



## NEWS RELEASE from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

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### RUSSIAN DELEGATION VISITS EU DRUGS AGENCY

#### **EU's largest neighbour exchanges know-how with EMCDDA**

(6.5.2004, Lisbon) A high-level Russian delegation is visiting the EU drugs agency, the EMCDDA, in Lisbon this week for an exchange of experience and know-how in the area of data collection and drug information systems.

The meeting comes two weeks after EU Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs António Vitorino visited Moscow for talks with President Vladimir Putin's special aid on security issues, Victor Ivanov.

The two-day meeting in Lisbon is a Russian initiative, which takes place in the context of the 1999 'Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia' (1999/414/CFSP). In a chapter on 'Common challenges on the European continent', this strategy specifies, among others, that the EU will cooperate with Russia in the fight against organised crime, money laundering and illicit traffic in human beings and drugs.

It intends to do so specifically '...by increasing the cooperation and exchange of experts between Member States and Russia in the context of combating organised crime, including in the field of the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts as well as in the field of prevention. This shall be achieved in cooperation with the European Commission and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction'.

An EU action plan 'Common Action for the Russian Federation on Combating Organised Crime' – which takes into account the current EU drug strategy (2000–2004) – was also adopted in 2000 (2000/C 106/02).

Preparations are currently underway for a Federal programme on drugs for 2005–2009. Meanwhile, on Monday, the 25 EU Member States will meet in Dublin to chart the course of EU action on drugs from 2005 onwards. The Dublin conference will be a key input into the new EU drug strategy as will an ongoing evaluation of the 2000–2004 strategy by the European Commission and its partners.

The present delegation is headed by Mr. Alexey S. Sedov, First Deputy Director of the newly established Federal Service for Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Traffic Control. This new Federal coordination agency on drugs, set up following a presidential decision in March 2003, reflects the priority attributed to the drugs problem in Russia. The 40,000-strong body is responsible for the creation of a national monitoring system of the drug situation in Russia on the basis of statistical rates, analyses, intelligence, social studies data, population surveys and expert conclusions. It is authorised to control traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and counts among its tasks demand-reduction initiatives and the development of a unified database on drug-related crime and offences 'including all types of information linked to the drug problem'.

After several years of preparatory activities and cooperation with the EU's 10 new members, the European Commission and the EMCDDA have been instrumental in helping them develop balanced national drug strategies, set up inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms and create national Reitox focal points and drug information networks.

The agency shared this experience with the visiting delegation as well as its expertise in defining and implementing a set of harmonised indicators to monitor the drug phenomenon. The Russian delegation provided an overview of the drug situation nationally as well as information on data-collection practices.

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The participants at the meeting expressed their satisfaction with common drug monitoring approaches in the EU Member States and the Russian Federation.

The head of the delegation, Mr Sedov, expressed his gratitude for the information and documentation presented by the EMCDDA, particularly methodological information on the agency's key epidemiological indicators, which are now central to drug monitoring in the EU. These documents will be used in the Russian Federation to develop the national monitoring system, which will gather and analyse information and apply it in the prevention of drug addiction and counteracting drug-related organised crime.

The delegation will continue talks this week with the Portuguese authorities.