



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 18 May 2006**

**9597/06**

**CORDROGUE 44**

**NOTE**

from :	Horizontal Working Party on Drugs
to :	Coreper/Council
Subject :	The EU Approach on alternative Development

**I. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT vs. GENERAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Taking into account the internationally agreed definition of alternative development set out in the 1998 UNGASS Action Plan on international co-operation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development, these two concepts are, to a great extent, not different from each other except that there is a twin link with illicit drug crop cultivation in the first case:

**A.** Alternative development efforts are undertaken in areas:

- a) in which illicit cultivation exists, or
- b) in which illicit cultivation has existed and could come back, or
- c) in which illicit cultivation could exist if no action is taken, or
- d) from which people could migrate towards drug cultivation activities and areas.

- B.** In these efforts, a stronger emphasis than in “regular” rural development co-operation initiatives is placed on the notion of “alternative”, i.e., alternative to drug cultivation.

Yet, for this emphasis on alternatives to drug crops to succeed a way must be found to answer to the need for alternatives to the miserable life caused by poverty and marginalisation. This is why alternative development is placed in a broader context that includes:

- a) alternative economic activities and sources of income and employment (including non-farm activities, small enterprises promotion, etc.),
- b) marketing and export enhancement,
- c) technological and managerial skills transfers,
- d) transport and communication structures,
- e) guaranteeing the presence of the State,
- f) institutional development and empowerment of local communities and governments,
- g) strengthening of civil justice institutions (and not just law enforcement in a narrow sense),
- h) social infrastructures and services,
- i) overall capacity development,
- j) access to micro credits including, where appropriate, the establishment of rural banks,
- k) conflict prevention and mitigation,
- l) migration pressures,
- m) protection of human rights and constitutional rights (i.e. land titling).

## **II. OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EUROPEAN APPROACH TO ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

**A.** It is part of an approach that covers, in application of the principle of shared responsibility, a number of simultaneous efforts in other areas of counter-narcotics work including:

- First and foremost, demand reduction in consuming countries;
- International cooperation in law enforcement against traffickers, precursors' diversion and illicit drug manufacturing laboratories;
- Commitment of national governments of beneficiary countries to address the drug challenge in all its dimensions, particularly law enforcement actions against the gangs involved in the drug trade but also demand reduction and, more fundamentally, poverty alleviation and conflict prevention, including bringing alternative development into their national development strategies;
- Commitment of the local communities, in which alternative development initiatives are undertaken, to voluntary eradication – or better, non-planting - as soon as legitimate and viable alternatives are in place.

**B.** From these postulates, there emerge:

1. A strong European reluctance to making coca, poppy and cannabis farmers the key culprits in the drug chain, bearing in mind that drugs are also cultivated by organised criminals - as a rule, peasants that grow illicit drugs do not have a vocation for criminal behaviour.
2. The European view that, while it might seem harder than going after farmers, the greater efforts must be taken against illicit drug manufacturers and traffickers and the gangs organising cultivation, and against abuse – the benefits per unit of cost are higher here as well.

3. The acknowledgement on the part of the EU that efforts must also be placed, nonetheless, on voluntary eradication, including via social pressure within the local communities.
4. The European perception that forced eradication should remain an option but should only be pursued when ground conditions ensure that small-scale farmers have had access to alternative livelihoods for a sufficient time period.
5. The European view of the need to systematically combine supply reduction and demand reduction measures.
6. The clear understanding by the EU that alternative development initiatives do not exist to provide short term solace to illicit crop farmers or to compensate them euro for euro for their losses when they stop their illicit cultivation. On the contrary, alternative development is a long-term strategy, based on a comprehensive approach to rural development, that seeks to place the foundations for sustainable development and independence from illicit drug cultivation in the long term.
7. An EU recognition that alternative development initiatives require adequate market access for products that are being produced as alternatives to illicit crops; and that they need to generate sufficient revenue to allow farmers to maintain a decent standard of living and deter them from producing illicit crops.
8. The European view that affected countries have to take a strong and broad ownership of sustainable drug control and should integrate illicit drug cultivation objectives in their national development programmes and policies.
9. The European conviction that fundamental notions such as respect for human rights, empowerment, accountability, participation and non-discrimination of vulnerable groups should be integral parts of any approach to alternative development.

### **III. THE QUESTION OF FORCED ERADICATION**

**A.** The EU concerns against forced eradication are not ideological, but rather pragmatic and evidence-based.

- There is every reason to believe that drug growing farmers are aware of the illegality of their activities.
- However, the EU also realises that it cannot ask many of these farmers, most of them extremely poor, more than what they can deliver. In this respect forced eradication, when alternative livelihoods are not available:
  - tends to generate social and political violence.
  - tends to displace cultivation to more inaccessible spots.
  - is unlikely to succeed in the long term.
  - finally, the benefit ratio is low.

**B.** Explicit conditionality as a means of facilitating eradication can appear as a disguised form of forced eradication. Where it does, it is unlikely to bear fruit because it:

1. might suggest a mistrust of donors as regards the actions of beneficiary farmers (and can thus harm the relationship between local communities and development cooperation providers) and thus negate the notion of local ownership of development;
2. is difficult to enforce in practical terms;
3. has a moral hazard component, as it could give perverse incentives (neighbouring communities might start growing poppy to attract assistance);
4. unless alternative livelihoods are available, it could undermine sustainable solutions and thus fail in achieving its goals.