



Speech

Speaker	Laura d'Arrigo, Chair of the EMCDDA Management Board
Title	European Drug Report 2021: Trends and Developments
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Since early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the way in which we live. Countries in Europe, and around the world, have had to introduce unprecedented measures to protect public health.

All aspects of the drug phenomenon in Europe — including production, trafficking, distribution and use — have also been affected by the pandemic. The *European Drug Report 2021* this year provides the latest overview of these developments.

Several indicators suggest that the availability of illicit drugs in Europe is very high. The interception of a growing number of shipments of cocaine, cannabis and, to a lesser extent, heroin, reveals the worrying fact that organised crime groups are infiltrating Europe and have adapted rapidly to restrictions linked to the pandemic.

Europe has also become an active area for the production of illicit drugs, notably synthetic drugs destined for European and global markets. Online platforms, whether on the surface or dark web, are increasingly exploited by drug traffickers.

The growing complexity of the drug market also poses new challenges: the availability and use of a wider range of substances, often of high potency and purity, can present greater risks to public health.

Therefore, it is even more important today that we join forces, at European and international level, to identify changing trafficking methods and routes, to rapidly detect new substances appearing on the market, to improve our knowledge of consumption patterns and associated risks and to provide adequate drug services for all those in need.

But, equally, we need to work to prevent substance use, notably by reinforcing young people's psychosocial skills, their critical spirit, their autonomy and their ability to resist when offered these products.

The new EU Drugs Strategy 2021–2025 provides a robust and comprehensive framework for concerted action to protect and improve public health and wellbeing and to offer a high level of security.

It reaffirms the commitment of the EU to a balanced, integrated and science-based approach to a complex drug phenomenon.

I welcome the fact that the new strategy fully recognises the important role of the EMCDDA both in providing timely evidence to inform policymaking across the Member States and in offering support through early warning, threat and risk assessment, research, innovation and foresight. The EMCDDA is thus a precious tool, both for decision-makers and for professionals. It enables us to tackle our own experiences and identify effective methods and practices that can be usefully adapted to other contexts.

I would like to convey my special thanks to the EMCDDA Director and to all of his staff for this high-quality report, once again produced in a difficult context. My thanks also go to the national focal points, to the EMCDDA Scientific Committee, and to all national, European and international partners who helped enrich this analysis. I salute their commitment.

The challenges continue to evolve and so must our common response. The work of the EMCDDA is crucial to ensure that drug and addiction policies are founded on the best possible analysis and, therefore, contribute to safeguarding the health and security of European citizens.

Today's report shows how timely and scientific information are critical for keeping pace with new threats and developments and for identifying areas requiring rapid action. This is the clear added value that the EMCDDA brings to Europe, and that should be reinforced in the years to come.

Thank you for your attention.