Action to combat drugs: action plan 2000-2004

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This document comprises of the mid-term evaluation of the EU action plan on drugs (2000-2004). Tackling drugs is a top priority for the European Union. It is for this reason that in 1999, the Commission presented a Communication on a European Union Action Plan to Combat Drugs (2000 - 2004). Based on this Communication the Helsinki European Council endorsed in December 1999 the EU Strategy on Drugs for 2000-2004 setting out 11 general aims and six main targets for the EU in this period. The Strategy calls for a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to drugs where drug demand and supply reduction are seen as equally important and mutually reinforcing parts of a balanced strategy. In parallel, the Feira European council adopted in June 2000 the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2000-2004. The Action Plan has 3 main aims : 1) to provide a guide to all actors in the EU when setting priorities in the drugs area; 2) to ensure that drugs receive the necessary high level support; 3) to provide a solid base for the evaluation of the EU Drugs Strategy. The Communication presented by the Commission in 2001 on the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Drugs (2000-2004) underlined that the evaluation should be performed in three stages: - Stage 1: assessment of the level of achievement of the activities identified in the Action Plan; - Stage 2: assessment of the extent to which achievement of the Action Plan met the objectives of the Drugs Strategy; - Stage 3: assessment of the impact on the drug situation. It is not the purpose of the Commission in either the mid-term or final evaluation to make a judgement on national drugs policies. Rather the aim of the mid-term evaluation is to assess the level of achievement of the activities set out in the Action Plan (stage 1). The aim of the final evaluation is to assess the extent to which achievement of the Action Plan met the objectives of the Drugs Strategy and to assess the impact of both the Drugs Strategy and the Action Plan on the drug situation in the European Union (stages 2 and 3). The final evaluation of the Action Plan will be completed by the end of 2004. The evaluation tools already in place for the mid-term evaluation will be used and further tools may need to be developed. The final evaluation will provide the basis for the future development of EU Drugs policy from 2005 onwards. As regards the results of the mid-term evaluation: the Action Plan comprises actions to be undertaken by the Member States, the European Commission, the EMCDDA and Europol. The evaluation covers five main areas: coordination, information and evaluation, reduction of demand, supply reduction and international cooperation. For each of these areas, the Commission details the results of the progress made at national as welll as at European level. Overall, balanced national action plans have been developed by many Member States in line with the principles of the EU Action Plan. In addition, many initiatives have been adopted by the Council on the basis of the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan and a number of important proposals from the Commission or Member States are under discussion. At the same time much work remains to be done. Certain issues in particular should be noted: - the issue of synthetic drugs must remain a top priority for the European Union and its Member States; - the evaluation of drug policies and drugs activities at national and EU levels should be further developed. In this regard research has an important role to play in enabling an evidence based approach to be taken; - there should be close co-operation with the candidate countries in the implementation of the Joint Declaration on Drugs and of the drugs elements of the Justice and Home Affairs Chapter of the EU acquis; - a more effective co-ordination of action in third countries at EU level is needed, with a focus on the main producing and transit countries. In order to take work forward on the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Drugs and in preparation for the final evaluation the Commission proposes that: a) Specific priorities among the activities set out in the Action Plan should be established in order to focus on key activities in the Action Plan. Deadlines where appropriate to achieve these priorities should also be set. A mechanism should be put in place to monitor progress in achieving them. b) A steering group, to include representatives from the Commission, the Council Presidency, Europol and the EMCDDA, should be established in 2003 by the Presidency and the Commission. The European Parliament is invited to appoint its representative to this group. This steering group could oversee and provide guidance in relation to the preparation of the final evaluation to be carried out by the Commission. It could in particular provide guidance on the methodology and the evaluation tools to be used for this evaluation. This steering group could also ensure continuity among the

Council Presidencies that will be involved in the evaluation process. c) Initiatives in the field of drugs brought forward during the remaining lifespan of the Action Plan should be primarily focused on achieving the actions set out in this Plan. The steering group could assist in ensuring that there is continuity in these initiatives. d) The EMCDDA and Europol should compare 2003 data in the field of drugs to be provided by the Member States with the 1999 baseline data in connection with the final evaluation of the Action Plan. e) A conference could be organised in 2004 to involve civil society in the future development of EU Drugs policy. f) On the basis of contributions from the Member States, the EMCDDA, Europol and the Commission itself, the Commission will prepare a Communication on the final evaluation of the Action Plan by the end of 2004. g) The European Council of Copenhagen endorses this mid-term evaluation and its conclusions and proposals.