



# **PRESS RELEASE**

**European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction**

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## **EMCDDA Informal Drugs Forum on Draft European Action Plan to Combat Drugs: Gradin highlights role of national drug co-ordinators**

European Commissioner Anita Gradin, participating today in an informal Drugs Forum in Lisbon, pointed to the important role of the EU Member States' national drug co-ordinators in the implementation of the fourth European Action Plan to Combat Drugs (2000–2004).<sup>1</sup> The involvement of the co-ordinators in the course of the Plan would be particularly valuable, she said, in view of their unique overview of individual national drug strategies and policies.

The Commissioner, currently responsible for Justice and Home Affairs, delivered this statement during her presentation of the draft Action Plan at the EMCDDA. Commenting on evaluation, one of the key topics covered by the Plan, Mrs Gradin underlined the need to develop rapidly a 'specific methodology' to evaluate the Action Plan, in general, and the programmes and activities being carried out at national and EU level, in particular. She referred to the considerable amount of 'knowledge and experience in our Member States to assist such as process' and the need for 'proper political mobilisation, adequate resources and a certain amount of strategic planning'. The national co-ordinators had an important part to play here, she said.

The Commissioner's words won wide support at the meeting particularly from French and German national drugs co-ordinators Nicole Maestracci and Christa Nickels and Deputy UK Anti-drugs Co-ordinator Mike Trace. The UK delegate called for 'improved co-ordination at top level between Member States on drugs in the form of annual meetings between the countries' co-ordinators'. Trace agreed that the Action Plan should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the quality of activities matched the quality of the document itself.

'The European Commission believes that a European Union anti-drug strategy must promote and safeguard a well-balanced policy of interdiction supported by a strong social and preventive commitment and extensive international co-operation' stated the Commissioner at the Forum. The Plan, which proposes a 'global, multidisciplinary and integrated approach to drugs', was broadly praised by the 13 national representatives present. Constructive improvements included increased reference to poly-drug use and the social aspects of the drugs problem. The delegates also felt that the Plan's emphasis on the rise of new synthetic drug use overshadowed other problem drugs such as heroin and cocaine.

An exchange of views was held in the afternoon session on: the evaluation of activities and performance indicators; information on the drug phenomenon and harmonised epidemiological indicators; national and European co-ordination; and integrating research into the fight against drugs.

Particularly relevant to the EMCDDA were the Commissioner's comments stressing the importance of developing Member States' information capacities. '...information in the field of drugs is a highly politicised issue' she said. 'It is also crucial if we are looking for consistency and continuity in our actions'. She commented on the much improved overview of the drug situation in the EU, thanks to efforts by the EMCDDA in bridging the differences between existing information systems in the Member States. Nevertheless there were still 'white spots' on the map, she said.

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