

25 years of monitoring – selected events from the EMCDDA’s international cooperation history

Drugs have long been a cross-border phenomenon. As drug problems in Europe are increasingly linked to, and influenced by, global developments, it is crucial that our analysis of trends and developments be placed in the wider international context. This is why working with external partners is a key area of our work, increasing our understanding of the external dimension of the drug phenomenon as well as boosting our preparedness to react quickly to new threats.

Over the last 25 years, the EMCDDA has forged a variety of partnerships with a wide range of international organisations, EU agencies and third countries (non-EMCDDA members) ⁽¹⁾. These activities are currently guided by the [EMCDDA International Cooperation Framework](#), which charts the direction of work in this area for the period 2018–25, and by the [EMCDDA Strategy 2025](#), which identifies partnerships as one of the agency’s main business drivers.

This month, to mark the EMCDDA’s 25 years of monitoring celebration, we have published a commemorative timeline of selected events in our international cooperation history. Take a walk through some of the key moments and milestones.

International Cooperation Framework

The EMCDDA International Cooperation Framework sets out three strategic objectives:

1. Better assess the global drug situation, including the key drug policy developments occurring internationally.
2. Improve knowledge of EMCDDA stakeholders regarding the drug situation in third countries, in particular in those bordering the EU, to understand the implications for public health in the EU and its impact on the European drug market.
3. Support EU policies and initiatives in the drug field.

International organisations

The EMCDDA collaborates with a wide range of international organisations in the areas of public health and security. These include the: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC); Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe; Interpol; World Customs Organization (WCO); World Health Organization; Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD).

Purpose of cooperation:

- Develop a better understanding of the changing drug phenomenon worldwide and its impact on the European drug situation and market.
- Strengthen the agency's role as key player on the international stage and in defining global drug-monitoring systems and standards.

Nature of cooperation:

- Formal memoranda of understanding, cooperation agreements/frameworks and practical joint work programmes.
- Close participation in routine EMCDDA data-collection activities.
- Exchange of information, methodologies and expertise (e.g. ad hoc technical collaboration on specific supra-national projects).

[Read more in our international partners section >>](#)

EU agencies

The EMCDDA collaborates with several EU agencies in the areas of health and security. In the health domain, it cooperates with: ECDC, ECHA, EFSA, EMA and CHAFAEA. In the area of security, it is actively involved in the EU Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies' network, which aims to coordinate and plan joint activities in the area of migration and security. This network is composed of nine agencies: CEPOL, EASO, EIGE, EMCDDA, eu-LISA, Eurojust, Europol, FRA and Frontex. The EMCDDA chaired the network in 2017. The EMCDDA recently signed working arrangements with five EU agencies under new legislation to respond to public health and social threats caused by new psychoactive substances.

Purpose of cooperation:

- Deliver added value via working together and building synergies.
- Coordinate and facilitate work and avoid duplication of effort at EU level.
- Provide the European Commission with a holistic analysis of complex and interlinked issues in specific areas.

Nature of cooperation:

- Formal memoranda of understanding, cooperation agreements and working arrangements and practical joint work programmes.
- Exchange of best practice, information, methodologies and expertise.

[Read more in our EU agencies section >>](#)



Third countries

The EMCDDA has a long tradition of working with third countries (non-EMCDDA countries), which it does by engaging actively in EU-funded regional programmes that provide technical assistance (e.g. to prepare for accession) or by cooperating in the framework of bilateral working arrangements.

Third country groups:

- Candidate countries – currently Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – and potential candidates – Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*.
- Eastern and southern neighbours – Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine**, Syria (suspended in 2011), Tunisia, Ukraine.
- Other third countries – Canada, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA (if in the interest of the EU and subject to bilateral working arrangements and the availability of EU-funded projects at regional level).

Purpose of cooperation:

- Prepare the candidate countries and potential candidates for future accession to the EU.
- Allow the EMCDDA to improve its knowledge on the drug situation in third countries (particularly those bordering the EU).
- Understand better the public health and security implications and threats for the EU.
- Share knowledge on drug monitoring among the EMCDDA's key external partners.
- Promote the EU's balanced and integrated approach to the drug phenomenon.

Nature of cooperation:

- Formal memoranda of understanding, working arrangements, joint statements, friendship declarations, ad hoc agreements and practical joint work programmes.
- Exchange of best practice, information, methodologies and expertise.
- EU-funded projects (see below).

EU-funded projects:

[Read more in our third countries section >>](#)