

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2674/05

by Marco Pannella (ALDE) and Emma Bonino (ALDE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Ban on the medical use of methadone in Ukraine and its reclassification as an extremely dangerous prohibited narcotic substance

The joint-ministerial Committee on Drug Control of Ukraine has decided to proceed with the prohibition of the medicinal use of methadone reclassifying it among other 'extremely dangerous, prohibited narcotic substances'. The decision is awaiting approval by the Supreme Court.

This new law not only disregards the large volume of scientific literature supporting the therapeutic benefits of methadone but is also likely to undermine many of the initiatives to promote opiate maintenance therapies and the use of antiretroviral drugs made possible by funding from the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria launched by the United Nation.

On 29 June 2005 there was a meeting of the national coordinating committee for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and at the beginning of July a meeting was scheduled in Kiev of the World Health Organisation's regional office to present its 2004 report on opiate substitution therapies in Ukraine.

There is a real possibility that abandoning substitution therapies and other harm reduction measures will have negative repercussions at regional level.

At the 48th session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs held in Vienna from 7 to 14 March 2005, the European Union, when presenting its own strategy, emphasised the promotion and funding of methadone and other harm reduction programmes in line with the documents produced by the UN Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Can the Commission say:

- how it intends to tackle this issue at its bilateral meetings with the government of Ukraine?
- whether it regards this decision violating the right to health as a potential obstacle to the start of negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the European Union?