

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

SJR(2)-17-06(p.1)

Date: 6 December 2006

Time: 9.30 - 12.30

Venue: Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: EU policy and legislative priorities for 2006

Purpose of Paper

1. This paper updates Members on the priorities Committee selected for 2006 from the European Commission's Forward Work Programme.

Background

2. Committee selected the following priorities for the coming year from the European Commission's Forward Work Programme at the meeting held on 25 January 2006:

Rights of the Child

Communication on the Rights of the Child: this is intended to set a framework for actions to implement children's rights in the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Drugs Policy

Green Paper on drugs and civil society: this would provide a framework for working with civil society to implement actions in the EU Drugs Action Plan 2005-08. The Drugs Action Plan was one of the suggested priority items for consideration by the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee in 2005.

Alcohol-related Harm

Commission Communication on an alcohol policy: the aim is to reduce the health and social effects of alcohol consumption

Postal services

Proposal for a Directive on an internal market for postal services. This would further progress the creation of a postal internal market (i.e. the opening of remaining postal monopolies to competition) towards the target date of 2009 which could affect rural areas in particular.

To promote ‘a clustering of actions’ on child poverty in the EU (2007).

Identifying priorities for future EU action e.g. to collect comparable data on children’s rights (2007)

Mainstreaming children’s rights in EU actions (2007).

Establishing efficient coordination and consultation mechanisms e.g. increasing children’s involvement in decision making and the setting up of a coordinator for the rights of the child (2006).

Enhancing capacity and expertise on children’s rights and communicating more effectively to publicise children’s rights (2007 onwards).

It is hoped the Strategy will be launched by late 2008 or early 2009

Green Paper on the role of civil society in EU Drugs Policy

The European Commission consultation on dialogue with civil society organisations active in the drugs field on the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2005-2008 has now closed. The Drugs Action Plan was one of the suggested priority items for SJR in 2005.

The Commission will now report on the contributions received and suggest ways forward.

Consultation closed
30 Sept

EU Alcohol Strategy

The Commission has published its "EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm" - the aim is to reduce alcohol-related harm in Europe until the end of

2012. It explains what has already been done at national and Community level, where further action is needed and taking this forward, in particular through the proposed Alcohol and Health Forum which is to be set up by June 2007.

The priorities identified in the Communication are to:

1. protect young people and children and the unborn child;
2. reduce injuries and deaths from alcohol-related road accidents;
3. prevent harm among adults and reduce the negative impact on the workplace;

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4. raise awareness of the impact on health of harmful alcohol consumption; and on appropriate consumption patterns;

5. develop a common evidence base at EU level.

The strategy identifies areas where the EU can support the actions of Member States to reduce alcohol related harm, such as financing projects through the Public Health and Research Programmes, exchanging good practice on issues such as curbing under-age drinking, exploring cooperation on information campaigns or tackling drink-driving and other Community initiatives. It also interested parties and sets out areas where industry can make a contribution, notably in the area of responsible advertising and marketing.

Postal services directive

The European Commission has published its proposed draft legislation to open EU postal markets fully to competition by 2009, in line with the target date set out in the current Postal Directive.

National operators will no longer have a monopoly on mail below a certain weight (currently a maximum of 50 grams). Member States will be allowed a flexible choice of means to finance universal service provision or the possibility to share out the universal service obligation between operators.

The proposal maintains the current provisions such as:

1. the obligation on Member States to ensure a high-quality universal service comprising at least one delivery and collection five days a week for every EU citizen;
2. the obligation to ensure affordability of postal services;
3. the possibility for Member States to impose a uniform tariff for single piece tariff items such as consumer mail.

The provisions of the directive now have to be agreed jointly by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers (Member States' Ministers).

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