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**39th meeting
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Work programme for 2009

Formal opinion of the Scientific Committee

Formal opinion of the Scientific Committee on the 2010-2012 work programme of the EMCDDA

1. General overview

The Scientific Committee welcomes the 2010-2012 work programme, which follows up on the previous three-year work programme, thus ensuring sustainability, but also refocuses on specific developments, and introduces new and complementary issues. The work programme is ambitious and therefore it is important that clear priorities are identified, and that the core activities of the agency are adequately supported. Nonetheless, the committee recognises the need to take forward new areas of work within the constraints provided by the available resources.

The work programme adequately takes into account the existing framework, namely, the recast of the EMCDDA founding regulation of 2007, the EU Drug Strategy (2005-2012) and the challenges of the EU Drugs Action Plan (2009-2012), as well as the requirements of Council Decision 2000/5/387/JHA on the information exchange, risk-assessment and control of new psychoactive substances.

2. Specific comments

The objectives of the work programme build on and reflect the experience and the longstanding work of the EMCDDA. It is important to enhance capacity to undertake further analysis of the existing data sets.

Overall the Committee noted the importance of supply and supply reduction as areas of work requiring development, and welcomed their inclusion in the work programme. However, the Scientific Committee recognises the difficulties in collecting information in this area and notes the relative weakness of current drug-related criminal justice information. In particular, the EMCDDA should avoid duplication of work done elsewhere and should exert particular focus on good quality and scientifically robust projects, which will add significantly to the body of knowledge on supply reduction.

The stream of work of the early warning system and risk assessment have been very productive and the Committee recommends continued development of this area of work.

The Committee notes the importance given in the work programme in identifying new trends and reporting information in a timely manner. It is clear that rapid responses are important to feed into policy development. To carry credibility and have impact at the policy level it is important that findings are scientifically sound and measured.

A common theme running through the work programme is the need for more in-depth analysis and this is welcomed by the Scientific Committee. It recommends that further exploration be undertaken of the potential for comparative analysis at a country and regional level. Further, it proposes that analyses of policy developments and their impact be carried out where possible, in particular where

policy-induced or other changes can be exploited in order to understand some of the dynamics of the developments occurring.

The Committee welcomes the focus on poly-drug use and prisons. In the area of demand and demand reduction, as well as focusing on prevention and treatment, harm reduction and social integration at the individual level, there is a need to develop work on families and communities who are also affected by drugs problems.

Another theme elaborated in the work programme is the need for evidence-based policy and practice. The Scientific Committee fully endorses this approach but encourages the EMCDDA to work in partnership with national and international bodies interested in this area. However, the Committee also recognises the difficulty of coming to firm conclusions in some of the more complex areas of the drugs field. The Committee supports the further development of work promoting best practice.

Mention is made in the work programme of the need to better incorporate qualitative studies into the overall work of the EMCDDA. The Committee is of the view that such qualitative work is important in both supply reduction and demand reduction to understand important differences across a wide range of cultures.

The Centre's excellent work needs to be made more available to the wider scientific community. To this end qualitative and quantitative studies and analyses produced by the Centre need to be incorporated in the scientific communication channels through publishing in peer-reviewed scientific journals across a range of disciplines. Promoting this should be a matter of prioritisation. The Centre needs to provide adequate support to staff and to structure the work process in a manner conducive to this aim.

The Scientific Committee welcomes the opportunity to be closely involved in the work of the EMCDDA, namely in enhancing the overall scientific quality of the implementation of the work programme. To this end, the Scientific Committee would value being involved early on, in order to make a meaningful contribution. The Committee underlines the importance of good planning and effective communication in order to ensure that it can fulfil its commitments,

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Scientific Committee notes that the work programme is ambitious and will require careful prioritisation in the annual work programmes. Overall, it is the Committee's opinion that the work programme is pragmatic and scientifically sound and it commits itself to fully engage, as individual members and as a body, to support the EMCDDA and its staff with all its means and possibilities in the fulfilment of the 2010-2012 work programme.

16 June 2009