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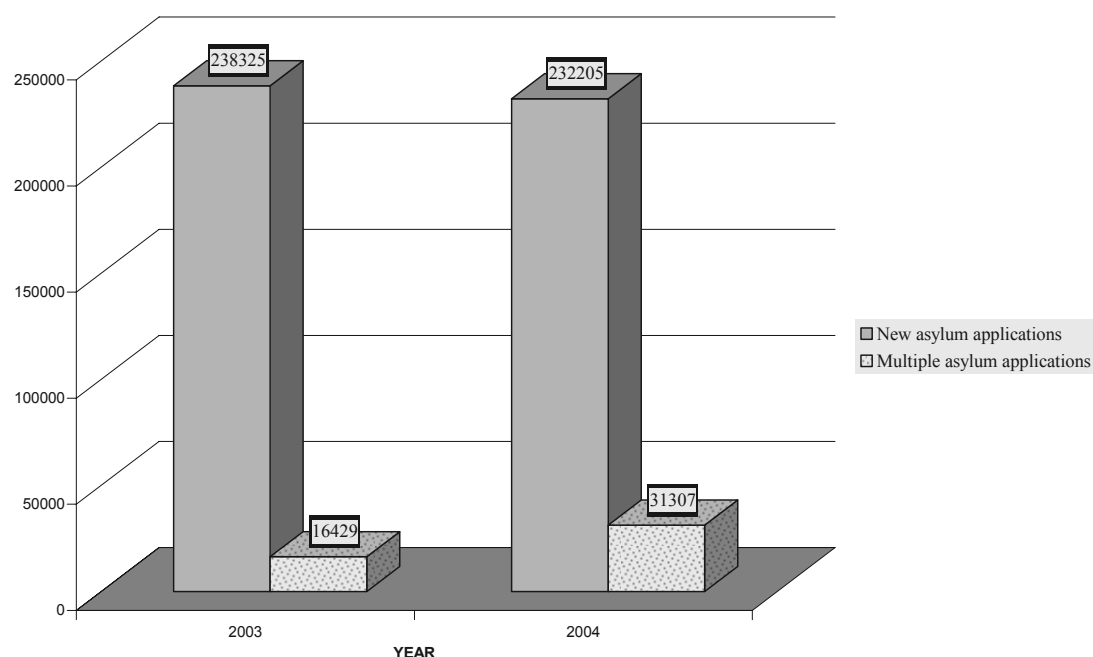
## EURODAC guarantees effective management of the Common European Asylum System

*The second evaluation report on the functioning of EURODAC, the EU-wide fingerprint database for the comparison of the fingerprints of asylum seekers and illegal entrants to help establish which Member State is responsible for examining an asylum application, shows that the number of multiple asylum applications doubled in 2004. The evaluation report highlights very satisfactory results on the activities of the EURODAC Central Unit, in terms of efficiency, quality of service and cost-effectiveness. After two years of application, EURODAC confirms its role as a key asylum management tool for the EU.*

In 2004, EURODAC successfully processed 232,205 fingerprints of asylum seekers, 16,183 fingerprints of people crossing the borders irregularly and 39,550 fingerprints of people apprehended while illegally on the territory of a Member State. Figures show that in 2004, the number of asylum applications has decreased while the number of registered irregular entrants has increased. The amount of checks of illegally present persons has also more than doubled in 2004.

The report reveals that in 13% of the total number of cases, the same person had already made at least one asylum application in the same country or in another Member State (known as a multiple application).

### Multiple asylum applications



The EURODAC central unit has been available 99.9% of the time, operating 24/24 hours and 7/7 days. No data protection problems have been raised in respect of EURODAC operations by the national data protection authorities responsible for monitoring the lawfulness of the processing of these personal data by Member States, nor by the European Data Protection Supervisor in charge of monitoring the processing of personal data by European institutions.

## **Background**

### **Policy background**

Since 15 January 2003, the fingerprints of anyone over the age of 14 who applies for asylum in the European Union (except Denmark, for the time being), in Norway and in Iceland are stored in a database called EURODAC. EURODAC was created in the context of the development of an asylum policy common to all the Member States of the European Union.

Agreements have been recently signed with Denmark and Switzerland in order to make EURODAC applicable to those states as well.

EURODAC aims at facilitating the so-called Dublin II Regulation, the Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 which determines the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application. This Regulation establishes a series of criteria which, inter alia, allocate responsibility for examining an asylum application to the Member State that permitted the applicant to enter or to reside. That Member State is responsible for examining the application according to its national law and is obliged to take back its applicants who are irregularly in another Member State. EURODAC is therefore an important tool in the development of a Common European Asylum System called for by the European Council at its meeting in Tampere (Finland), in October 1999 and reaffirmed by the European Council in The Hague last 4-5 November.

### **Technical background**

EURODAC is the first common Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) within the European Union.

The European Commission operates the system on behalf of the participating States. The total co-operation in this framework thus forms a good basis for further common large-scale IT projects, such as the second generation of the Schengen Information System or the future European Visa Identification System.

Under the EURODAC system, each participating State has to promptly take the prints of all fingers of every asylum seeker over the age of 14. The procedure for taking fingerprints has been determined in accordance with the safeguards laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights and in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These fingerprints are compared with fingerprint data transmitted by other participating States and already stored in the central database. If EURODAC reveals that the fingerprints have already been recorded, the asylum seeker can be sent back to the country where his/her fingerprints were originally recorded.

Access to this system is restricted to the sole purposes stated in the EURODAC Regulation. It does not contain details such as the name of a person because it relies only on biometric comparison, the safest and most accurate available identification method. Each participating state ensures that the national supervisory authority on data protection monitors independently the lawfulness of the processing of the data.

EURODAC consists of a Central Unit within the Commission equipped with a fully automated, computerized central database for comparing the fingerprints of asylum applicants and a system for electronic data transmission between each participating State and the Central Unit. Every step has been taken to guarantee the security and protection of the data registered in EURODAC.

The total Community budget allocated for EURODAC is 13.6 million euro; the total expenditure on all externalised activities specific to EURODAC, after two years of operations, totals 7.5 million euro. The expenditure for maintaining and operating the Central Unit in 2004 totals 257.163 euro.