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

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The rapporteur recalled that in April the report had been referred back to committee. Unfortunately, the committee had once again put to the vote the amendments deemed to be fundamental, in spite of the disagreement with the Commissioner. The aim of the programme was to reduce the demand for drugs and to provide a solution for young drug addicts through preventive measures. These measures should be accompanied by a programme for the rehabilitation and reintegration of young drug addicts. The programme also related to young people who felt neglected because they did not want to leave the tunnel of drugs and thus risked dying as a result of an overdose or AIDS. As regards the debate between the prohibitionists and the anti-prohibitionists, the rapporteur felt that the latter's argument, which was that soft drugs were not harmful to health, had not been proven; it was important to be cautious, especially as regards the use of designer drugs. There was no proof that lifting the ban on the use of soft drugs would reduce dependency; on the contrary, it risked encouraging the use of drugs, including harder drugs, since people often moved from softer drugs to harder drugs. Commissioner Flynn recalled that this programme was only one of the European Union's strategies to combat drug addiction. That was why many of the amendments tabled by Parliament would be more appropriate in the context of other initiatives. He called for a pragmatic approach that focused on the most pertinent priorities in light of the limited resources. Mr Flynn stated that it would be difficult for the Commission to adjust its proposals unless Parliament revised its amendments (with the exception of Amendment No 2). He felt that a number of amendments provided a political assessment of national or international strategies and thus went beyond the competences laid down in Article 129 of the Treaty. Another group of amendments (including the amendment on the committee procedure) also went beyond the scope of the programme. A final more formal group of amendments contained less flexible or more restrictive wording than initially proposed by the Commission. Lastly, Amendment No 61, which related to the prevention of drugs, could be taken over in part.