Action to combat drugs: action plan 2000-2004

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Since 2000, the EU has adopted a Strategy and an Action Plan aimed at reducing both the demand for and supply of drugs in the European Union. This Communication presents the results of the final evaluation of the Strategy and Action Plan. As well as assessing the implementation of the Action Plan it also lays the foundation for the future EU drugs policy on the basis of what lessons have been learned from the present process.

The actual evaluation of the Action Plan was undertaken in April 2003 and involved input from Commission representatives, Member States the EMCDDA and Europol. Drug policy impact evaluation is still in its infancy phase and the lack of precise and quantifiable operation objects does not make the task simple. Nevertheless certain trends have been identified, indicating which activities should be prioritised in the future.

The evaluation process has established that around 95% of the actions set out in the EU plan on drugs have been implemented or are being implemented. Further, there can be little doubt that the implementation of the Action Plan has contributed to the achievement of the 11 aims specified in the EU Drugs Strategy. In terms of the target set for the reduction of drug use, the Communications notes that no strong evidence exists to suggest that drug use, especially amongst young people is decreasing. However, some of the data does point to evidence of a levelling off in the upward trend in drug use prevalence, - albeit that drug use is at historically high levels. Some of the results obtained from the evaluation process show that many of the EU targets set have acted as a catalyst for a number of EU level initiatives, which have strengthened law enforcement measures against drug trafficking and supply. Similarly, a number of important initiatives have been taken to combat money laundering with a number of Member States participating in important initiatives to combat the diversion of precursors, such as the European Joint Unit on Precursors.

Regarding a future strategy, the Commission suggest that a future EU Drugs Strategy should contain clear and precise objectives and priorities, which are easily translated into operational indicators and actions. Responsibilities and deadlines for implementation should be clearly defined. Continued progress should be made regarding drug availability, quality and comparability. In order to create a smooth transition the European Commission will present, in the course of 2005, proposals for a new Action Plan, set to last from 2005-2008. The objectives of the new Drugs Strategy and Action Plan should be reflected in the Multi-annual Programme for the area of freedom, security and justice.