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Speech • Discours

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Title of speech • Titre du discours *European Drug Report 2013*

Occasion Launch of the *European Drug Report 2013*

*Director of the EMCDDA, Dear Wolfgang,
Ladies and gentlemen of the press,
Dear colleagues of the EMCDDA and SICAD,*

It is a great honour for me, as Chairman of the EMCDDA Management Board, to participate in the launch of the *European Drug Report 2013*.

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate the Director and the staff of the EMCDDA for being able to improve — with this new *European Drug Report* — what was already universally recognised as an outstanding product: the *Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in Europe*. I must also highlight that this report is only made possible by the support and hard work of our partners in the Reitox network, who provide the national data on which the analysis is based — I would like to say a big thank you to them.

As a health professional myself, and national drugs coordinator in Portugal, I can appreciate a tool that innovates and keeps pace with the fast-changing European drugs phenomenon. This comprehensive set of information that the EMCDDA has published today will help national authorities understand the European scale of the problem they are facing and provide them with solutions to both old and new problems.

As Europe continues to face negative economic growth, increasing unemployment rates and reductions in government spending, available budgets for health, public order and safety measures risk being reduced. A number of European countries are already reporting cuts in drug-related services. We need to reinforce the message that drug treatment remains the most cost-effective policy option, even in difficult economic times.

European countries are determined to fight this phenomenon together. That is why, last December, the Council of Ministers of the EU adopted a new drugs strategy for 2013–2020. This eight-year strategy is both innovative and ambitious. For the first time, 'reduction in the health and social risks and harms caused by drugs' is incorporated as a policy objective, alongside the two traditional drug policy aims of reducing the supply of, and demand for, drugs.



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The new strategy calls for the involvement of young people, drug users and clients of drug-related services in the development of policy measures. And, for the first time, it involves civil society in the drug policy-making process.

Over the last 10 years the number of people in treatment has doubled. Over the next eight years we need to do more to decrease this number. We need to focus on the social reintegration and recovery of all people living with problem drug use.

The new European strategy recognises the need to improve care for prisoners with drug problems. Over the next eight years we need to ensure that the care received by drug users in penal institutions is equivalent to that provided by health services in the community.

The new strategy also aims to disrupt the European drugs market in order to decrease the availability of drugs in our towns. Criminal organisations are skilled in diversifying drug trafficking routes and methods of transport, and we must combat them through more effective use of both intelligence-led law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

The strategy pays specific attention to the rapid increase in the number of new psychoactive substances. Only last year, in 2012, 73 new substances appeared on the market — and we thought we had broken an undesirable record in 2011 with 43 new substances. Member States have resolved to work together on this issue, paying special attention to communication technologies and to the Internet, which has become a market parallel to the street market.

But the EU drugs strategy does not intend to face only internal European problems. It aims to promote the European model elsewhere, to our neighbours and key international partners. The strategy, in fact, supports a drugs policy model that is *integrated*, combining all aspects of drugs activities; *balanced*, concentrating equally on demand and supply reduction measures; and *evidence based*, ensuring that policy measures are based on scientific findings.

To close, I would like to thank the EMCDDA's Director and staff for their work in producing this *European Drug Report*. I would also like to stress once again that the quality and relevance of the information being made public today is made possible only through the joint efforts of the specialists working at the EMCDDA in Lisbon and those working at the national focal points situated in each of the capital cities.

Without these joint efforts and without such a pooling of European and national resources, it would not be possible to fully understand the drugs phenomenon, inform policy with scientific evidence and, ultimately, be appreciated for what we do throughout the world.

To conclude, although we are in the context of the launch of the *European Drug Report*, I would like to make myself available at the end of this press conference to answer any questions relating specifically to Portugal.

I thank you for your attention and your interest in the subject.