Action to combat drugs: action plan 2000-2004

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COMMISSION'S IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION :

The drugs phenomenon is one of the major concerns of European citizens. Tackling drugs is a top priority of the European Union in view of the high levels of drug misuse, trafficking, drug-related crime, health problems and social exclusion. Just under1% of the European adult population is considered to comprise problem drug-users. Moreover, drug consumption amongst young people has reached historically high levels.

For more information regarding the context of this problem, please refer to the complementary summary of the Communication (COM(2005)0045) on an EU Drugs Action Plan (2005-2008).

2. OBJECTIVE :

The ultimate aim of any EU action in the field of drugs is to significantly reduce the prevalence of drug use among the population and to reduce the social harm and health damage caused by the use of drugs, building on the outcome of the former EU Drugs Action Plan (2000-2004).

3. POLICY OPTIONS AND IMPACTS :

In order to tackle the drugs issue in the EU and to achieve the objectives outlined above, several options are envisaged:

3.1 **-Option A***: Actions in the field of drugs are left exclusively to the Member States :* drugs are a problem that knows no national boundaries. In the case that actions in the field of drugs were purely taken at national level, the fight against drugs would be as difficult as in the case of other global threats such as terrorism or organised crime. Moreover, the implementation of 25 national policies and strategies reflecting different complex social and cultural models would raise important difficulties for the freedom of movement of people and goods. This paper states that the drugs issue is a world-wide phenomenon which requires a coordinated and integrated approach. What is at stake here is the protection of the values of freedom, security and justice which are the very basis of European society. Therefore, the only way to deal with this is to create European added value.

Due to the reasons outlined above, the European Council endorsed in 2000 an Action Plan providing a common framework for policymaking calling for a balanced, coordinated and integrated approach.

3.2 **-Option B***: The former Action Plan 2000-2004 is renewed for another 5 year period :* the Action Plan 2000-2004 was divided into five sections: i) co-ordination, ii) information and evaluation, iii) drug demand reduction and prevention of drug use and drug-related crime, iv) supply reduction and (v) international co-operation.

The conclusions of the final evaluation on the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan on Drugs were presented by the Commission in October 2004:

- a large part of the actions set out in the EU Action Plan on Drugs have been implemented or are in some stage of being implemented;

- the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan have been taken as a central reference point for action and have provided a framework for drug-related activities and initiatives at national and EU level;

- almost all Member States have adopted a national drugs strategy or action plan. Among the elements in these national drugs strategies and action plans, are common patterns with the EU approach, as outlined in the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan;

- there can be little doubt that the implementation of the actions in the Action Plan has contributed to the achievement, to a greater or lesser extent, of the 11 aims of the EU Drugs Strategy;

- the available information does not suggest that the availability of drugs has been reduced substantially;

- a number of important initiatives have also been taken to combat money laundering.

The final evaluation proposes that the future EU Drugs Strategy should contain clear and precise objectives and priorities that can be translated into operational indicators and actions in future Action Plans.

3.3 **-Option C***: a new Action Plan is presented, building on the main lessons from the final evaluation of the EU Action Plan 2000-2004 and in connection with the new Drugs Strategy 2005-2012:* the new EU Strategy on Drugs 2005-2012 has two general aims that can be summed up as follows: the EU aims 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 harm to health and society; the EU and its Member States aim to ensure a high level of security for the general public by taking action against drugs production, cross-border drug trafficking and by intensifying preventive action against drug-related crime, through effective cooperation embedded in a joint approach.

Clear and measurable assessment tools and indicators have been introduced, to the extent possible, to enable proper evaluation.

3.4 **-Option D***: a EU policy on drugs is proposed:* 71% of Europeans believe that decisions on drugs should be taken at EU level. EU added value is most visible on issues like the fight against drug trafficking, precursor control and action against money laundering. Given the absence of an overall legal basis for a common EU drugs policy and in view of national sensitivities in this matter, the main aim can only be to achieve a coordinated policy, with due regard to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

CONCLUSION : ***On the basis of lessons learned from the final evaluation, it was decided, in the draft Commission proposal, to discard options A, B and D and to present an improved new Action Plan (option C).***

4. FOLLOW- UP : ***With a view to proposing a second Action Plan for the period 2009-2012, the Commission will organise an impact assessment in 2008.*** During 2009-2012, annual progress reviews will continue to be drawn up by the Commission. In 2012, the Commission will organise an overall evaluation of the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plans. Moreover, the Commission launched, via the internet, an initial public consultation on the Action Plan which came to an end on 8 November 2004 which will be the subject of a Green Paper.