



European Union
Statement on the occasion of the
Intersessional Meeting 16-18 October 2017
Commission on Narcotic Drugs 60th session
Vienna, 17 October 2017

Chapter 5: Operational recommendations on cross-cutting issues in addressing and countering the world drug problem: evolving reality, trends and existing circumstances, emerging and persistent challenges and threats, including new psychoactive substances, in conformity with the three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments.

Madam Chair, Mr Facilitator,

The European Union and its Member States wish to thank you for organising this intersessional meeting in which we can share our best practises as regards cross-cutting issues in addressing the world drug problem. We recognize the need to effectively respond to the evolving reality, trends and existing circumstances through comprehensive, integrated and balanced drug control policies set out in the UNGASS recommendations.

Nowadays, we are more concerned with the emergence and spread of new psychoactive substances as ever before. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction currently monitors more than 600 new substances out of which 80% were detected in the last 6 years. Although new drugs were reported to the EU Early Warning System at a rate of one per week in 2016, the overall number of new detections was lower than in previous years, 66 in total. This may be a positive sign, especially if this decline is sustained.

There are a number of reasons that may explain why the pace of new substances appearing on the market may be slowing. Some European countries have introduced the so called blanket bans, generic and analogue based legislation and other measures to target the producers and retailers of new psychoactive substances. In addition, control measures and law enforcement operations in China targeting laboratories producing new substances may be an influencing factor.

Despite the evidence of some success, we are worried about the appearance of new potent opioids, mainly fentanyl derivatives, on the market. Lately there have been several outbreaks of overdose related deaths in vulnerable populations and among users who are injecting new psychoactive substances. Overall, 25 new opioids have been detected on Europe's drug market since 2009, of which nine were reported for the first time in 2016. This includes 18 fentanyls, eight of which were reported for the first time in 2016. Currently, the problem affects only a few Member States, and new fentanyls are still playing a relatively small role in Europe's drug market in general. However, trends show that their market share is consistently increasing. Member States confronted with the problem are reporting high rates of overdose related deaths and extensive health consequences. In 2016, the EMCDDA and Europol launched special investigations into acryloylfentanyl and furanylfentanyl, after signals were detected through the EU Early Warning System. More than 50 deaths were reported, many of which were attributed directly to these substances. In addition, the EMCDDA also issued five alerts to its network across Europe related to these and other new fentanyls.

The EU and its Member States have taken several measures to address the challenges posed by new psychoactive substances. Since 1997, the EU has developed capacity to detect, identify and assess the risks associated in order to respond rapidly and effectively to the emergence of new psychoactive substances by applying, if necessary, control measures. In the upcoming months, new legislation will be adopted in the EU, cutting by half the time needed to ban new psychoactive substances compared with the current EU procedure. The active cooperation of forensic laboratories, customs authorities, law enforcement and public health services, along with Europol, the EU's law enforcement agency, and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction will create a dynamic process of exchange of information and knowledge that enables us to respond effectively to this threat.

From lessons learnt in the past, we realize that the successful management of the situation of new psychoactive substances requires not only measures of control and supply reduction but

also demand and harm reduction. The prevention of and the response to the adverse health consequences and risks associated with the use of new psychoactive substances is a priority for the EU and its Member States. We emphasise the need for further research into and development of scientific evidence-based health responses and training to help those providing prevention, healthcare and social services to prevent and address the adverse health consequences associated with new psychoactive substances. In this respect, we welcome the adoption of CND resolution 60/4 in March this year, which requests that the UNODC and WHO and other relevant organizations, incorporate data on the health harms of these substances into the UNODC Early Warning Advisory database. We look forward to seeing the results from the UNODC and WHO.

The EU and its Member States acknowledge that it is important to address the emerging challenge of the use of the Internet in relation to drug-related activities. The EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment report for 2017 once again identifies Darknet as a key facilitator for various criminal activities, including the illicit trade in drugs. The number of illicit transactions of drugs on cryptomarkets has tripled, with revenues doubling since 2013. Total drug revenues on cryptomarkets during January 2016 were estimated between EUR 10.5 and EUR 18.5 million.

The rising number of illicit trafficking on the Internet also creates a new environment for demand reduction interventions. Finding ways to prevent and reduce drug use, and offer counselling, treatment and risk and harm reduction services in these settings seem to be a possible future path to take. Internet-based interventions have the potential to extend the reach and geographical coverage of treatment programmes to people experiencing drug use problems who may not otherwise access specialist drug services. In the EU and its Member States, a wide range of drug treatment interventions, including brief interventions for cannabis users, are provided online.

Madam Chair, Mr Facilitator, dear panellists,

The EU and its Member States believe that through our joint efforts we can effectively tackle the new challenges.

Thank you!