



NEWS RELEASE from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

26 JUNE: INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING EU calls for 'common language' to describe drug-related crime

(25.6.2007, LISBON) Ensuring a high level of security for the general public is prominent on the European policy agenda and stepping up work to prevent drug-related crime is one of the key goals of the current EU drugs action plan (2005–2008). But, before countries can measure the extent of such crime, or assess the impact of measures to counter it, they must first agree on a common language to describe the problem.

This issue is taken up by the **EU drugs agency (EMCDDA)** in the latest edition of its policy briefing ***Drugs in focus*** ⁽¹⁾, released on **International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking** (26 June).

EMCDDA Chairman Marcel Reimen comments: 'Adopting a clear definition of drug-related crime is an essential first step if we are to develop the methodologies needed to assess, not only the true extent of this problem, but also the impact of our policies and actions.'

The year 2007 is the deadline set by the drugs action plan for presenting a common European definition of 'drug-related crime'. The European Commission is expected to propose such a definition to the Council of the EU at the end of this year based on studies brought forward by the **EMCDDA**.

Today's briefing, one of the resources to be submitted to the Commission, puts forward elements for a definition of 'drug-related crime' encompassing four categories:

- psychopharmacological crimes — committed under the influence of a psychoactive substance;
- economic–compulsive crimes — committed to obtain money (or drugs) to support drug use;
- systemic crimes — committed within the functioning of illicit drug markets (as part of the business of drug supply, distribution and use);
- drug law offences — committed in violation of drug laws (and other related) legislations.

At present, routine data in the EU are only collected on the last type of crime and even then are gathered through very different reporting practices. Data on the first three types of crime are rare or patchy, usually gathered through ad hoc local studies.

EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz says: 'In the same way that we have developed common European methods to monitor and describe other aspects of the drug problem — such as drug-related deaths — we must now turn to developing reliable instruments to assess the extent of, and trends in, drug-related crime. Agreeing on a common conceptual framework to describe the problem and to explore the relationship between drugs and crime will give us the foundation we need to talk with confidence in future about this complex phenomenon'.

Drug law offences increased in the majority of the EU Member States in the period 2000–2005. The proportion of those involving cocaine in particular rose over the same five-year period.

‘Your life. Your community. No place for drugs’

International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking is designed to underline the international nature of the drugs problem. The theme chosen by the UN to mark the occasion this year is ‘*Do drugs control your life?*’⁽²⁾. With the slogan ‘*Your life. Your community. No place for drugs*’, we are invited to reflect on the impact of illicit drugs, not only on those using them, but also on the wider society in which we live.

Wolfgang Götz says: ‘Sadly today, drugs affect all our communities, both at home in Europe and way beyond its borders. Responding to problems caused by the production, trafficking and use of drugs is a challenge and a responsibility we all share, whether we are working at international or local level’.

The **EMCDDA** will mark this International day with an awareness-raising event for the Lisbon diplomatic community and its partners from the Portuguese authorities. The **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** will be launching its *2007 World Drug Report*.

Portuguese drug coordinator and President of the *Instituto da Droga e da Toxicodependência* (IDT), **Dr João Goulão** visits the **EMCDDA** on 25 June to give a presentation to staff on the forthcoming events in the field of drugs planned for the Portuguese Presidency of the EU which begins this Sunday.

Notes:

⁽¹⁾ *Drugs in focus* No 16: ‘Drugs and crime — a complex relationship’. Available in over 20 languages at: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/?nnodeID=439>

⁽²⁾ For more on this International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking, see the UNODC website at: http://www.unodc.org/unodc/event_2007_06_26_1.html

For data on drug-related crime, see the 2006 EMCDDA *Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in Europe* at: <http://ar2006.emcdda.europa.eu/en/page005-en.html#4.6>

The contents of this news release are intended for publication/broadcast by the media on the morning of Tuesday 26 June.