



# PRESS RELEASE

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

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Declaration from the EMCDDA on the occasion of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking – 26 June 1999

## **New draft European Action Plan to Combat Drugs: Promising news for the EMCDDA, says Director**

Following the European Commission's proposal for a European Union Action Plan to Combat Drugs (2000–2004), tabled in a communication to the European Council and Parliament on 26 May, EMCDDA Director Georges Estievenart welcomes the Plan's innovative ideas.

Commenting on the draft this week at a meeting of national drug centres (REITOX network) in Lisbon, the Director stated that the Plan 'puts forward a number of new and significant elements in the areas of information, evaluation, research and co-ordination on drugs which are of immediate interest to the EMCDDA and directly linked to its ongoing work programme'.

In particular, the Director welcomed one of the Plan's five key objectives, namely: 'to ensure the collection, analysis and dissemination of objective, reliable and comparable data on the drugs phenomenon in the EU with the support of the EMCDDA'. Estievenart applauded 'the importance attributed to reliable information on drugs as a basis for sound political decisions', an issue also underlined last year at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS). 'The agency greatly looks forward to the contribution it can make in this area, especially via the series of harmonised epidemiological indicators of drug use it is developing' said the Director. 'These indicators will increasingly be used as a model by the Central and Eastern European Countries and may provide a potentially interesting model to Latin America, another region where contacts with the Centre are increasing'.

The European draft Action Plan also calls for the regular evaluation of initiatives, programmes and policies launched over the 2000–2004 period, underlining that: 'Evaluation must be an integral part of the EU approach to fighting illicit drugs'. The EMCDDA, which has played a pioneering role in the evaluation of drug-prevention activities by developing a number of practical evaluation tools, is expected to provide considerable support in this domain. The Centre organised the 'First European Conference on the Evaluation of Drug Prevention' in March 1997 and is following up this initiative with a second conference on the topic to be held in December 1999 in Strasbourg in co-operation with the European Commission.

With regard to research, the draft proposal goes a step further than the current Action Plan (1995–1999) – which largely focuses on the biomedical aspects of drug misuse – to highlight additionally the socio-economic impact of the drugs phenomenon. Again, this aspect will be developed in close co-operation with the EMCDDA which is instituting pilot studies in the field. Finally, the Plan underlines that 'co-ordination is essential' due to the multi-faceted nature of the drugs phenomenon and calls for it to be enhanced at all levels and to involve all EU institutions and entities. Estievenart underlines the close link between information on drugs and co-ordination of anti-drug activities: 'Information is the fuel in the engine of national and European co-ordination on drugs. The more reliable and understandable the information provided, the smoother and better the co-ordination'.

The draft Plan, which aims to achieve a global, multidisciplinary and integrated response to illicit drugs, is expected to be adopted during the Finnish presidency later this year following debates within and between the Council and Parliament. European Commissioner responsible for Justice and Home Affairs, Anita Gradin, who presented the proposal in Brussels, is scheduled to visit the EMCDDA in July where the Plan is likely to feature among topics for discussion between the Commissioner and Drug Co-ordinators from EU Member States.

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