Air routes are more and more being used as migration and facilitation routes for the illegal entry into the Member States of the European Union. Illegal entries might successfully be headed off by taking counter-measures as close as possible to the danger and risk spots, so as to prevent migrants from reaching the countries of destination in the first place or from moving on to other European countries where it would be much more difficult and far less likely to intercept them.

The recent past has shown that the longer-term deployment of document advisors to problem airports may help to prevent illegal entries by air and to prevent entrants from moving on by land.

On the basis of these findings the "CIREFI" Group finds it necessary to launch a pilot project at an airport which is relevant for several EU states. Document advisors from various Member States would be involved in the project.

Istanbul Airport, which is a hub for smuggling illegal migrants into Western Europe, has been selected for this project.
The legal basis for this measure is the "Joint position of 25 October 1996 on pre-frontier assistance and information programmes". This position enables specialists from the Member States to be deployed to departure airports to help local authorities and air carriers identify forged or falsified travel documents. The costs are borne by the Member States which make document advisors available, unless they are borne by the third country and/or the air carrier.

The pilot project at Istanbul Airport should at least last for four months. This period is necessary because considerable work has to be carried out before taking up the activity as such, which would ideally take place in June 1999. Document advisors will also have to get an overall picture of the situation on the ground. Another reason is that it will generally take document advisors and the local authorities and organisations more than a few weeks to build mutual trust.

The experts should advise staff of all carriers serving Europe, so that problems are not shifted onto other air carriers. As departure times are due to overlap, this work cannot be carried out satisfactorily by one officer alone. It would therefore be expedient that two document advisors are present at the same time.

So as to keep the financial burden for the Member States concerned as low as possible, two advisor teams could be deployed in succession.

The document advisors should be linked to the diplomatic representation of their country for their own safety. Thus, they will also have access to logistic facilities, in particular to encryption-capable telecommunications. For the project to be effective it should be organised as a concerted mission of the EU Member States. Apart from Germany six other European Union States are considering taking part in the project.
The document advisor should jointly discharge the following tasks on the ground:

- giving advice concerning the authenticity of travel documents presented during check-in to airlines serving EU Member States,

- organisation of joint training events for the staff of EU Member State diplomatic representations, and for the staff of air carriers and passenger processing companies and local border authorities, if so requested,

- regular participation in AOC meetings to inform the local control authorities, air carriers and passenger processing companies about any identified modi operandi and other intelligence,

- participation in the monthly meetings of the law and consular departments of the diplomatic representations of the Member States and exchange of topical information concerning falsified or forged documents presented by visa applicants,

- summing-up intelligence regularly in the form of "information letters for air carriers" to prevent further illegal transports.

The K4-Committee is requested to approve the deployment of document advisors from the EU Member States which are planning to engage in the above-mentioned pilot project.

Upon conclusion of the measure the "CIREFI" Group will submit an experience report to the K4 Committee.