prepares the Preliminary Draft Budget. The Commission will as a general rule consult civil society and, where appropriate, international actors before drawing up the proposals it will make to the European Parliament and the Council.

### **4. MANAGEMENT ASPECTS**

#### **4.1. Programming**

The thematic programmes identified in the previous chapter are internally coherent in the sense that they define areas with broad common denominators responding to specific Community policies and objectives. Therefore, in parallel to the programming of geographic resources, the financial resources allocated to each thematic programme will be programmed on the basis of a strategy document.

Following the scope and definition criteria set out in chapter 3, thematic programmes must not substitute but supplement actions under geographical programmes. Their specific added value needs therefore to be identified in the strategies. Where thematic programmes lead to actions in third countries, an important challenge lies in the linking of country-based thematic projects and strategies and priorities established in the Country and Regional Strategies, where they exist. Country and Regional Strategies, in establishing the policy mix, should identify opportunities for adding value to the national and regional programmes<sup>10</sup> by using thematic programmes. In turn, thematic strategies – where they lead to actions supplementary to national and regional programmes – should identify countries and regions of particular importance in attaining the intended objectives and will take into account the country and regional strategies, where they exist.

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<sup>10</sup> Under the ENPI and the DCECI, these are the “National and Regional **Indicative** Programmes”.

Thematic strategies will set out the objectives, expected results, performance indicators, and priority areas for Community interventions as well as their complementarities, added value and synergy with actions of other international actors. The Commission will apply a standardised framework for thematic strategies similar to the one for country strategy papers and a harmonised adoption procedure following the three main stages of drafting, quality control and formal approval.

#### **4.2. Implementation through the new instruments for external actions**

The thematic programmes identified above cut across the geographical coverage of the three instruments with a defined geographical scope. However, as far as the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) is concerned, supplementary actions under thematic programmes are normally not required, since the pre-accession strategies already cover, through national and/or multi-country programmes, all aspects of the *acquis communautaire* (the 36 chapters of the negotiation process) and all Community policies, including the participation of beneficiary countries in Community programmes.

A specific case is the thematic programme for democracy and human rights, which would be implemented through all three policy driven instruments and the stability instrument. The thematic programme “Cooperation with industrialised countries” will be implemented only through the DCECI. All other thematic programmes would be implemented only through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument (DCECI).

Two aspects need to be highlighted:

- Assignment of funds from the envelopes co-decided by the budgetary authority for the various instruments

Each of the two instruments, DCECI and ENPI, will be endowed with a financial envelope co-decided between the two arms of the legislator. This implies that financial resources allocated to thematic programmes need to be clearly assigned to the two instruments. Global initiatives and programmes for the provision of Global Public Goods will however be solely assigned to the DCECI.

For thematic programmes, which cut across different instruments, funds would be assigned and specifically identified from the respective envelopes as part of the multi-annual indicative framework.

- Implementation on the basis of the different regulations (ENPI, DCECI, and IPA and stability instrument for democracy and human rights issues).

The regulation that governs cooperation with a specific region will also govern the actions under thematic programmes in that region. Actions in the areas of global public goods and global initiatives would be governed by DCECI. The implementing provision proposed by the Commission under the ENPI and the DCECI are largely identical or fully consistent in respect of the implementation of thematic programmes.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The Commission recognises the continuing need and usefulness for thematic programmes in the area of external cooperation. By consolidating and rationalising thematic programmes, which leads to reducing their number by about one half, it aims at ensuring an effective and efficient implementation of future cooperation programmes in pursuance of Community policies and priorities. In drawing up the thematic programmes, the Commission will fully involve the European Parliament and the Council and will consult civil society.

## ANNEX: LESSONS LEARNED FROM EVALUATIONS

The Commission has evaluated most of the thematic regulations under the current Financial Perspectives. Moreover, a significant number of country strategy evaluations have been undertaken in recent years, which throw light upon the link between country programmes and thematic programmes. Certain general findings and lessons to be drawn from these studies need to be taken into account in the concept and definition of future thematic programmes, particularly where they are implemented at country level. On one hand, the evaluations show that thematic programmes have had a positive impact:

- Thematic programmes have proven useful for implementing Community actions in cases when the government of the partner countries blocks them under the geographic programmes, which is notably the case in sensitive areas such as human rights, democracy or support to civil society.
- They have been assessed as useful to initiate actions, often with innovative approaches, with pre-selected partners.
- Actions are often more easily accepted by partner countries when funding is “additional”.
- Thematic programmes have proven useful to intervene in fragile states and difficult partnerships, particularly in supporting programmes implemented by non-state actors.

On the other hand, the thematic programmes and budget lines have demonstrated certain weaknesses. They are currently large in numbers and fragmented. The narrowly defined thematic focus, once determined by legislative act, limits the flexibility to adapt to new needs. The parallel implementation of numerous thematic programmes and the country programme poses managerial challenges and loss of efficiency<sup>11</sup>. Interventions in third countries funded under thematic programmes create by their nature problems of coherence with country and regional strategies<sup>12</sup>. Thematic interventions need to be consistent with the country analysis and should respond or relate to country strategies<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, they should also be part of the complementarity assessment made in the context of country strategies. The substance of thematic programmes should be integrated into the policy dialogue with partner governments.

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<sup>11</sup> Example: “About fifty budget lines, of which around thirty that function and are regulated differently were mobilised to finance almost 400 identified projects”. Evaluation of the EC Country Strategy for Honduras, February 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Breakdown of the legal bases: if the European initiative for democracy and human rights is excluded, these various thematic regulations concern crisis situations (refugees, humanitarian aid) or post-crisis situations (rehabilitation) within the framework of which actions in favour of human rights are one component of the aid. However, if this falls exactly within the objective of mainstreaming, it is particularly difficult within these circumstances to precisely identify which projects – and which budgets – are implemented in favour of human rights.

<sup>13</sup> Example: “Secure further coherence between all the EC instruments and budget lines deployed in Bangladesh. ...develop procedures to ensure that...deployment of the budget lines concerned is coherent with the Country Strategy, and pursues country specific objectives. ”. Recommendation 5 of the Evaluation of the EC Country Strategy for Bangladesh, November 2003

## Correspondence list of current and future thematic programmes

(The content and substance of thematic programmes may not necessarily correspond exactly to current programmes.)

Heading 4 in 2000 – 2006	Heading 4 in 2007 – 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Democracy and the rule of law and respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms (Reg. No. 975/1999 and 976/1999)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Democracy and human rights</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Poverty diseases (Reg No. 1568/2003 plus 550/97 on AIDS/HIV)</li> <li>● Reproductive and sexual health and rights in developing countries (Reg. No. 1567/2003 plus 1484/97 population policies and programmes in developing countries)</li> <li>● Gender equality in development cooperation (Reg. 806/2004)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Human and social development</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integration of environmental dimension in development process (Reg. No. 2493/2000)</li> <li>● Conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests and other forests in developing countries (Reg. No 2494/2000)</li> <li>● Some international funding currently included in DG ENV budget</li> <li>● Intelligent Energy (COOPENER)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Environment and sustainable management of natural resources</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Decentralised cooperation (Reg. No. 1659/98 plus amendments)</li> <li>● Co-financing operations with NGOs (Reg. No 1658/1998)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Civil society and decentralised cooperation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Food aid policy and food aid management, special operations in support of food security (Reg. No. 1292/1996)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Food security</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cooperation and commercial relations between the EU and the industrialised countries (Reg. No. 382/2001)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Cooperation with industrialised countries</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rehabilitation and reconstruction operations in developing countries (Reg. No. 2258/1996)</li> <li>● Aid to up-rooted people in Asia and Latin America (Reg. No. 2130/2001)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Programmes transferred to geographic programmes (regional programmes)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assistance to third countries in the area of migration and asylum (Reg. 491/2004)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Migration and asylum</li> </ul>