



Message from the Director

from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon



Season's greetings and warm wishes for a peaceful 2023

(19.12.2022) As we reach the end of 2022, we look back on a year which has seen Europe face the trials of war, growing instability in food and energy supplies and ongoing social and economic challenges as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, our thoughts are with those most affected and we hope for more peaceful times ahead.

When I reflect on the past 12 months, I feel proud of the way in which the EMCDDA team has once again adapted to uncertainty and change in the European landscape and has worked to provide useful and relevant analyses to inform drug policy and practice.

A key area of focus for us this year has, of course, been the war in Ukraine, following the Russian invasion of the country in February. As one of nine EU agencies working in the area of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), the EMCDDA [contributed](#) to supporting EU Member States and institutions in responding to the conflict and helping those in need. We salute the neighbouring EU countries which have ensured a rapid humanitarian response, providing urgent health and social support to those fleeing the country.

The EMCDDA played a part by publishing a trendspotter study looking at how EU countries are responding specifically to the needs of displaced persons who use drugs (PWUD) and how they can be better prepared for the future. We also developed an '[EMCDDA 4 Ukraine – Health Preparedness Hub](#)', offering resources for health professionals who provide services for those displaced by the war. It was fitting that the [Lisbon Addictions 2022](#) conference, of which the EMCDDA was a co-organiser, should end with a keynote speech '[Providing care in a time of war — perspectives from Ukraine](#)'.

In 2022, we continued to monitor the drug situation in the context of COVID-19. Our [European Drug Report 2022](#) described the rapid [bounce back](#) of drug supply and use following the disruption of the pandemic. The [European Web Survey on Drugs](#) also provided us with valuable information on emerging trends and changing patterns of use during periods of lockdown.

Contributing to a more secure Europe, we teamed up with Europol this year to release our latest in-depth analysis of the drug market. Two [new analyses](#) on the [cocaine](#) and [methamphetamine](#) markets point to increased production activities in Europe and how collaboration between criminal groups worldwide is creating new security threats and expanding the market.

Our overall analysis of the drug situation in 2022 can be summarised in three words: [Everywhere](#), [Everything](#), [Everyone](#). Established drugs have never been so accessible, and potent new substances continue to emerge. Today, almost anything with psychoactive properties can be a drug, as the lines blur between licit and illicit substances. And everyone can be affected, whether directly or indirectly, as drug problems exacerbate most of the other important health and social challenges we face today.

We see the new drugs market continuing to undergo significant change, with novel and toxic substances putting consumers at greater risk. This year marked the [25th anniversary](#) of the EU Early Warning System on new psychoactive substances (NPS), a key mechanism to detect and respond to NPS and the threats they pose to Europe.

I firmly believe that we can only address the complex policy issues in the drugs field if we base our responses on a balanced and evidence-based understanding of the problem. One of the most critical challenges for today and tomorrow is developing and maintaining inclusive drug policies based on respect for fundamental rights.

There is a growing acknowledgement in the EU of the need to associate people who use drugs with the design of responses and interventions. Recent developments in the drug situation and the broader range of substances used call for adopting a more holistic and comprehensive approach.

Throughout 2022, with the invaluable and unconditional support of the French and Czech EU presidencies of the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament, great progress has been made in preparing for the new EMCDDA mandate in 2024. This will give the new EU Drugs Agency stronger capacity for analysis and monitoring, better preparedness through health alerts and security threat assessments and a stronger international role. I am confident that this will put us in an optimal position to address the current and future challenges related to illicit drugs in the EU.

It has been an honour and a privilege to lead the agency at this time. I would like to thank the EMCDDA staff, Reitox national focal points, our Management Board and Scientific Committee, the EU institutions and our external partners for their support and dedication throughout the year.

With gratitude, I send you all Season's greetings and warm wishes for a peaceful 2023!