

Launch of the European Drug Report 2015: Trends and Developments

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Speech of Dimitris Avramopoulos, European Commissioner responsible for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship

LAUNCH OF THE EUROPEAN DRUG REPORT 2015

(Check against delivery)

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today and for the <u>launch of the 20th report on the state of the</u> drugs problem in Europe.

Looking back over the years, it is very gratifying to see the progress made in developing a sound understanding of the drug phenomenon.

Let me start with a simple fact: the market for illicit drugs <u>is the most dynamic of all criminal</u> <u>markets</u>.

It is a globalized and a rapidly changing market.

The production of new psychoactive substances, is increasingly taking place in the EU moving closer to consumer markets.

This growing criminal activity requires a clear, strong and coherent answer at European level.

That is why anti-drugs policy was included as an <u>integral part of our European Agenda on</u> Security, which the Commission adopted a few weeks ago.

Tackling organised crime is one of the three main priorities of the Agenda.

The trafficking of drugs is often interconnected with other organised criminal networks, such as migrant smugglers and human traffickers.

It is also linked to the financing of terrorism.

Cracking down on traffickers is not easy. The constant change of trafficking routes, which are largely affected by armed conflict, make it increasing difficult to trace the drug traffickers.

So we will have to intensify our efforts.

Let me now turn to the issue of new psychoactive substances.

A cornerstone of our approach on drugs policy is how to tackle the "new drugs" phenomenon.

Thanks to the Early Warning System that has been developed over the years by EMCDDA and EUROPOL, just in 2014 we were able to identify 101 new uncontrolled psychoactive substances.

This brings the total number of substances being monitored by the Agency to over 450, with more than half of that figure being identified in the last three years.

The speed at which new psychoactive substances can appear and be distributed, is particularly challenging.

To deal with such substances, the Commission has put forward a proposal that will strengthen the existing legal framework.

It is essential that the Council and the European Parliament move swiftly towards the adoption of the legislation; it will strengthen our responses and equip us with better instruments to deal with these substances; it will make us more efficient, more effective.

Another phenomenon I am particularly concerned with is the growing use of <u>the Internet as a new source of supply</u>, for both controlled and uncontrolled psychoactive substances.

EMCDDA monitoring has identified around 650 websites, selling so-called 'legal highs' to Europeans.

Social media and apps play an active role in drug markets, whether used directly for buying and selling drugs, or indirectly for marketing, opinion-forming or experience-sharing.

Criminals abuse anonymisation techniques and anonymous payment mechanisms for the illicit online trade of drugs.

So, needless to say, Europe needs address this problem urgently.

Of course, addressing the drugs phenomenon at European level requires much more than just analysis and legislative actions.

We must become more operational.

The EMCDDA, Europol and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) are already working well together within the early-warning mechanism on new psychoactive substances.

An unprecedented six risk assessments were conducted in 2014. It's a reminder of the importance of keeping a focus on the substances that cause particular harm.

Moreover, the EMCDDA and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) are working together on drug-related infectious diseases, assisting Member States in assessing associated risks.

I note for example their joint work on recent HIV outbreaks.

This close and regular cooperation among all relevant European Agencies, should to be strengthened even further.

But acting coherently at the European level is not enough.

The drugs phenomenon is not just a European challenge; it is a global challenge.

It requires global and comprehensive engagement.

Next year, the <u>Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly</u> (19–21 April 2016, New York) will review the current policies and strategies to confront the global drug problem.

This will be a key moment for worldwide action on drugs.

It is also opportunity to work on an international scale to promote a <u>balanced approach</u> <u>grounded</u> on harm reduction, public health and human rights.

I am fully committed to face this global challenge by working with all Member States and with our international partners for a successful outcome at the Special UN Session on Drugs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have no time to spare.

To fight the drug phenomenon, we need to show determination and commitment.

We need to be coordinated at the national, European and international levels.

Rest assured that the Commission, together with the EMCDDA, will to continue to play a leading role in this effort.

Thank you