

Council adopts conclusions on alternatives to coercive sanctions for drug using offenders

The Justice and Home Affairs Council has adopted today Council conclusions on alternatives to coercive sanctions for drug using offenders.

This agreement represents the political will of the 28 EU Member States to apply, in each legal system, alternative measures to coercive sanctions in order to: prevent crime; reduce recidivism; enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system and look at reducing health-related harms and minimising social risks.

Alternative measures can include: education; suspension of investigation or prosecution; suspension of sentence with treatment; rehabilitation and recovery, aftercare and social reintegration.

This initiative, started under the Maltese Presidency in 2017, was promoted by the Estonian Presidency and concluded under the current Bulgarian Presidency of the Council. It responds to Action 22 of the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2017–2020 which requests Member States and working parties of the Council to provide and apply alternatives to coercive sanctions for drug using offenders (where appropriate, and in accordance with their legal frameworks). The Action Plan also requests concerned parties to increase monitoring, implementation and evaluation of alternatives to coercive sanctions.

This political agreement calls on the EU Member States to: implement effectively alternative measures and monitor and evaluate their implementation; develop and share best practice in the field; and raise awareness (e.g. through training among national policy makers, law enforcement, criminal justice, public health, social and education professionals and persons providing support to drug-using offenders).

The text: 'Invites the EMCDDA to continue to monitor the measures and to exchange information and best practices on implementation, development of these measures, their effectiveness and cost-effectiveness'. It also: 'Invites the European Commission 'to support this work'.