



# News release

from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

HEALTH AND SOCIAL RESPONSES TO DRUG PROBLEMS: A EUROPEAN GUIDE 2021

## World AIDS Day: new EMCDDA miniguide on responding to drug-related infectious diseases

(1.12.2021, LISBON) Health and social responses to drug-related infectious diseases are explored today in a new **EMCDDA** miniguide, released to mark **World AIDS Day**. The resource is the eighth in a series of miniguides, making up the agency's latest overview of actions and interventions to respond to the consequences of illicit drug use <sup>(1)</sup>.

Sharing drug injecting equipment increases the risk of transmitting and acquiring blood-borne infections, such as HIV and hepatitis B and C. While hepatitis C is the most prevalent blood-borne viral infection among people who inject drugs (PWID), injecting drug use remains an important mode of HIV transmission in some EU countries, and local outbreaks continue to occur. Despite falling HIV transmission rates in recent years, more than 1 in 10 new AIDS cases in the EU are still attributed to injecting drug use. This may signal late diagnosis or poor case management, both of which are avoidable.

Opioids, mainly heroin, are the predominant drugs injected in Europe, however, in recent years, there have been indications that the injection of stimulants has been on the increase. Stimulant injecting has been associated with particularly risky injection practices and a number of HIV outbreaks.

Today's miniguide highlights a range of measures for preventing and controlling infectious diseases among PWID, including routine testing, promoting safer injecting behaviour and ensuring access to opioid agonist treatment. It places focus on interventions that have proven to be beneficial in this area, such as the provision of sterile needles and syringes and of antiviral treatments.

Latest evidence in this area suggests that services should be targeted, integrated and delivered according to user needs and local conditions. This can be through outreach and fixed sites offering testing, treatment, harm reduction and counselling interventions, as well as through referrals to general primary health and specialist medical services. The combination of these interventions in many cases enhances their effectiveness. Ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic and combatting viral hepatitis are part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Drawing on a fresh global review of the evidence, and insights from 29 countries (27 EU, Turkey and Norway), the EMCDDA miniguides — which are grouped in four bundles — are designed to support practitioners and policymakers in addressing the negative consequences of drug use. The resources are presented in a digital and modular format, designed to improve accessibility, to be easier to read across a range of devices and to facilitate regular updates and translations.

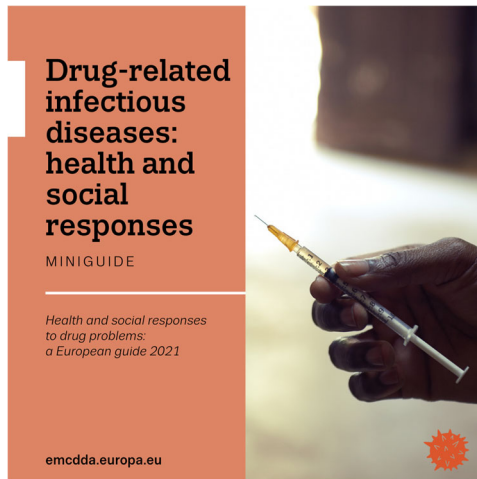
Each miniguide provides an overview of the most important aspects to consider when planning or delivering health and social responses to particular drug-related problems. The miniguides review the availability and effectiveness of responses and consider implications for policy and practice. Throughout the guides, 'Spotlights' focus on a number of hot topics requiring special attention today.

Today's miniguide is one of two in the second bundle dedicated to drug-related harms. The first bundle, launched on 18 October, focused on responding to specific patterns of drug use. Upcoming bundles in 2022 will focus on settings and vulnerable groups.

(<sup>1</sup>) [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/health-and-social-responses-a-european-guide\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/health-and-social-responses-a-european-guide_en)

## BUNDLE 2: HARMS

1 December



Coming soon (December)



The miniguides update and replace the 2017 one-volume *Health and social responses to drug problems: a European guide*.