Public health: Community action programme 1996-2000 on the prevention of drug dependence

1994/0135(COD) - 20/09/1995 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

In adopting the second report by Mr BURTONE (PPE, I), the European Parliament approved the Commission's proposal for a decision with many amendments. The EP firstly wanted to make a clear distinction between drug trafficking and drug use and highlighted that drug dependence was a sickness that could be prevented and treated rather than repressed (drug addicts were above all people with a health problem and as victims they should be helped). It called on the 1996 IGC to raise the fight against drugs to a European level. The other amendments related to: . the objectives of the measures to be implemented: - coordination with all similar initiatives under the Union's three pillars (Article 129, Article K.1(4) and Title V of the Treaty on European Union); - promoting measures at grassroots level to tackle the social causes of drug use: promoting programmes teaching children and young people (not only of school age) how to deal with the availability of drugs (including in universities), paying particular attention to risk groups (especially in prisons or pregnant women) or groups that were difficult to reach; - promoting medical and psycho-social assistance to drug addicts (therapies supplying substitutes such as methadone provided that sufficient support was given; initiatives to reduce health risks by distributing disinfection sets and syringes); - cooperation with organisations for former drug addicts and the relatives of drug addicts; - promoting scientific research in the area of drug addiction (with a view to discovering new medicines to put an end to dependence); - drawing up preventive strategies for all types of drug users; - promoting awareness of local experiences in combating drug addiction; - extending the general fight against drugs to cover all substances leading to dependency (in other words combating all form of drugs, hard and soft); . the objectives of the programme in general: - the need for the Union to provide specific assistance to countries producing drugs (new sources of income for local populations whose survival depended largely on the cultivation of psychotropic substances); - cooperation with all NGOs in the sector and with the European Drugs Monitoring Centre; - greater transparency in the allocation of appropriations; . comitology: the EP recommended a mixed committee, which would include a number of partners from the voluntary sector. The EP also called for an annual report to be drawn up on the measures implemented under this programme and forwarded to Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions by 30 September each year. In light of the results of these reports, the Commission could amend its programme in accordance with the experience gained. In the annexes, the EP added many measures including: - the organisation of a European conference (end of 1996) and further European Drug Prevention Weeks; - the development of telephone helpline services with a single telephone number throughout Europe; - the proposal to grant funding to therapy communities, health professionals, teachers and youth leaders as well as the forces of law and order (particularly in prisons); - the creation of a Community network concentrating on prevention in risk areas; - the publication of a Community guide for the relatives of drug addicts and organisations in the sector to facilitate the reintegration of drug addicts; - the promotion of work experience designed to help reformed drug addicts move from treatment centres to working life; - the development of measures targeting all users (users should only be pursued if they are involved in drug trafficking or the sale of drugs).