DEVELOPING DRUG INFORMATION NETWORKS

EMCDDA and CICAD–OAS launch joint handbook on building national drug observatories

(18.10.2010, LISBON and MONTEVIDEO) The EU drugs agency (EMCDDA) and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organisation of American States (OAS) launch in Montevideo today a joint handbook on Building a national drugs observatory. The handbook will be released during the fifth Ibero-American meeting of national drug observatories, being held this week in the Uruguayan capital (18–22 October).

The EMCDDA collaborates with CICAD under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2000 (1). Supporting the establishment of national drug observatories and drug information networks is a significant component of this partnership.

Since the adoption of the United Nations ‘drug conventions’ (2), countries have been obliged to report regularly on their national drug situations as well as on interventions to address them. International and regional organisations are also setting target-based action plans which rely increasingly on reliable, factual and quality data. National drug observatories play a key role in gathering data of this kind and feeding into the drug policy debate.

Over the last two decades, the EMCDDA has created some 30 national drug observatories or ‘national focal points’ across Europe, which form the European information network on drugs and drug addiction (Reitox) (3). CICAD–OAS has assisted its Member States in creating and strengthening similar structures across Latin America.

Based on the experience of the two bodies in their respective geographical areas, today’s handbook provides a practical guide relevant for all world regions and adaptable to a wide range of national and institutional settings. It is complemented by an online toolbox to ensure the continued exchange of experience and best practice.

‘Over the last two decades, national drug observatories have been established on both sides of the Atlantic, and this handbook transcribes the lessons learned in the process’, says EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz. ‘On the European side, the handbook furnishes us with an effective training tool to support the future development of observatories beyond EU borders’.

The value of the handbook was underlined by Europe’s closest neighbours last week at an EMCDDA–European Commission seminar held in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (4).

‘The CICAD–OAS Hemispheric Drug Strategy, adopted this year, heralds a new phase in regional cooperation on the drugs problem’, adds James Mack, Executive Secretary of CICAD. ‘In the past, too many public policy decisions on drugs were based on “good intentions”. This strategy gives weight to the national drug observatories that now provide the scientific evidence needed to underpin drug policy. Our experience in creating these structures at the core of our monitoring system is reflected in the handbook’.

This week’s meeting in Montevideo is held in cooperation with the Spanish national plan on drugs and is financed by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs — through its Agency of International Cooperation (AECID) — and the US State Department. At the event, participating representatives of the Ibero-American drug observatories will work in plenary sessions and workshops on the concepts and methodological tools presented in the handbook.
Building a national drugs observatory: a joint handbook


Further language versions are planned for 2010 and 2011 (provisionally Arabic, Croatian, Italian, Russian and Turkish).

Notes:

(1) For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/about/partners/cicad
(3) http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/about/partners/reitox-network