Public health: Community action programme on health promotion, information, education and training 1996-2000

1994/0130(COD) - 25/01/1995 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

As already emphasised in the Opinion on the Communication, the ESC recognised the need for Community action in the field of public health, and considered this move essential for disease prevention, the dissemination of health information and health education. It believed that a consistent prevention plan, based on an improvement in habits and lifestyles, could not only enhance the health care rights and quality of life of European citizens, but also help to curb medical treatment and care costs, which was a major problem currently facing all Member States. The ESC supported the reference to the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality in paragraph 65 of the Communication. It emphasised that the Community should act as a driving force and enhance the value of national and local initiatives in order to guarantee a high level of public health protection in Europe. The Commission should set up appropriate structures to encourage directly the organisation and management of national and trans-national pilot schemes, involving non-governmental organisations representing all parties concerned and scientific or training associations operating within Europe. In the first instance, national and European scientific associations operating in the sphere of public health should be involved, and they should be allowed to play an active role in training health professionals and, by extension, in health education. Finally, the ESC recommended that the schemes promoted should have a solid, scientific underpinning, that they be subject to cost-benefit analysis, and that special attention should be paid to the authenticity of public information, so as to avoid over-simplification and distortions.