

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

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

Date: Wednesday 6 December 2006

Time: 09.30am – 12.30pm

Venue: Senedd, Cardiff Bay

SJR Committee EU Priorities (2006) – latest developments

Priorities identified	
<p data-bbox="39 797 376 842">Rights of the Child</p> <p data-bbox="39 898 1273 1115">The European Commission adopted its Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" on 4 July 2006. The Communication proposes to establish a comprehensive EU strategy "to effectively promote and safeguard the rights of the child in the EU's internal and external policies and to support Member States' efforts in this field."</p> <p data-bbox="39 1173 1254 1391">Following scrutiny of the Communication, the UK Parliament Select Committee on European Scrutiny concluded that because of the importance of children's rights, the contentious nature of the Commission's proposals and the UK Government's opposition to them that the document is recommended for debate by the European Standing Committee.</p> <p data-bbox="39 1449 1246 1621">The Draft Opinion produced by the Committee of the Regions for discussion on 29 November 2006 broadly welcomes the Commission's proposals, but stresses the need for local and regional authorities to be regarded as essential partners in the development of the Strategy.</p> <p data-bbox="39 1680 1158 1718">The Strategy is structured around seven specific objectives which include:</p> <p data-bbox="39 1776 1278 1899">Capitalising on existing activities (e.g. tackling human trafficking) and addressing urgent needs. The Commission will therefore undertake the following urgent measures:</p> <p data-bbox="39 1957 1262 2083">To attribute one single six digit telephone number (beginning with 116: 116 xyz) within the EU for child help-lines and one for child hotlines dedicated to missing and sexually exploited children (end 2006).</p>	<p data-bbox="1310 797 1474 842">4 July 06</p> <p data-bbox="1310 898 1461 936">Published</p> <p data-bbox="1310 1563 1490 1644">6 October 2006</p> <p data-bbox="1310 2083 1353 2121">29</p>

<p>To support the banking sector and credit card companies to combat the use of credit cards when purchasing sexual images of children on the Internet (2006).</p> <p>To promote ‘a clustering of actions’ on child poverty in the EU (2007).</p> <p>Identifying priorities for future EU action e.g. to collect comparable data on children’s rights (2007)</p> <p>Mainstreaming children’s rights in EU actions (2007).</p> <p>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).</p> <p>Enhancing capacity and expertise on children’s rights and communicating more effectively to publicise children’s rights (2007 onwards).</p> <p>It is hoped the Strategy will be launched by late 2008 or early 2009</p>	<p>November 2006</p>
<p>Green Paper on the role of civil society in EU Drugs Policy</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Commission will now report on the contributions received and suggest ways forward.</p>	<p>Consultation closed 30 Sept</p>
<p>EU Alcohol Strategy</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The priorities identified in the Communication are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. protect young people and children and the unborn child; 2. reduce injuries and deaths from alcohol-related road accidents; 	<p>Published October 24</p>

3. prevent harm among adults and reduce the negative impact on the workplace;
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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