

## **Expert Working Group on improving drug statistics and strengthening the Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ)**

Vienna, 28-30 August 2019

Background paper I: Priorities for capacity building to improve drug information systems at country level and ARQ reporting

### **I. Introduction**

The objectives of this paper are to provide a list of priorities on improving drug statistics at the national level and building capacity in Member States for the years following the improvement and strengthening of the ARQ. This list has been developed taking into account discussions on this subject that took place at the previous Expert Working Group (EWG), Vienna, 29-31 January 2018 (see Background Paper I and Report of the meeting<sup>1</sup>).

The list of priorities below is presented for discussion among experts from Member States and international organizations participating in the forthcoming Expert Working Group (28-30 August, 2019).

### **II. Priorities for building capacity and improving drugs statistics at the national level**

#### **Priority A: Targeted regional and national capacity-building activities on producing, collecting and reporting drugs data**

Although issues of data quality and availability affect drug indicators generally, significant differences exist across regions. Dedicated regional capacity building trainings should be conducted, targeting specific regions in collaboration with relevant regional organisations and focused on generating, collecting, analysing, and reporting data on indicators of drug use and supply. These workshops would primarily address national priority needs and focus on strengthening international reporting mechanisms such as the ARQ.

During the 2018 EWG, experts identified a number of areas where capacity development is required, including:

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Drugs/Background\\_paper\\_session I -  
\\_Improving\\_drug\\_statistics\\_at\\_national\\_level.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Drugs/Background_paper_session_I_-_Improving_drug_statistics_at_national_level.pdf)  
[http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Drugs/2018EGM\\_Presentations/FinalReport.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Drugs/2018EGM_Presentations/FinalReport.pdf)

- coordination and harmonization among agencies producing data on supply,
- training of national experts/officials involved in the data collection process,
- the interpretation and analysis of data.

The focus of such activities would be adapted to the specific needs of each region.

### **Priority B: e-learning training modules**

In order to improve the capacity of Member States to report drugs data at international level, an integrated set of web-based training modules should be developed, targeting officials of the national agencies/institutions responsible for different areas of data production (supply, demand and related socio-economic aspects). In particular, a request was made to produce specific training curricula for national officials responsible for ARQ compilation.

### **Priority C: Methodological guidelines and tools on drug-related issues**

While some international standards on drug epidemiology already exist, the rapid emergence of new techniques and the evolution of those already existing requires that new methodological guidance be developed and/or updated.

During the previous EWG, population surveys on drug use were identified as the primary tool to produce high-quality data on prevalence of drug use. Experts recognized the need for methodological guidelines on the implementation of population surveys on drug use.

Additionally, experts identified the need to update existing tools on indirect methods to estimate drug prevalence and other indicators, develop guidelines for studies in prisons and to further develop the methodology for producing metrics based on wastewater analysis, among others.

### **Priority D: Promotion of national coordination mechanisms on drugs data, including national drug observatories**

During the previous EWG, experts agreed on the need to develop national coordination systems, with focal points from different agencies. This would allow for a maximum use of the information available at the national and sub-national levels, while facilitating reporting to regional and global data systems. Experts also agreed on the importance of establishing national drug observatories, as a vehicle to promote, coordinate and implement national data collection and analysis initiatives on all facets of the drug problem at the national level.

International and regional bodies should partner to promote the establishment of national drugs observatories, or other national coordination mechanisms. The development of methodological guidelines for establishing and managing national drug monitoring systems would improve effectiveness and efficiency of data collection processes and promote integrated analyses of drug data. Such guidelines would build on existing documents and practices, and they would provide step-by-step guidance when establishing national drug observatories, including:

- establishing data collection and data sharing procedures

- establishing standard procedures and methods
- assessing the quality and comprehensiveness of existing data,
- building the capacity of relevant specific institutions to generate data,
- establishing the required reporting mechanisms,
- developing national drug situation reports.

### **Priority E: Establishment of regional and global networks**

At the previous EWG, experts highlighted the importance of establishing regional and global networks to provide fora for technical and scientific discussion, sharing of good practices and for peer support. Such networks would promote the production and use of consistent, comprehensive and comparable data on drugs.

The regional networks will build on already existing mechanisms established by regional organizations, such as (but not limited to) EMCDDA, OAS, the African Union or ASEAN. At least one national focal point – with expertise and responsibility in producing drugs statistics - should represent each country that is part of the corresponding network in regular regional meetings, fora and discussions. National focal points should report back to other relevant actors at the national level and facilitate national processes to improve statistical data on drugs. Resources on contacts, guidelines and best practices will be shared among members through dedicated common platforms.

Additionally, a global network will be established to foster knowledge transfer across regions, with the same national focal points representing their respective countries. Regular meetings of focal points will be held to facilitate the exchange of ideas, best practices and discussions.

### **Priority F: Promotion of early warning systems on NPS, at national and regional levels**

Early warning systems (EWS) are an indispensable tool to detect and monitor NPS spread at various geographical levels. EWS should involve and link stakeholders from different sectors, such as health, law enforcement and forensics, and serve as a communication platform for the timely exchange of information on new psychoactive substances. As highlighted by experts during the previous EWG, the EWS serve as a tool to identify health risks and other threats posed by drugs early on and support decision-makers in taking appropriate measures to prepare for and/or counter emerging threats. Methodological guidance, technical and institutional support are issues where capacity building activities would be needed.