



Speech • Discours

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Title of speech • Titre du discours European Drug Report 2014

Occasion Justice and Home Affairs Council, 5–6 June 2014, Luxembourg (session 5 June)

Ministers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to present to you today some highlights from the EMCDDA's new analysis of the drug situation in Europe.

In a nutshell, our analysis indicates an overall stable situation, with positive signs in some areas, but with new threats that raise concerns for public health and law enforcement. In particular, we see a downward trend in the use and availability of heroin, but stimulants, synthetic drugs, cannabis and medicinal products are all becoming more important.

The drugs that we see today are, in many ways, different from those we knew in the past.

We see this in established drugs like cannabis, where new production techniques are impacting on the potency of both resin and herbal products. We also see this in synthetic drug production, with the appearance of a plethora of new substances.



A serious current concern is the emergence of new synthetic opioids and hallucinogenic substances that are so highly pharmacologically active that even a few grams can be used to produce 10 000 doses.

New psychoactive substances (NPS) are very often sourced legally, as powders mostly from China and India, and imported into Europe. Once here, they are processed, packaged and retailed as so-called 'legal highs' or 'research chemicals' as well as sold directly on the illicit drug market.

Currently we are monitoring some 403 new psychoactive substances. 81 of them — four times more than four years ago — were notified to the EU Early Warning System in 2013, and this upward trend shows no sign of running out of steam.

We also report that the Internet continues to play a key role in shaping the market for these new psychoactive substances. In 2013, the EMCDDA identified some 650 websites selling these substances to Europeans. In addition, a new challenge for law enforcement is the sale of both new and 'old' drugs via 'darknets'.

Over 15 years ago, great vision was shown by the EU institutions and Member States in investing in an EU Early Warning System on new psychoactive substances — a system that is now recognised as a model of best practice globally. I am deeply concerned, however, that this mechanism is under increasing strain and may be at risk because — given the developments I have just described — it is inadequately resourced at national and at EMCDDA levels.



Cannabis is the drug where public opinion remains most polarised. Here we observe a lively public debate, which has recently been fuelled by regulatory changes in parts of the United States and Latin America.

In Europe, the scale of the cannabis market combined with an increase in domestic production has led to a growing recognition of the drug's importance as a cash generator for organised crime.

The overall European market for illicit stimulants appears to be relatively stable, with cocaine remaining the stimulant of choice in southern and western Europe, and amphetamines more prevalent in northern and eastern countries.

New wastewater studies at city level confirm that methamphetamine use, historically low in Europe, with its stronghold in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, is now identified in a number of other countries such as Germany, Greece, Norway and the UK.

Last year, Europol reported the dismantling in Belgium of the two largest ecstasy drug production sites ever found in the EU. ... And together with Europol we released a joint warning on the availability of high-potency ecstasy (MDMA).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In European cities the drug problem is no longer as visible as it was a few years ago... and this is largely due to the investments our Member States have made in drug treatment and other programmes.



However, the European drug problem has not been solved. ... It is still very much with us and it is evolving constantly.

In this context, I can assure you that we will continue to focus on delivering a timely, objective and balanced analysis of an ever more complex drug problem.

Sound information is at the heart of Europe's response to drug problems and our interventions are all the more effective because of this.

Thank you