Public health: Community action programme 1997-2001 on health monitoring

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The ESC endorses the aims and principles of the Commission's proposal. The development and implementation of new indicators is possibly the most important result of the programme and, therefore, the ESC feels that the programme should place even more emphasis on this development stage. In particular, the ESC would like to emphasize the Commission's cooperation with the WHO (World Health Organization), OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and EMCDDA (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction) as well as cooperation with other European agencies, such as the European Environment Agency. Comparable data is needed from other countries, as well as from EU Member States. The Committee considers it very important that the expertise available in Member States and in Community committees handling health and safety statistics should be utilized in the preparatory work on the selection of "domains" and "headings" for indicators. In particular, the ESC stresses the importance of consulting the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work. The ESC emphasizes that the rules on data protection with regard to individuals must be properly observed both when establishing the indicators and collecting data. The preferred trend would be for data sharing to be developed using electronic data networks but other methods should be used as well. Use should also be made of other corresponding projects. Finally, the ESC draws attention to the size of the appropriation for the programme. The appropriation for the collection and dissemination of data is too small considering the importance of the matter for the health policies of Member States and the European Union. In view of the fundamental importance of the programme, more funds should be provided.