

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Council Regulation on the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction'

(COM(2003) 808 final – 2003/0311 (CNS))

(2005/C 120/15)

On 23 September 2004 the Council decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 152 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

The Committee decided to appoint Jan Olsson as rapporteur-general.

At its 412th plenary session of 27-28 October 2004 (meeting of 27 October), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion with 159 votes in favour and one abstention:

1. Gist of the Commission proposal

1.1 The Commission is proposing a recast of Council Regulation (EEC) No 302/93 of 8 February 1993 on the establishment of a European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

1.2 The proposed amendments include the following:

— those designed to boost the Centre's role, in particular to take account of new drug use patterns, especially among young people, who increasingly tend to combine unlawful substances with lawful substances such as alcohol, and to enable the Centre to devise indicators for evaluating drugs policies and strategies implemented in the European Union;

— those designed to take account of enlargement. The Regulation sets up a Steering Committee to assist the EMCDDA Management Board. A review of the composition of the Centre's Scientific Committee is also proposed;

— those designed to remove a number of uncertainties which emerged when the initial Regulation was applied. In particular, this concerns the reference to the REITOX focal points, instead of the specialised centres.

2. General comments

2.1 The European Economic and Social Committee regrets the very short deadline the Council has set for the Committee to deliver its opinion on a proposal for a Regulation that the Commission had already submitted in December 2003.

2.2 The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) is intended to provide the Community and its Member States with objective, reliable information that is comparable at European level on drugs and drug addiction and the consequences thereof.

2.3 The Committee therefore welcomes the proposed Regulation, which aims to extend the role of the Centre, to adapt the operation of its constituent bodies and to remove a number of uncertainties arising from the implementation of the initial Regulation. This reflects the thinking already expressed in previous EESC opinions on the prevention and reduction of the risks associated with drug addiction (¹).

3. Specific comments

3.1 The EESC insists that stakeholder civil society organisations be involved in the work of the EMCDDA. To this end, the Committee fully endorses the proposal in Article 5(5) of the draft Regulation, which states that the Centre '... may have recourse to additional expertise and sources of information, especially transnational networks working in the field of drugs and drug addiction.'

3.2 The EESC proposes that the Centre be provided with a Liaison Committee comprising representatives of the European networks that are active in this field and able to provide information in addition to that supplied by the national focal points (²).

(¹) — Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European Action Plan to Combat Drugs (2000-2004), rapporteur: Ms Hassett-van Turnhout. OJ C 51 of 23.2.2000.

— Opinion on the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the prevention and reduction of risks associated with drug dependence, rapporteur: Ms Le Nouail-Marlière. OJ C 61 of 14.3.2003.

(²) The national focal points are part of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (REITOX), which is at the Centre's disposal.

3.3 In view of the Community's financial contribution to the national focal points, the Committee calls for:

— closer Member State harmonisation when collating statistical data, so that the information will be more reliable and comparable, as is the case with Eurostat. Article 5(2) of the draft Regulation must therefore be strengthened in this direction;

— the national civil society networks active in the sector to be closely involved in the work of the national focal points.

3.4 The Committee will examine closely the new European Union action plan to combat drugs, which is expected to be published in early 2005.

Brussels, 27 October 2004.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Anne-Marie SIGMUND

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Improving the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy'

(2005/C 120/16)

On 25/26 March 2004, in its (Presidency) conclusions, the European Council invited the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to examine ways and means for 'Improving the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy'.

The Section for Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion, on the basis of the work carried out by a Lisbon Strategy Steering Group, adopted its opinion on 7 October 2004. The rapporteur was Mr Vever; the co-rapporteurs were Mr Ehnmark and Mr Simpson.

At its 412th plenary session on 27 and 28 October 2004 (meeting of 27 October), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 169 votes for, 4 against and 8 abstentions.

1. Preface

— aimed at a balanced development of its three strands, i.e. economic growth, social cohesion and environmental sustainability, by stimulating European competitiveness and job creation whilst at the same time building on appropriate environmental policies.

1.1 The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the fact that the European Council of 25 and 26 March 2004 invited it to examine ways and means for more effective implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, which is now at the halfway point.

1.2 The Committee recalls that from the outset, the Lisbon mandate of 24 March 2000:

— emphasised the need to actively involve the social partners and civil society with the strategy, using variable forms of partnership;

— specified that its success depends primarily on private sector and public-private partnerships;

1.3 Throughout its debates, hearings and opinions over recent years, the Committee has consistently underlined the importance of the Lisbon Strategy for the economic and social future of the Union, and called upon all the socio-occupational players to play an active part in it. In particular, the Committee has recently adopted opinions on European business competitiveness, the sustainable development strategy⁽¹⁾, better economic governance and employment support measures⁽²⁾. The Committee has continuously underlined that the Lisbon Strategy objectives will not be achieved without the full involvement of civil society.

⁽¹⁾ OJ 117 of 30.4.2004.

⁽²⁾ OJ 110 of 3.4.2004.