



# PRESS RELEASE

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

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## EMCDDA welcomes German drugs co-ordinator to Lisbon

On 11 February, at the start of a two-day fact-finding visit to Portugal, Christa Nickels, German National Drugs Co-ordinator and Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health, visited the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), Lisbon.

With Germany currently holding the presidency of the European Council, the purpose of Ms Nickels' visit to Portugal was to gather information on the drug problem in Europe in general, and in Portugal in particular. Her main interest was the EMCDDA's work on comparable information across the European Union Member States. Through the information and data it provides, the Centre's *Annual Report on the State of the Drug Problem in the European Member States* offers a unique overall picture of the actual situation in the 15 Member States.

The Director of the EMCDDA, Georges Estievenart, introduced the activities of the Centre to the German delegation, demonstrating the Centre's various systems for collecting, analysing and disseminating information.

Ms Nickels was very impressed by the presentation of the EMCDDA's Three-Year Work Programme (1998–2000). She expressed an interest in hearing how information collected at a local and regional level could be used to achieve a complete European overview. Ways of collecting data often varied across Europe and she observed that it could not always be easy to collect information in the form required. The overlap between the use of licit and illicit drugs was also discussed within the context of the Centre's overall remit as was the need to maintain the Centre's scientific independence from European law enforcement bodies. Mrs Nickels commented that the work of the Centre was of great interest to policy makers and welcomed the opportunity to hear about its tasks and objectives in such detail.

Ms Nickels' visit continues today with meetings with prominent figures in the drugs field in Portugal, including Deputy Prime Minister responsible for drugs, José Socrates, and Portuguese Under-Secretary for Health, Francisco Ventura Ramos. The German delegation will be accompanied by Portuguese National Drugs Co-ordinator, Alexandre Rosa.

The EMCDDA is one of 11 independent European Community agencies focusing on specific topics ranging from improving working conditions and the environment to combating racism and drugs. The Centre's mission is to provide Europe's citizens, drug practitioners and politicians with the information they need to take appropriate action on drugs and related problems. The EMCDDA's main tasks are: collecting and analysing existing information on drugs; improving data-comparison methods; disseminating this information; and co-operating with European and international bodies and organisations and with non-EU countries.

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