

French Presidency of the Council of the European Union - programme on drugs and drug addiction

The priorities of the French Presidency

1/The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union is focusing on four main priorities (immigration, energy, environment, defence), and four cross-cutting themes (Europe of growth, the protection of citizens, Europe of the future, Europe on the international stage). Concerning the protection of citizens, the fight against drugs and drug addiction remains a constant objective, a permanent everyday reality that can be achieved by developing operational and practical approaches.

Concerning Europe on the international stage, the Presidency will endeavour to coordinate national positions regarding drugs, allowing Europe to adopt a common position within international organisations.

2/During the second half of 2008, the Presidency will particularly:

- facilitate the negotiation of a new EU action plan on drugs for 2009-2012;
- seek to prepare EU positions in view of the high-level meeting at the UN in Vienna, March 2009, where the guidelines for the international strategy on drugs and drug addiction will be adopted for the years to come.

These two issues represent a unique opportunity to reinforce and deepen cooperation within the EU and towards third countries in their joint action against drugs and drug addiction.

3/The fundamental objectives should be both to seek greater effectiveness (i.e. obtaining a real and measurable impact on the drug situation within our countries) and to improve communication around the action envisaged so it is better known and understood by all of our citizens.

4/By sharing these general guidelines, we can reach the following political objectives:

- enhancing the stature and political authority of the EU Council's Horizontal Drugs Group, in accordance with the guidelines defined in the EU strategy on drugs (2005-2012);
- obtaining a new EU action plan for 2009-2012 which guarantees a real impact on the drug situation in our countries;
- being able to defend a clear, common EU position at the UN in March 2009, with added-value for Europe and the international community.

5/In order to succeed, the Presidency proposes to examine the following potential developments concerning the Horizontal Drugs Group (HDG) and the action plan:

- produce an analysis of the threat (both external and internal);
- make the mutualisation of national means on a European level, the convergence methods of action and experience sharing in the scientific field a key approach for prevention and healthcare, research, and the fight against trafficking within the EU and third countries;
- **simplify and focus the future action plan;**
- reinforce the legal enforcement dimension of cooperation between Member States and third countries in the field of drugs;
- reinforce the tools available for the identification, seizure and distribution of criminal assets, an objective not solely linked to the HDG;
- debate the positioning and running of the HDG to allow more involvement in alcohol issues given the link with illicit and massive drug use;
- better inform public opinion;
- as part of this impetus, study the means by which primary prevention messages can be diffused to young people through the new media.

6/With regard to external relations, these guidelines should lead us to maintain, resume or launch EU dialogue with:

- traditional partners: Latin American and Caribbean countries, Russia, the USA
- recent or former partners: ECOWAS (The Economic Community of West African States) and Mauritania on one hand, Central Asia on the other,
- new partners: Morocco.

With the support of its partners, the Commission, the General Secretariat of the Council and the European agencies involved (EMCDDA, Europol, Eurojust), in cooperation with multilateral partners (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Council of Europe/Pompidou Group, WHO), the French Presidency is endeavouring to emphasise the urgency and political visibility of the European drug problem and to enhance the effectiveness of common action.