



NEWS RELEASE from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

VICE-PRESIDENT FRATTINI VISITS EU DRUGS AGENCY IN LISBON

Up-to-date intelligence crucial to curbing Europe's drug problems

(21.11.2006, LISBON) **Franco Frattini, Vice-President of the European Commission**, has called for 'continued, concerted and measurable action' to strengthen Europe's response to the problems of illegal drugs. Mr Frattini's remarks were made during a one-day briefing on the EMCDDA's *2006 Annual report*, ahead of its official launch in Brussels this week. The visit is the second by Vice-President Frattini to the EMCDDA in Lisbon, reflecting the urgency attached to addressing drugs problems in Europe. 'Only with up-to-date and reliable intelligence can we improve our responsiveness to Europe's evolving drug problems,' continues Frattini. The new EMCDDA *Annual report* will be released this Thursday, 23 November at the European Parliament.

As **European Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security**, Mr Frattini is responsible for the EU drugs portfolio, overseeing implementation of the 2005–2012 EU drugs strategy ⁽¹⁾ and its current Action Plan (2005–2008 ⁽²⁾). Meeting with **EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz** and staff members, Mr Frattini underlined the value of the EMCDDA as provider of the annual snapshot of the European drugs situation. Around 80 actions are planned to be implemented in line with the EU Drugs Action Plan 2005–2008. The Commission, which is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the Plan, presents annual Progress Reviews on its implementation, in order to identify gaps and possible new challenges. The EMCDDA makes an important contribution to this, providing data collected and analysed from the Member States.

Commenting after the briefing, Frattini said 'The new EMCDDA *Annual report* gives us cause for both optimism and concern. First of all, considerable progress has been made in exchanging information on drug problems — not only internally among Member States, acceding and candidate countries, but also with countries and organisations outside the EU. Also encouraging are new targeted legislative actions aimed at breaking key links in the drug supply chain, including two regulations controlling precursor chemicals ⁽³⁾ and the establishment of EU-wide minimum penalties against drug traffickers ⁽⁴⁾. We have also built what is effectively an 'early-warning system' for emerging threats ⁽⁵⁾, enabling Europe to assess with confidence the risks of new psychoactive substances that are currently not controlled under existing legislation.'

'But we also face worrying findings. Record levels of heroin seizures in Europe must be seen in the context of increasing production in Afghanistan, and we cannot be complacent about the possible impact of the increasing availability of this heroin on the streets of Europe. Similarly, cocaine seizures continue to grow and there is evidence that cocaine cartels are increasingly targeting European markets.'

The EMCDDA *2006 Annual report* reports that opportunities for drug treatment across Europe are being widened, diverting drug-dependent users away from the criminal justice system and towards treatment and rehabilitation. At the same time, there is a shift in enforcement efforts towards increased penalties for supply and trafficking and a reduced emphasis on custodial sentences for drug possession for personal use.

Notes:

2006 Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in Europe (100 pages) will be downloadable in 23 languages from <http://annualreport.emcdda.europa.eu> on 23.11.2006 at 11H00 CET.

⁽¹⁾ **EU drugs strategy 2005–2012**

<http://www.emcdda.eu.int/?nnodeID=6790>

⁽²⁾ **EU drugs action plan 2005–2008**

<http://www.emcdda.eu.int/?nnodeID=10360>

⁽³⁾ **EC regulation on drug precursor control**

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/customs/customs_controls/drugs_precursors/index_en.htm

⁽⁴⁾ **EU Council Framework-Decision laying down minimum provisions on the constituent elements of criminal acts and penalties in the field of illicit drug trafficking**

<http://eldd.emcdda.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.Content&nnodeid=5766&sLanguageiso=EN>

⁽⁵⁾ **Early-warning system on new psychoactive substances**

<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.Content&nNodeID=16775&sLanguageISO=EN>