Fight against drugs: European action plan 1995-1999

1994/2088(COS) - 01/06/1995

The committee unanimously adopted the draft report by Mr Jack STEWART-CLARK (PPE, UK) on the Commission communication on an EU action plan to combat drugs (1995-1999). There were dozens of amendments to the rapporteur's text, which were largely the result of a compromise reached during the vote, following the direction taken by the rapporteur since the beginning. In fact, Mr STEWART-CLARK had always felt that the report needed to receive as much support as possible to enable it to truly influence the Commission, the Council and the Member States. The Member States were responsible for implementing all the measures required to tackle the drugs problem effectively. As a result, the report approved the 1995-96 action plan and called on the Council to adopt the plan, which underlined that prevention and harm reduction should be given as much attention as the laws and penalties relating to drugs and drug trafficking. The report also pointed out that the action plan should tackle all links in the chain, from production, through criminal trafficking, to education, health and rehabilitation. Moreover, Mr STEWART-CLARK recommended in his report that the Commission and the Council study and give serious consideration to possible alternatives to strategies pursued so far on the basis of a scientific and statistical study of the actual results of the present strategy. The report also considered that it was important to make a sufficient distinction between consumers and traffickers, by concentrating efforts on cracking down on organised crime which ran trafficking and by offering drug addicts health care and social welfare programmes. On the basis of these broad guidelines, the report put forward several specific requests and recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the Member States. It called for a further increase in police and customs cooperation in order to combat drug trafficking, and recommended that the Europol Convention be concluded (accompanied by the necessary guarantees concerning the protection of personal data, and judicial and parliamentary scrutiny) before the Cannes European Council. Similarly, the report called for arrangements to be worked out in the EU whereby goods seized from persons convicted of drugs-related crimes could be declared forfeit throughout the territory of the Union. It also called for as close an approximation as possible on sentencing practices by national courts, for the extradition process between Member States to be speeded up, and so on. All Member States should fully implement the directive on the prevention of money laundering, and the EU, in conjunction with FIN-CEN in the United States, should implement more thorough measures to tackle this aspect of organised crime at global level. The report called for a survey across all states of the EU and in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe of organised crime linked to drugs trafficking and money laundering, but also of corrupt practices involving government bodies and politicians. Mr STEWART-CLARK also requested a survey into the state of drugs and drug addicts within prisons across the EU and policies effected to assist drug addicts in prisons to rehabilitate themselves into society after release, and wherever possible to find alternatives to prison for drug users. He recommended examining, with the information available from these surveys, the effects of drugs policies being carried out in different countries, including aid initiatives, in order to ascertain which were most effective - in terms of both crackdowns and prevention - and so come close to a common approach to the whole drugs problem (risk-reduction pilot projects being carried out by European cities such as Frankfurt, Hamburg, Amsterdam and Zurich should also be considered). Finally, the report suggested that a conference be arranged to involve the European Parliament, the Commission and other relevant bodies to discuss the present situation in the European Union, with emphasis on demand reduction (including a study of the social reasons for drug-taking) and the development of aid policies. This conference should encourage analysis of the results of the policies in force as laid down by the 1961, 1971 and 1988 UN Conventions so as to permit a possible revision of those conventions.