



## Commission proposes a new EU Action Plan on Drugs to enhance action against drug use and trafficking

Strasbourg, 15 March 2017

### The Commission is today proposing a new EU Action Plan on Drugs for the period 2017-2020.

Building on the findings of the evaluation of the EU Drugs Strategy for 2013-2020 and the Action Plan for 2013-2016, the new Action Plan on Drugs provides a strengthened response to the newly-emerging health and security challenges in the area of illicit drug use and trafficking. While maintaining and updating the core policy areas and cross-cutting themes of the overall EU Drugs Strategy, the new Action Plan identifies new priority areas for action, including the monitoring of new psychoactive substances as well as the use of new communication technologies for prevention of drug abuse and evidence gathering on the potential connection between drug trafficking and financing of terrorist groups, organised crime, migrant smuggling or trafficking in human beings.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"The use of illicit drugs continues to be a considerable challenge in many of our societies, affecting, directly and indirectly, the lives of millions of people in Europe and all over the world. The human, social but also economic costs of drugs addiction are very high. In a constantly evolving drugs market, reducing drugs use and demand requires an adequate and effective response through coordinated actions at both EU and Member States level. This is precisely what today's Action Plan does, building on our achievements so far and clearly outlining the actions and objectives in order to tackle the new health and security challenges for the future."*

Approximately 88 million adults in the EU, or almost one quarter of the adult population, are estimated to have tried illicit drugs in their lifetime. Over 17 million adults have tried cocaine and 12 million have tried amphetamines. In addition, 1.3 million adults are high-risk opioid users. EU citizens spend an estimated €24 billion every year on illicit drugs, making the illicit drugs market one of the most dynamic and lucrative criminal markets. More than one third of the criminal groups active in the EU are involved in the production, trafficking or distribution of various types of drugs according to Europol's 2017 Serious Organised Crime Threat Assessment. Over the past few years, new psychoactive substances (NPSs) have become increasingly available on the market, posing serious health threats. The Internet has the potential to further develop as a source of supply for NPSs. Moreover, Internet-facilitated drugs have also considerably impacted the mode of drugs trafficking.

Building on the findings of the mid-term assessment of the EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020 and the final evaluation of the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2013-2016, the new Action Plan proposes the following actions:

- **Drug demand reduction:** The Action Plan calls for enhanced use of information and communications technologies (ICT) for prevention purposes, such as awareness raising activities, targeting young people in particular. It also encourages measures to better address the needs of older drug users and vulnerable communities as well as focusing on the reduction of health and social harms caused by drug use.
- **Drug supply reduction:** In order to address the increase of new psychoactive substances (NPSs) across the EU, the Action Plan calls for a rapid adoption and swift implementation of the new legislative package on new psychoactive substances proposed by the Commission in August 2016. It also calls for the use of alternative sanctions for drug-using offenders.
- **Coordination:** The Action Plan suggests further steps for greater coherence and coordination between Council working groups to ensure coherence between demand and supply reduction activities as well as a more inclusive policy formulation process with the participation of civil society at both the EU and national levels.
- **International Cooperation:** An improved capacity of EU delegations is necessary to engage on drugs-related issues and networks at regional level. Greater focus should be placed on combating illegal drug crop cultivation and on enhancing alternative development. The EU should also explore ways of engaging with other countries whenever serious drugs-related issues arise.

- **Research and information:** The Action Plan suggests reinforced efforts in the area of research to identify any potential connections of drug trafficking with other organised crime activities, such as terrorist financing, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. In addition, it focuses on the need to analyse current cannabis policy models and their impact.

The new Action Plan will now be put forward to the European Parliament and the Council for discussion and final approval.

With the evaluation and the proposed new Action Plan, along with its proposals to address New Psychoactive Substances and the proposal for a strengthened common EU voice in international drugs related fora, such as the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs meeting taking place in Vienna this week, the European Commission today reconfirms its commitment to continue delivering on a very complex, longstanding and evolving phenomenon of both important security and social impact.

## Background

The European Union and the Member States have, over the past two decades, developed together a sustainable European approach to addressing drugs. This approach is enshrined in the [EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020](#) which is operationalised in two consecutive four-year Action Plans. The Strategy is structured around two policy areas: drug demand reduction and drug supply reduction, and three cross-cutting themes: (a) coordination, (b) international cooperation and (c) research, information, monitoring and evaluation.

To deliver on the Strategy, the Commission works closely with and supports the activities of Europol, Eurojust, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC (N)). Civil society, in particular non-governmental organisations (NGOs), is an important partner in the implementation of EU drugs policy. To enable a structured dialogue with civil society, the Commission has created a specific consultative body, the [Civil Society Forum on Drugs \(CSF\)](#). In addition, four EU financial programmes provide funding for drug-related projects between 2014-2020, to help implement the objectives set by the Strategy and to foster cross-border cooperation and research on drug issues.

The EU Drugs Strategy aims to further strengthen coordination between EU countries and its international partners. The EU's approach on cooperation with third countries on drugs focuses on specific drug trafficking routes, involving producer, transit and consumer markets. The EU conducts regular experts' dialogues on drugs with the CELAC, Central Asia, Eastern Partnership, Russia, the US and the Western Balkans.

The EU has also agreed on action plans to address drugs with a number of countries and provides assistance for a wide range of drugs-related projects in Latin America, the Caribbean and West Africa along the cocaine trafficking route, and in Afghanistan and Central Asia along the heroin route.

The EU funds major drug-related projects in third countries, mainly via EU Regional Programmes and closely cooperates with other international organisations working in the field, among others the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

## For More Information

[Communication on an EU Action Plan on Drugs 2017-2020](#)

[Mid-Term Assessment of the EU Drugs Strategy 2013–2020 and Final Evaluation of the Action Plan on Drugs 2013–2016](#)

[Mid-Term Assessment of the EU Drugs Strategy 2013–2020 and Final Evaluation of the Action Plan on Drugs 2013–2016 – ANNEXES to the Final Report](#)

[Staff Working Document – Evaluation of the implementation of the EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020 and the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2013-2016](#)

[EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020](#)

[EU Action Plan On Drugs 2013-2016](#)

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