# 20 years

# Monitoring | Communicating evidence | Informing policy

2015

In 2015, the EMCDDA commemorates 20 years of monitoring the drugs problem in Europe. Over the last two decades, much has changed in the extent and nature of the phenomenon and the Centre's work has developed to keep pace with this complexity. When the agency opened in 1995, with a staff of 17, the EU had 15 Member States and was in the midst of a heroin epidemic, with drug policy largely driven by HIV transmissions and AIDS-related and overdose deaths. Today, the range of substances being monitored is far broader, policy drivers have diversified, the EMCDDA has a 100-strong team and the EU has grown to 28 Member States.

One of the agency's key achievements of the first 20 years is the development of Europe-wide surveillance systems, to carry out regular and sustained monitoring of developments in the drugs field, as well as early-warning mechanisms to ensure rapid responses to new substances. These systems mean that the Centre can today talk with confidence on drug problems evolving across the Union, in order to inform policy discussions and responses at national, regional and local level. These developments have been enhanced through joint efforts with our European, national and international partners, in particular the EU institutions and the Reitox network of focal points.

Over the years, the EMCDDA has improved the comparability of drug information across the EU and devised the standards and methods needed to achieve this. Starting from very limited, disparate and incomplete data, we now have a more homogenous, complete view. In particular, the agency's five key indicators allow countries to use a 'common language' when describing drug use, its effects and consequences. To deepen insight and increase the timeliness of information, the agency has broadened its repertoire of monitoring methods in recent years by employing internet monitoring, wastewater analysis and 'trendspotter' methodology to assess new trends and patterns of use.

Central to the work of the EMCDDA throughout this period has been its close collaboration with key stakeholders, including the EU Member States, other European agencies, organisations active in the field of drugs and relevant third countries. This has allowed the agency to create synergies, drive the exchange of knowledge and contribute to developments.

The tough economic climate of recent years has created a new difficulty: how to achieve more, but with fewer funds. Facing this head on has made the EMCDDA stronger and more efficient, ready to embrace the future.

For the last 20 years, the EMCDDA has demonstrated its ability to act as a catalyst for data collection and strategic analysis in a policy area that cuts across crime, health and security issues, both in Europe and worldwide. The agency is now seen as a reliable partner and is an internationally recognised centre of excellence.

As the EMCDDA looks to the future, it will build on the considerable progress made so far. We now have a regional information system that is unique in the world. We must continue to gain a better understanding of the global dimension of the drugs problem we face in Europe, whilst developing quicker responses to emerging challenges through early-warning and threat-assessment activities. The rigour of the agency's work, a core element of its added value, will ensure that the EMCDDA is ready to meet its upcoming challenges.

Through their actions, the agency's highly experienced and multidisciplinary staff will help to make the EU a safer and healthier place to live. Making full use of the new communication channels we have available will be key to creating better engagement with our audiences and maintaining the high standards set by the agency during its 20-year history.

First statutory publications launched: Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in Europe and General report of activities

# 1998

United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs EMCDDA signs Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (now UNODC)

EMCDDA signs Memorandum of Understanding with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)

First report on the drug situation in the candidate Central and Eastern **European Countries** 

10 new countries join the EMCDDA following EU enlargement (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)

# 2006

President of the European Commission José Manuel Durão Barroso visits EMCDDA

First EMCDDA-Europol Annual Report on the implementation of Council Decision 2005/387/JHA on new psychoactive substances

Launch of the Best practice portal

Wolfgang Götz begins second term as Director of the agency (5 years)

First European drugs summer school (EMCDDA-ISCTE)

# 2014

President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz visits EMCDDA Turkey joins the EMCDDA

Georges Estievenart (France) is first EMCDDA Director (served two terms, until end 2004)

Inauguration of the EMCDDA headquarters in Lisbon

Joint action concerning the information exchange, risk assessment and control of new synthetic drugs

Early-warning system on new drugs established

## 1999

EMCDDA and the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe sign Memorandum of Understanding

Council Resolution on the implementation of the five EMCDDA key epidemiological indicators on drugs

Norway joins the EMCDDA

Four new synthetic drugs placed under control measures in the FU Member States, following risk assessment in 2002

# 2005

Wolfgang Götz appointed Director of the agency (5 years) Council Decision 2005/387/JHA on the information exchange, risk-assessment and control of new psychoactive substances

EMCDDA founding regulation recast with the aim of helping the agency better respond to new challenges in the drugs field

Bulgaria and Romania join the EMCDDA following EU enlargement

# 2009

EMCDDA 15-year conference: 'Identifying Europe's information needs for effective drug policy' held in Lisbon

'Community agencies — partners in accession' conference for candidate and potential candidate countries held in Sintra

First EMCDDA trendspotter meeting on recent shocks in the European heroin market

EMCDDA launches scientific paper award

First EU drug markets report (EMCDDA-Europol)

New, interactive European Drug Report package launched (revamp of former Annual report)

Croatia joins the EMCDDA following EU enlargement

EMCDDA 20 years of monitoring event Lisbon Addictions 2015 conference

Alexis Goosdeel elected Director of the agency (5 years)