



NEWS RELEASE from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

PORTUGUESE HEAD OF STATE VISITS EMCDDA

President expresses confidence in Portuguese response to drugs

(21.12.2005 LISBON) His Excellency the **President of the Portuguese Republic, Mr Jorge Sampaio**, visited the **EU drugs agency (EMCDDA)** in Lisbon today for an insight into the latest trends and developments in the drug situation in Europe and in Portugal in particular.

Meeting with **EMCDDA Chairman Marcel Reimen, Director Wolfgang Götz** and the agency's scientific staff, the President praised the important work of the agency in collecting, analysing and disseminating objective information on drugs in the European Union for the purpose of sound decision-making.

Commenting on the European and national drug situations, the President said: 'The enlargement of the European Union has presented new challenges, new complexities, new borders and new drug prevalence patterns. To face these hurdles, decision-makers in Europe have now moved beyond responding to the problem in an ideological way, to formulating policies according to sound scientific bases, such as those offered by the EMCDDA'.

The President added: 'There have been encouraging signs of progress in Portugal over the last decade, particularly in expanding treatment and other drug services. Compared with other European countries, drug use among young people in Portugal is still relatively low and there are signs that our recognised heroin problem is now stabilising. I have full confidence in the structures in place nationally which respond to the drugs problem on a daily basis'.

This was the President's fourth visit to the **EMCDDA**. Previous visits took place in 1997 (*EMCDDA Annual report* launch) and in 1999, when he was accompanied by President Jacques Chirac of France and King Albert of the Belgians.

During this morning's visit, the issue of the future headquarters of the **EMCDDA** and European Maritime Safety Agency (**EMSA**) – the second EU agency to be located in Lisbon – was addressed. **Wolfgang Götz** underlined the importance of installing both agencies simultaneously, and with the same conditions, before the end of November 2007 as scheduled. The premises will be located at Av. Ribeira das Naus (Cais do Sodré).

Also present at today's meeting were:

- Portuguese Minister of Health, Mr. António Correia de Campos;
- Chairperson of the Portuguese Parliamentary Committee for Health, Ms. Maria de Belém Roseira;
- President of the Portuguese Institute for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Mr. João Goulão; and
- Portuguese National Coordinator for HIV/AIDS infection, Mr. Henrique Barros.

Further details on the work of the EMCDDA, and a copy of this news release in Portuguese, are available at: <http://www.emcdda.eu.int>

For information on the recently published *2005 Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in Europe* and related products see <http://annualreport.emcdda.eu.int>
