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understanding the dynamics, nature and scale of drug use in europe

EMCDDA conference: 20 years of monitoring and communicating evidence on drugs

(18.9.2015, LISBON) Understanding the dynamics, nature and scale of drug use in Europe, including lessons learnt and challenges for the future, will be the thrust of an EMCDDA technical conference being held in Lisbon from 21–22 September (1). The event, organised ahead of *Lisbon Addictions 2015* (2), commemorates the EU agency’s 20 years of monitoring and communicating evidence on drugs (3).

Building on national and early European-level activities, the EMCDDA has worked for the last two decades to establish and develop mechanisms to monitor Europe’s drug problems. At the heart of its activity have been efforts to enhance the comparability of drug information across Europe and to devise the standards, methods and tools required to achieve this. Among the agency’s core achievements are its five key epidemiological indicators (KI), supported by EMCDDA expert groups, which allow countries to describe in a ‘common language’ the extent and nature of drug use and its consequences (4).

This event will bring together over 180 experts from across the globe including representatives of: the EMCDDA KI expert networks; the Reitox focal points; and other technical domains covered by the agency. The event will further the agency’s ongoing efforts to inspire cross-discipline, multi-indicator analyses of the drugs problem and the sharing of perspectives from different technical domains.

**EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz** says: ‘Over the years, the EMCDDA has supported the development of Europe-wide surveillance systems to carry out regular and sustained monitoring of developments in the drugs field, as well as early-warning mechanisms to ensure rapid responses to new substances. It is an imposing feat that the fledgling monitoring instruments established 20 years ago have now matured into a comprehensive European system recognised worldwide’.

A packed two-day agenda will feature over 70 interventions, eight sessions and 11 workshops. Issues covered will include: maximising the value of information collected; incorporating new tools and topics; and ensuring that the European drug monitoring system remains fit for purpose in the face of new challenges. The final workshop will focus on ‘Making monitoring data speak louder to policy and more clearly to inform best practice’.

The conference aims to reflect on past successes but also to be forward-looking. Key issues to help the EMCDDA better achieve its aims include: increased data quality and comparability; improved timeliness; better identification of emerging trends; faster and more sensitive monitoring approaches; and the integration of traditional and new monitoring methods (e.g. wastewater analysis, internet surveys). The ultimate aim of this milestone event will be to contribute to reducing drug-related harms through better informed and faster evaluated policies.

**Notes**

(1) The full programme is available at [www.emcdda.europa.eu/events/2015/20-years](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/events/2015/20-years)

This technical expert meeting is a closed event. However, media interviews may be scheduled via press@emcdda.europa.eu (2) [www.lisbonaddictions.eu/start](http://www.lisbonaddictions.eu/start) — [www.lisbonaddictions.eu/start#pressRelease](http://www.lisbonaddictions.eu/start#pressRelease)

(3) [www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2015/20-years-monitoring](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2015/20-years-monitoring) (4) [www.emcdda.europa.eu/activities/key-indicators](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/activities/key-indicators)