Draft European Union drugs strategy for 2005 to 2012

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Giusto CATANIA (GUE/NGL, IT) on the European Strategy on fighting drugs (2005-2012). MEPs stressed that problems such as drug trafficking and drug abuse could not be solved by each country acting alone, and that the EU needed to adopt a common strategy to tackle drug problems. However, they also wanted national drug policies to be based on scientific knowledge about each type of drug, not on "an emotional response".

The committee formulated a series of recommendations ahead of the December 2004 EU summit which was set to adopt a new EU Drugs Strategy for 2005-2012. Existing European cooperation on drugs policy should be revamped in order to tackle cross-border and large-scale drug trafficking and to take account of all the implications of the problem, using a scientific approach. A detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the previous strategy should be carried out, with particular regard to prevention of use and dependence, a reduction in the supply of and demand for illicit drugs, the limitation of social (i.e. marginalisation) and health damage and the reduction in drug-related petty crime and organised crime. The new drugs strategy should not be adopted until the real results of the previous strategy were known.

MEPs wanted the Council to propose measures totally different from those currently being used to achieve overall EU drugs strategy goals. For example, priority should be given to protecting the lives and health of users of illicit substances, improving their wellbeing and protection and preventing them from being marginalised. They added that the Council should make harm reduction programmes more widely available, especially to prevent the spread of HIV and other blood-borne diseases among drug users. MEPs also wanted the Council to set minimum standards for rehabilitation measures instead of placing too much emphasis on treatment with drug substitutes. The committee was keen for rehabilitation programmes to be set up for offenders and users as alternatives to prison and it urged goverments to do more to prevent drugs entering prisons. Greater attention should also be focused on information and prevention measures: the Council was urged to boost funding for science-based information campaigns and to fund consultations with civil society organisations and professionals about the impact of drug policies. Moreover, following the arrival of ten new Member States, more cooperation was needed with the states on the EU's new frontiers as these were closer to the countries where drugs originate.

The Council was also urged to take steps to prevent the profits from illegal drug trafficking being used to fund international terrorism. Lastly, MEPs called for development aid to drug-producing countries to be increased through programmes to fund sustainable alternative crops and increase research into the use of plants like hemp, opium and coca leaves for medical applications, food security and other beneficial purposes.