Control of new synthetic drugs, designer drugs

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In adopting the report by Mr Hubert PIRKER (EPP, A) on the control of new synthetic drugs, Parliament considered that the growing consumption of these drugs by young people was a matter of concern. It considered that there was an urgent need to gather information on the side-effects and long-term effects of these drugs and called on the Member States and the Commission to encourage relevant research. It called for steps to be taken without delay on these new drugs through close cooperation with the countries of central and eastern Europe and more effective involvement of these countries with the existing information systems and those to be developed (Europol, contacts with the chemical industry, control of precursors, etc.). Priority should be given to the development of efficient structures to combat the criminal organizations which underlie the traffic in synthetic drugs in Europe and in the applicant countries, whether in the police or health sectors. It considered, however, that a harmonization of the national criminal law provisions on traffic in, possession and consumption of synthetic drugs to be impracticable as the differences in this area between the Member States were still too great. The communication had suggested such harmonization. With regard to repressive measures Parliament considered that the diversion of precursors of synthetic drugs and the production of and traffic in these substances should be a criminal offence and should be prosecuted in all Member States. Member States should ensure that their legislation was sufficiently comprehensive to prevent producers from circumventing the law by altering the chemical composition of the drugs. Parliament also called for club operators, in order to retain a licence, to ensure that drugs were not available at events, that the premises had proper ventilation, a free supply of cold drinking water and cooling off areas available. It called in particular for repressive measures against dealers to be enshrined in the law and for these measures to be applied effectively. The penalties for trafficking, pushing and consumption of synthetic drugs should also be proportional to the seriousness of the offence. With regard to cooperation, the Member States should ensure the closest possible cooperation of the national authorities concerned and should examine whether the organized criminal groups behind the traffic in drugs could not be countered effectively through special supra-institutional units. It proposed that the possibilities offered by the Falcone programme should be used fully to this end. Parliament also called on the Member States, following ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty to develop operational cooperation between the competent authorities of the Member States in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of criminal offences with a view to prosecution of organized criminal groups. Parliament considered that the threat of penalties for the consumption of this type of drug could have a deterrent effect on potential consumers. With regard to information on and control of precursors, Parliament recommended the establishment of a common system for detecting new synthetic drugs and the adoption of a single method for placing them into generic categories. It called for a report on the implementation to date and success in controlling precursors through the relevant Community directives. Effective information systems should also be established to ensure full communication between the competent services of the Member States. A control system for precursors should also be established with a list of substances to be controlled and also including the countries of eastern Europe. Contacts should be developed between the police authorities of those countries and the Member States so that information was obtained as early as possible on possible suspicious transactions. With regard to prevention it suggested the introduction of 'anti-drugs discotheques', a system whereby the police cooperating with drug advisory centres, parents and schools presented information at disco events on the risks of drug use. It invited the Member States to recommend to schools that, on a voluntary basis, they declared themselves drug-free zones and called on the Commission to back such initiatives with an appropriate proposal. It also proposed that the Internet should be used to communicate the prevention message in a language familiar to the target group. Lastly, it called on the Commission to ascertain whether the consumption of synthetic drugs affected the ability of drivers to drive and, if so, to propose appropriate initiatives.