



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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| from : | General Secretariat |
| to | COREPER/Council |
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| Subject : | Council conclusions on strengthening EU research capacity on illicit drugs |

At its meetings on 11 and 30 November, the Horizontal Working Party on Drugs discussed and agreed on the above-mentioned draft Council conclusions.

Coreper is requested to invite the Council to approve the draft Council conclusions on strengthening EU research capacity on illicit drugs as set out in Annex.

**Council conclusions
on strengthening EU research capacity on illicit drugs**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the EU Drugs Strategy for 2005-2012¹, which specifies information, research and evaluation as a cross-cutting theme aiming at a better understanding of the drugs problem and the development of an optimal response to it through a measurable and sustainable improvement in the knowledge base and knowledge infrastructure;

Having regard to the EU Drugs Action Plan for 2009-2012², in particular the cross-cutting theme Information, Research and Evaluation, which indicates as a main priority improving the understanding of all aspects of the phenomenon of drug use in order to expand the knowledge base for public policy and raise awareness among citizens of the social and health implications of drug use, and to carry out research;

Recalling in particular action 63, which requests the Council and Commission to:

- identify future EU research priorities in the field of illicit drugs and the mechanisms needed in order to generate new knowledge,
- develop new approaches and technologies,
- strengthen research capability by developing and focusing its strategic direction and taking steps to improve cooperation in the EU;

¹ 15074/04 CORDROGUE 77 SAN 187 ENFOPOL 187 RELEX 564

² 2008/C 326/09

Having regard to the Specific Programme 'Drug Prevention and Information' (2007 – 2013)³, the drugs-related aspects of the Specific Programme 'Fight against and Prevention of Crime Programme (2007-2013)', the Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health (2008-2013), which *inter alia* aim at ensuring the expansion of the knowledge base in this field, including through studies and research;

Having regard to the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013)⁴, which complements national research activity, and in particular the specific programme "Cooperation" and its thematic areas of Health, Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities, Security and Nano, Materials and Production;

Also noting that while the above mentioned thematic areas may include drug related research, there is no specific thematic area for drug related research as such;

Recognizing the importance of research to inform drug policies and develop the necessary evidence-based responses to reduce the adverse consequences of drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking in the EU;

Recognizing that research into illicit drugs is embedded in different national research approaches and strategies with important cultural and historical characteristics, and that research priorities are a reflection of such differences as well as of differences in drug problems and responses;

³ Decision No 1150/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council

⁴ Decision No 1982/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council

Mindful of the study “Comparative Analysis of Research into Illicit Drugs in the European Union” published by the European Commission and containing an assessment of drug-related research activities and research structures in the EU as well as an evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, gaps and possible options for improvement⁵ and the outcome of the conference Bridging the research gap in the field of illicit drugs organized by the Commission on 24-25 September 2009;

Welcoming the Commission staff working paper on Strengthening EU Research Capacity on Illicit Drugs⁶;

Realizing that drugs-related research programmes and projects are often part of a broader, integrated research policy and therefore have a strong national dimension, while recognising the complementary character of EU funded research;

Noting that while there is considerable informal networking among researchers, there are few drugs specific cross-border projects;

Noting that there is no forum at EU level for a systematic dialogue on drug-related research, to identify research needs, to better exploit the EU's potential for research through joint cooperation and provide a more strategic direction as required by the EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012;

Also noting that research in the field of drug supply and supply reduction has so far received less attention and therefore needs strengthening;

Convinced of the need to strengthen EU research capacity on illicit drugs and to harness the EU's considerable research potential to find effective solutions to drug problems,

⁵ *A Comparative Analysis of Research into Illicit Drugs in the European Union*, Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security, European Commission, September 2009

⁶ Doc. 17247/09 CORDROGUE 79

ADOPTS THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS:

1. In order to support the expansion of the drugs knowledge base and evidence base for drugs policy making, the Council identifies the following future EU priorities in the field of illicit drugs:
 - the cause and nature of drug problems and how these develop in society, as well as the responses to them;
 - evaluation research, in which theory and practice are monitored and examined.

2. The Council recognizes that today's multifaceted drugs problems require an increasingly multidisciplinary approach and development of new technologies, in particular in the following research fields at national and EU level:
 - with regard to research in the field of drug demand and demand reduction, in particular health and socio-economic related research, covering aetiology (including neurosciences and biomedicine), addiction, epidemiology, interventions for prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and harm reduction and drug-related diseases prevention, pharmacology and toxicology;
 - with regard to research in the field of drug supply and supply reduction covering areas such as criminology, research into criminal behaviours, drug markets, organised crime, corruption, money laundering, forensic science⁷, detection and surveillance technology.

⁷ Recalling inter alia the existence and the work since 1995 of the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI), in which 25 of the 27 EU Member States participate as well as the Council conclusions on a European system for forensic drug profiling (doc. 15876/09 ENFOPOL 222 CORDROGUE 66).

3. The Council stresses the need to improve coordination between policy, research and practice as effective coordination provides the cornerstone for an effective illicit drugs research strategy to underpin an evidence-informed drugs policy and to translate knowledge into practice.
4. The Council agrees that a number of actions are necessary at national, cross-national and EU level to better address research needs in the field of illicit drugs:

4.1 At national and cross-national level, Member States are therefore invited :

- To further explore ways to strengthen their research capacity and infrastructure to support research and to foster interdisciplinary links.
- To put in place, where necessary, effective coordination mechanisms to improve communication and cooperation between relevant stakeholders (research, policy, practice and civil society) in the field of drug-related research.
- To enhance cooperation between national and regional research programmes, which fund drugs-related research, for example by exploiting the opportunities provided by the Seventh Research Framework Programme competitive calls on European Research Area Networks (ERA-NET).
- To promote the establishment of training schemes that seek to support the academic development of junior researchers in the field of drugs and enhance the expertise of senior researchers as these play an important part of building up overall EU research capacity. Marie Curie Actions⁸ can be one of the options for giving support to such training, with due respect to the fact that research fields are freely chosen by the applicants.
- To enhance postgraduate exchange arrangements between Member States in the field of drugs.

⁸ Marie Curie Fellowships funded under the "People" programme of FP 7 help strengthen careers prospects and mobility of researchers

4.2 *At EU level, the Council:*

- Agrees to establish, for the first time in the first half of 2010, an annual exchange on drugs-related research within the framework of the Horizontal Drugs Group to strengthen policy-research links and collaboration at the EU level and reflect on progress made. This information exchange should aim to create an understanding of the research priorities necessary to support the implementation of the EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012 and beyond, as well as to provide input for the annual work programmes of the relevant Commission funding programmes.
- Recognizes the significant benefits of European cooperation to complement national research and will aim therefore to promote drugs-related cross-border research cooperation which:
 - Focuses on interlinked, cross-border aspects of the drug problem, such as organized crime;
 - Involves large-scale, multi-site and – if necessary – longitudinal studies into e.g. causes of onset of drug use or dependence, that require considerable sample sizes and/or that aim to study the influence of different social, cultural and economic factors on drug use;
 - Takes a multidisciplinary approach and covers a diversity of disciplines that may not all be available in one country;
 - Supports research activities which require economies of scale to harness expertise and ensure cost effectiveness, for example the development of new detection and surveillance technologies;
 - Recognizes the need to improve access to research findings for policymakers and professionals at both national and European level. National "knowledge brokers" in the field of drugs should be encouraged to link up to the available information sources.
- Recognizes the need to stimulate and support research programmes at multinational level in order to promote an integrated and sustainable development of research and to decrease the research gap among all EU countries.

4.3 *At EU level, the Commission is invited:*

- To raise awareness, in cooperation with Member States, of EU funding opportunities of interest to the research community in the illicit drugs field, making full use of existing information channels, including National Contact Points for the Seventh Framework programme.
- To look at ways to proactively disseminate information about EU funding opportunities to stimulate and support cross-border cooperation among the research community in the illicit drugs field.
- To prepare the annual dialogue on drug-related research within the framework of the Horizontal Drugs Group and with the assistance of the EMCDDA, advised by its Scientific Committee in accordance with the Regulation (EC) 1920/2006⁹, and the Member States.

4.4 *At EU level, the EMCDDA is invited:*

- To provide and disseminate via its thematic web-area on research and its best practice portal and with support of the REITOX network;
 - drug-related research information, including EU funding opportunities,
 - drug-related research findings from Member States and the EU, including gray literature.

5. The Council recognizes the importance of establishing a sustainable long-term framework for research in the field of illicit drugs. To that end, Member States and the research community are invited and encouraged to actively contribute to consultations on the future European research policy and the future objectives of drug-related research under the next EU Drugs Strategy and EU Drugs Action Plan. In this context, it is important to strive towards developing application processes which are as simple and user-friendly as possible.

⁹ Regulation (EC) No 1920/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (recast), OJ L 376, 27.12.2006, p. 1