

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2007/2212(INI)	Procedure completed
Green Paper on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the EU		
Subject		
1 European citizenship		
4.20 Public health		
4.20.03 Drug addiction, alcoholism, smoking		
4.20.05 Health legislation and policy		
7.30 Police, judicial and customs cooperation in general		
7.30.30.04 Action to combat drugs and drug-trafficking		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs		
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
European Commission	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		28/11/2007
		PPE-DE ZÁBORSKÁ Anna	
	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Justice and Consumers	FRATTINI Franco	

Key events			
26/06/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2006)0316	Summary
27/09/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/02/2008	Vote in committee		Summary
12/03/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0073/2008	
23/04/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
23/04/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0169/2008	Summary
	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2007/2212(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	LIBE/6/53597

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(2006)0316	26/06/2006	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE400.403	17/01/2008	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE402.522	14/02/2008	EP	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE400.281	28/02/2008	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0073/2008	12/03/2008	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0169/2008	23/04/2008	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)3169	28/05/2008	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)3407	25/06/2008	EC	

Green Paper on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the EU

PURPOSE: to present a Green Paper on the role of Civil Society in Drugs Policy in the EU.

BACKGROUND: the production and consumption of illicit drugs has a direct impact on disease, crime, corruption, political and social instability. It erodes the many values that ordinary people take for granted as part of their dignified and secure life. As such illicit drugs is one of the gravest problems facing governments and society world wide.

CONTENT: the main objective of this Green Paper, therefore, is to explore ways in which those involved in, and concerned by, drugs policy can work closer with the EU as set out in the EU Action Plan on Drugs (2005-2008). The Green Paper focuses, in particular, though not exclusively, on the role that civil society can play in reducing the use of illicit drugs.

Opinion Polls indicate that drugs are seen as a key EU responsibility. Indeed, since the 1990's the EU has been developing Drug Strategies that are supported by a series of Action Plans. The present 'Drug Strategy' (2005-2012) is supported by an 'Action Plan' (2005-2008). The EU Drugs Strategy reflects the fundamental principles of the European model on drugs, namely a balanced, integrated and multidisciplinary approach in which action against drug supply and on reducing demand for drugs are seen as mutually supportive and equally important. It is considered an integral part of the Hague Programme, the purpose of which is to strengthen freedom, security and justice in the EU. Further the EU Drugs Strategy seeks to achieve high levels of health protection social cohesion and public security.

The 2005-2008 Action Plan on Drugs, on the other hand, specifically seeks to strengthen the involvement of civil society in fighting drugs and asks the Commission « to issue a Green Paper on ways to effectively cooperate with civil society. » This Green Paper has been prepared following an extensive consultation process.

Civil Society

There is no commonly accepted definition of « civil society ». The Commission has often used the term to refer to a broad range of organisations representing both social and economic players. However, for the purpose of this Green Paper a narrower concept is applied namely the definition suggested by the Council's Horizontal Drugs Group : « the associational life operating in the space between the state and market, including individual participation, and the activities of non-governmental, voluntary and community organisations. » It also covers those individual citizens who clearly make a significant commitment or contribution to society in a particular field. The Member States also play an important role in organising civil society's participation in drugs debate.

The Union's Legal and Policy Framework on Drugs

Although an official common drugs policy does not yet exist there is, nevertheless, an EU common approach to Drugs. Further, certain legal

provisions in the Treaties give a clear basis for European action to complement what is being done at the national level. For example, in the field of money laundering, the trade of drug precursors and the protection of public health. Moreover, Title VI of the TEU calls for further cooperation in creating an area of freedom, security and justice that includes actions against the use of illicit drugs. Examples of EU legislation include a Framework Decision on drug trafficking and a Council Decision on new Psychoactive Substances.

Civil society in the drugs field

There are many reasons why the EU should be involved with civil organisations working on drugs. Their active participation on formulating drugs policy helps to improve the policy outcome. Civil society, however, frequently views the EU as a distant entity. Further, civil organisations often lack the infrastructure and knowledge to be active at a European level ? this in spite of the fact that it is they who bear considerable responsibility for implementing, at a local level, the sort of actions stemming from the EU Action plan on Drugs. This is particularly so for drug prevention, treatment and the rehabilitation of drug users. The Commission recognises that NGO?s and voluntary groups of various kinds are good at developing innovative approaches based on a realistic picture of what is actually needed. Nor should their role in drug demand reduction be underestimated. Many of the organisations involved in tackling drugs have considerable experience in working with drugs in other countries through their extensive networks.

The way forward : Different options

Following a 2006 Conference with civil society, the Commission noted that the overriding concern of civil society is to have a permanent, structured dialogue with the Commission. The Commission, therefore, now proposes two ways in which to organise such a dialogue. Firstly, a Civil Society Forum on drugs and secondly, a thematic linking of existing networks.

Civil Society Forum on Drugs

This would be a broad platform for a structured dialogue. To make it manageable membership would be limited. Its objective will be to create a civil society assembly and to act as a platform for supporting policy formulation. Themes for discussion would be based on the EU Action Plan. Representation would be balanced in order to avoid one-sided views. Members would be selected on the basis of an open call, after it has received and analysed reactions to this Green Paper.

Thematic linking of existing networks

As an alternative (or acting as a complement) to the Civil Society Forum on Drugs, the thematic links between the different networks could be strengthened. Numerous networks currently exist that active on drug issues across Europe. These are very effective at sharing information on best practices and effective solutions. Encouraging cooperation by linking networks under common themes might offer an informal, light and cost-effective way to structure information flows as well as enabling a more effective consultation with civil society.

Conclusion : in its conclusions the Commission points out that it has put forward a number of options for a more structured and permanent dialogue on drugs policy between the Commission and civil society. A set of questions are posed including, inter alia, the possible strengths and weaknesses of a Civil Society Drugs Forum as well as the thematic linking of existing networks.

Green Paper on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the EU

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted the own initiative report by Giusto CATANIA (GUE/NGL, IT) on the Green Paper on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the European Union, indicating that civil society has an essential role to play in promoting the emergence, definition, implementation, assessment and monitoring of drug policies. With its experience gained at grass-roots level, its innovative capacity and its potential in terms of the exchange of information and sound practices, civil society can bring significant added value to planned measures. However, in order to do so, civil society must be recognised and supported in both its internal and external dimensions.

- Civil society ? the internal dimension: MEPs stress the importance of action by civil society in the achievement of the objectives set out in the EU's drugs strategy as regards prevention, the provision of information and the management of problems associated with drugs dependencies. They call upon all parties involved at both EU and Member-State level to better recognise the role of civil society in terms of damage-reduction, rehabilitation and social-reintegration policies. At the same time, MEPs call on the Commission and Member States to promote civil society initiatives, particularly those aiming to: i) reinforce the prevention of and information on the risks associated with drug use; ii) treat drug addicts in prison; iii) establish special preventive procedures in ?at-risk? metropolitan areas; iv) organise, with the cooperation of parents?, students? and teachers? organisations, awareness and prevention campaigns on drugs and their harmful effects on health; v) implement damage-reduction policies through direct contact with people in the street and in neighbourhoods; vi) establish reintegration projects for street children and disadvantaged families.
- Civil Society ? the external dimension: MEPs call for a strengthening of the external dimension of the EU?s drug strategy in order to have a sustainable impact on drug-producing countries. The experience of European NGOs that are active in this area should also be taken into account in order to help the countries in question to switch local cultivation to therapeutic and medical uses. In particular, they call on the Commission and Member States to explore forms of cooperation with civil society organisations involved in the promotion of legal substances derived from coca leaves. Other initiatives have also been proposed such as those set out in the European Parliament and Council Recommendation of 25 October 2007 on the production of opium for medical purposes in Afghanistan (see [INI/2007/2125](#)) or through the possibility of combating illegal poppy plantations by means of spraying, which is not harmful to humans, animals or the environment. Cooperation with the science industry is also highly recommended as well as with international networks of associations active in the area of combating drugs (for example, the Vienna NGOs Committee on Narcotic Drugs or the ?Beyond 2008? initiative which aims to promote the role of civil society within the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGASS) regarding drugs).

Role of the media: given the vital role of the media, and particularly digital media, in raising awareness among citizens, especially young people at risk of becoming drug addicts, MEPs call for these to become privileged partners in the fight against drugs by establishing awareness measures specifically aimed at female drug addicts. In this respect, MEPs call for targeted campaigns on the damaging effects of drugs to the physical and mental health of young girls, pregnant or breastfeeding women and on maternal health and the transmission of drugs between mother and foetus. Information campaigns should also be targeted at young consumers, in other words children and minors.

MEPs also highlight the importance of the Civil Society Drugs Forum, which represents the first step towards more concrete and constructive involvement of European civil society associations in the dynamics of the EU in terms of the prevention of and fight against drug use. While

regretting the selection process for participants in the Forum, MEPs recall that its aim is to establish direct contact with associations that are on the front line in the fight against drugs. They regret the low level of participation in the Forum of organisations that are representative of the new Member States as well as the non participation of networks of women's associations, or those for mothers and young girls. More generally, MEPs believe that the Forum should have a clear mandate so that dialogue with civil society can have a real influence on the European decision-making process. Measures have therefore been proposed to formalise the participation in the Forum.

More financial means: MEPs request that, subject to budgetary control, the EU becomes involved at a financial level in supporting civil society activities. They call on Member States to cover as far as possible, through public financing, the services proposed by professional civil organisations and request that financial measures be set out in order to assist voluntary organisations and parents' associations that take action in the fight against drugs. While they welcome the launch of the 2007-2013 'Specific Programme on Drugs Prevention and Information', they regret the delay in the implementation of the funding made available in connection with that Programme.

Green Paper on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the EU

The European Parliament adopted, by 600 votes to 35 with 32 abstentions, a resolution on Green Paper on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the EU, indicating that civil society has an essential role to play in promoting the emergence, definition, implementation, assessment and monitoring of drug policies. The own-initiative report was tabled for consideration in plenary by Giusto CATANIA (GUE/NGL, IT) on behalf of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

Parliament acknowledges the fundamental role of civil society in drugs policies, stressing the added value represented by its experience on the ground, its capacity for innovation and its potential in terms of information exchange and best practice. It insists on a strengthening of the role played by civil society in developing a drugs policy embodying a European approach, which is the main objective of the 2005-2012 EU drugs strategy.

Civil society – the internal dimension: Parliament calls upon all parties involved at both EU and Member-State level to recognise better the role of civil society in terms of damage-reduction, rehabilitation and social-reintegration policies. At the same time, MEPs call on the Commission and Member States to promote civil society initiatives, particularly those aiming to: i) reinforce the prevention of and information on the risks associated with drug use; ii) treat drug addicts in prison; iii) establish special preventive procedures in 'at-risk' metropolitan areas; iv) organise, with the cooperation of parents', students' and teachers' organisations, awareness campaigns on drugs and their harmful effects on health; v) implement damage-reduction policies through direct contact with people in the street; vi) establish reintegration projects for street children and disadvantaged families.

Civil Society – the external dimension: MEPs call for a strengthening of the external dimension of the EU's drug strategy in order to have a sustainable impact on drug-producing countries. The experience of European NGOs that are active in this area should also be taken into account in order to help the countries in question to switch local cultivation to therapeutic and medical uses. In particular, they call on the Commission and Member States to explore forms of cooperation with civil society organisations involved in the promotion of legal substances derived from coca leaves. Other initiatives have also been proposed such as those set out in the European Parliament and Council Recommendation of 25 October 2007 on the production of opium for medical purposes in Afghanistan (see [INI/2007/2125](#)) or through the possibility of combating illegal poppy plantations by means of spraying, which is not harmful to humans, animals or the environment. Cooperation with the science industry is also highly recommended as well as with international networks of associations active in the area of combating drugs (for example, the Vienna NGOs Committee on Narcotic Drugs or the 'Beyond 2008' initiative which aims to promote the role of civil society within the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGASS) regarding drugs).

Role of the media: Parliament calls for the media to become privileged partners in the fight against drugs by establishing awareness measures specifically aimed at female drug addicts. There must be targeted campaigns on the damaging effects of drugs to the physical and mental health of young girls, pregnant or breastfeeding women and on maternal health and the transmission of drugs between mother and foetus. Information campaigns should also be targeted at children and minors.

Parliament highlights the importance of the Civil Society Drugs Forum, which represents the first step towards more concrete and constructive involvement of European civil society associations in the dynamics of the EU in terms of the prevention of and fight against drug use. While regretting the selection process for participants in the Forum, MEPs recall that its aim is to establish direct contact with associations that are on the front line in the fight against drugs. They regret the low level of participation in the Forum of organisations that are representative of the new Member States as well as the non participation of networks of women's associations, or those for mothers and young girls. More generally, MEPs believe that the Forum should have a clear mandate so that dialogue with civil society can have a real influence on the European decision-making process. Measures have therefore been proposed to formalise the participation in the Forum.

More financial means: subject to budgetary control, Parliament calls for a financial commitment from the EU to support EU civil society activities in connection with current projects and future initiatives in the field. Member States are asked to cover as far as possible, through public financing, the services proposed by professional civil organisations. Financial measures must assist voluntary organisations and parents' associations taking action in the fight against drugs. While Parliament welcomes the launch of the 2007-2013 'Specific Programme on Drugs Prevention and Information', it regrets the delay in the implementation of the funding made available in connection with that Programme.