



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Launch of the European Drug Report 2016: Trends and Developments

31 May 2016

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

Dear Chair,

Dear Alexis,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to visit today, both the city of Lisbon and the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction. My presence today, here, proves my personal commitment to the fight against one of the most longstanding threats for our societies.

Today we launch the annual European Drug Report. The significant progress achieved by the Agency over all these years has resulted in a comprehensive understanding of the EU drug situation. This report is a key tool for all of us to assess, to shape policies, and to implement actions to address challenges.

Dear Friends,

This year's Report confirms that the drugs problem in the EU is not diminishing.

There are new products, new patterns of use, new markets, and therefore, new health risks. As a matter of fact, health risks linked to high-potency products have increased.

The number of new substances continues to grow and overdose deaths are unfortunately on the rise.

Just in 2015, 100 new substances were reported for the first time. 70% of the new psychoactive substances we monitor have been detected in the last five years alone. As these substances increase, so do also the harms, especially the harms affecting young people.

This requires a clear, strong, coherent and immediate answer at European and national level.

We need to reinforce the Early Warning System and the Risk Assessment. I hope the Agency will play, in future, a bigger role. Once adopted by the European Parliament and the Council a EU Directive will deal with the incrimination of harmful psychoactive substances.

These steps will finally allow to make decisive progress and to have swifter decision-making on new psychoactive substances at European level.

Allow me now to address another major concern highlighted in the Report. And this has to do with the new markets, the new avenues for the drugs trade that criminals find by abusing the Internet as a medium.

Unfortunately, the Internet allows the supply of drugs to be done without any physical interaction. Supply chains therefore become shorter, easier, and costs go down. This is where our monitoring should become more systematic and more sophisticated.

Our work with the Member States, the International community and the industry, about what happens in online drug markets, has to be stepped up. In fact, the Internet industry can also help by working with law enforcement.

That is why, within the framework of the EU Internet Forum, we are organising an expert meeting next week on how, exactly, to tackle the online drug trade.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Criminal activities such as the drugs trade, smuggling, trafficking, and even terrorism, are mutually reinforcing. Linkages are becoming more and more apparent. Some of the Brussels terrorist attackers had previous drugs convictions on their CV. Our fight against organised crime can only be effective if it is smart, multi-faceted and comprehensive.

We can make a difference by cooperating more closely, exchanging more information, by trusting each other more. I said this after the Paris and Brussels attacks in relation to terrorism. I say this in relation with our fight against smugglers who put migrants life at risk.

Only last week up to 700 migrants are estimated to have died in the Central Mediterranean. Dealing with criminality linked to drugs is a cross-border issue and requires a more coordinated European approach, trust among all stakeholders and cooperation with countries outside the EU.

This is the only way to protect the Union, citizens and migrants from those very dangerous criminals.

At the same time, as the drugs phenomenon is a global challenge, it requires global and comprehensive engagement. At the UN General Assembly on the World Drug Problem, we were firm and united in promoting balanced and evidence-based approaches to drug policies.

We are pleased to see that the outcome of this Assembly reflects many of the objectives promoted by the EU. We will now call on all partners to ensure that the commitments taken at UNGASS are implemented.

We will also work in the same united and robust way on the preparation of the review in 2019 of the UN Political Declaration on drugs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Once again I would like to welcome the European Drug Report for 2016 and congratulate the Agency for its efforts. I am fully committed to working with you, the Member States and our international partners to strengthen our fight against drugs in all its aspects.

For our youth, our citizens, our society.

Thank you