Public health: Community action programme 1996-2000 on the prevention of drug dependence

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The agreement reached yesterday evening in the EP-Council Conciliation Committee largely reflects Parliament's determination 'to take account of socio-economic conditions when tackling the fight against drug dependence, since this is a social problem', to quote the rapporteur, Giovanni BURTONE (EPP, I), himself a doctor. The Conciliation Committee maintains that drug dependence is a 'health' problem and measures under the first programme, which will run from 1996 to the year 2000 and have a total budget of ECU 27 m, must seek above all to prevent dependence and 'rehabilitate' drug addicts. It was agreed at the end of the talks that prevention should cover both hard and soft drugs, since all kinds of drugs should be covered. It was decided to take measures aimed at prisoners and other vulnerable groups. As Mr IMBENI said, 'we must finally agree to support initiatives that will reach young people in the places where they are must often to be found and make it possible to open a dialogue with them'. The text stipulates that, 'wherever possible', measures must be carried out 'with the involvement of relatives and other persons concerned'. Parliament was in favour of more direct aid, but former addicts seeking a job, will nevertheless be entitled to take part in the training activities provided for in the programme. To demonstrate that the fight against drug dependence should form part of all EU policies, measures will link up with activities under other Community programmes such as 'SOCRATES ', 'LEONARDO DA VINCI', or 'YOUTH FOR EUROPE'.