



PRESS RELEASE

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

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EMCDDA 1998 *Annual Report* covers new ground

The EMCDDA's 1998 *Annual Report on the State of the Drugs Problem in the European Union* will be launched at 10h00 on 18 December 1998 in Vienna. The Report relates to the situation in 1997. A press conference will follow the presentation. Limited copies of the *Report* are available to journalists on request from the EMCDDA. 'Summary and Highlights' of the *Report* in various EU languages will be available from 18h00 on 17 December at: <http://www.emcdda.org> **The report and its highlights are embargoed until 18 December 1998. There is no embargo on the contents of this release.**

This year, in addition to regular chapters on issues such as prevalence of drug use in the European Union, demand reduction practices and national strategies, the *Annual Report on the State of the Drugs Problem in the European Union* carries two new chapters.

The first of these enlarges the geographical scope of the *Report* by examining, for the first time, the nature and extent of drug use in the 13 Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs)¹ participating in the European Commission's Phare Project (of which 10 are accession countries to the EU). The chapter dedicated to the CEECs provides a picture of problems associated with the consumption, traffic and transit of illicit drugs in each nation. Over the last two years, within the framework of the Phare Programme, the EMCDDA has forged a closer relationship with the CEECs. This has led to the creation, in most countries, of National Focal Points which play an increasingly active role in the Centre's work programmes and in improving the quality, reliability and comparability of information on drugs gathered in the region. Like their counterparts in the EU, the Focal Points in the CEECs compiled *National Reports* to feed the EMCDDA information system.

The second new chapter analyses public spending on drugs in the EU. Here the EMCDDA aims to study the financial impact of drug policies in the EU and to analyse the breakdown of public expenditure on drug matters. The 3 domains considered in the chapter are: enforcement and control; treatment (particularly health costs related to AIDS) and prevention.

In this year's chapter on *Trends, Patterns and Prevalence of Drug Use*, a new distinction is made between current trends (based on informed opinions and qualitative measures on the most recent events) and key epidemiological indicators (which provide slightly less up-to-date records of drug trends but scientifically more reliable and valid data). The overall objective is to employ a variety of methodologies in establishing a wide-ranging series of images of drug activity and responses. The chapter on *Demand Reduction* considers new projects, while promoting a philosophy of innovation married to systematic and scientific evaluation.

Further chapters cover: *National Strategies*, with a comparative analysis of drug laws within the EU; *Action taken by the European Union*, outlining changes in EU spending over the past year; and *International Action*, providing an up-to-date account of the recent work of the main international bodies to combat the drugs problem.

The EMCDDA's *Annual Report* is a key reference document for understanding the major features of drug problems and the legal, political and social responses to them initiated within the EU. In the words of EMCDDA, Director Georges Estievenart, the report is: '...central to the continued advancement of a concerted knowledge base on which to build a strategic approach to drug policy within and beyond the European Union'.

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¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.