Action to combat drugs: action plan 2000-2004

1999/2095(COS) - 14/02/2005 - Follow-up document

PURPOSE : to present the Commission's EU Drugs Action Plan for 2005-2008 with a view to significantly reducing the prevalence of drug use among the EU population and to reduce the social harm and health damage it causes in societies.

CONTENT : in December 2004, the European Council endorsed the EU Drug Strategy (2005-2012) which sets the framework, objectives and priorities for two consecutive four-year Action Plans to be brought forward by the Commission. This Strategy is an integral part of the multiannual programme "The Hague Programme" for strengthening freedom, security and justice in the EU which states that an optimal level of protection of the area of freedom, security and justice requires multi-disciplinary and concerted action both at EU level and national level.

The current drugs situation in Europe can be summarised as follows:

- increasing numbers demanding treatment for cocaine use;

- signs of heavy cannabis use among teenagers;

- increase in ecstasy consumption. The EU remains one of the world's most important areas for the production of ecstasy;

- 2.1 million problematic drug users in the EU25;

- HIV/Aids is declining in some countries but the risk of epidemic spread remains high. Deep concern surrounds the continuing HIV epidemic in some of the new EU Member States and their bordering countries.

This Action Plan transposes the general objectives contained in the EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012 into concrete actions.

These include general policy measures, specific programmes aimed at the prevention of drug use amongst young people, in the workplace and in recreational settings as well as measures for improving access to treatment programmes.

A set of measurable assessment tools and indicators has been introduced for each action in order to enable proper evaluation.

The Strategy has a number of major objectives:

- to achieve a high level of health protection, well-being and social cohesion by complementing the Member States' action in preventing and reducing drug use, dependence and drug-related harms to health and society;

- with due regard for the EU's achievements and values in terms of fundamental rights and freedoms, to ensure a high level of security for the general public by taking action against drugs production, cross-border trafficking in drugs and diversion of precursors and by intensifying preventive action against drug-related crime through effective cooperation embedded in a joint approach;

- to strengthen the EU's coordination mechanisms to ensure that action taken at national, regional and international levels is complementary and contributes to the effectiveness of drug policies within the EU and in its relations with other international partners. The latter calls for a more clearly identifiable European position in international fora such as the UN and its specialised agencies, reflecting the EU's dominant position as a donor in this area.

The Strategy concentrates on the two major dimensions of drugs policy, demand reduction and supply reduction. It also covers a number of cross-cutting themes: international cooperation, research, information and evaluation.

The Action Plan proposed by the Commission takes account of its Final Evaluation of the EU Drug Strategy and EU Action Plan on Drugs (2000–2004) (refer to the summary of 22/10/2004). It targets in particular those areas that the evaluation highlighted as needing further progress. It reiterates a number of essential objectives that were not reached under the previous Action Plan. The Commission has also carried out an initial consultation of civil society on future policy through a dedicated web site. Such consultation will be significantly expanded by the Commission during the course of the Action Plan to include a wide range of representatives of civil society across the EU in a dialogue on how best to deal with drugs issues.

Lastly, the Commission will carry out an impact assessment in 2008 in view of proposing a second Action Plan for 2009-2012. A final evaluation of the Strategy and the Action Plans will be carried out by the Commission in 2012.