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 CHAFEA. 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 >>

ESMA publishes draft regulatory technical standards for CCP colleges

The proposed amendments are limited in scope and concern the practical arrangements for the functioning of the college regarding:

· voting procedures;

· the procedures for setting the agenda of college meetings;

· review and evaluation of the arrangements, strategies, processes and mechanisms implemented by the CCP and the risks to which the CCP is exposed;

· the minimum timeframes for the assessment of the relevant documentation by the college members; and

· the modalities of communication between college members.

The draft RTS proposals amend the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 876/2013 (RTS on colleges for central counterparties) and reflect the changes to Article 18(6) of EMIR (Regulation (EU) No 648/2012) introduced by EMIR 2.2 (Regulation (EU) No 2019/2099) which entered into force on 1 January 2020.

Next steps

Following the endorsement of the draft RTS by the European Commission, the Commission Delegated Regulation will then be subject to the non-objection of the European Parliament and of the Council.

EU-Vietnam: Council gives final green light to free trade agreement

The Council today adopted a decision on the conclusion of a free trade agreement (FTA) between the EU and Vietnam. This decision clears the path, on the EU side, for the entry into force of the agreement.

Once the Vietnamese National Assembly also ratifies the FTA, the agreement can enter into force, most likely in early summer 2020.

> This agreement is the second one we are concluding with a Southeast Asia country, after Singapore. It is also the most ambitious free trade agreement ever concluded with a developing country. We are opening up new trading opportunities, but we are also creating new tools to give impetus to the enforcement of basic freedoms and labour rights in Vietnam.
>
> *Gordan Grlić Radman, Minister for Foreign and European affairs of Croatia*

The FTA provides for the almost complete (99%) elimination of customs duties between the two blocks. 65% of duties on EU exports to Vietnam will disappear as soon as the FTA enters into force, while the remainder will be phased out gradually over a period of up to 10 years. As regards Vietnamese exports to the EU, 71% of duties will disappear upon entry into force, the remainder

being phased out over a period of up to 7 years. The FTA will also reduce many of the existing non-tariff barriers to trade with Vietnam and open up Vietnamese services and public procurement markets to EU companies.

The EU-Vietnam trade deal also contains important provisions on intellectual property protection, labour rights and sustainable development. The FTA includes commitments to implement International Labour Organisation core standards and UN conventions relating for example to the fight against climate change or the protection of biodiversity.

Vietnam has already made progress on some of these commitments:

- It ratified in June 2019 the ILO Convention 98 on collective bargaining
- It adopted a revised Labour Code in November 2019
- It confirmed a timeline for the ratification of the remaining two fundamental ILO Conventions on freedom of association and on forced labour.

The trade agreement also includes an institutional and legal link to the EU-Vietnam Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, allowing appropriate action in the case of serious breaches of human rights.

An investment protection agreement (IPA) was signed at the same time as the FTA, on 30 June 2019, in Hanoi. The IPA will need to be ratified by all member states according to their respective national procedures before it can enter into force. Once ratified, it will replace the bilateral investment agreements that 21 EU Members States currently have in place with Vietnam.

The Council adopted the decision on the conclusion of the EU-Vietnam FTA using a written procedure.

COVID-19 – Council adopts measures for immediate release of funds

The EU is taking swift action to make available money to help tackle the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Council today adopted two legislative acts to quickly **release funding from the EU budget** for tackling the COVID-19 crisis. One of the acts amends the rules of the structural and investment funds, while the other extends the scope of the EU Solidarity Fund.

The **Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative** will give member states access to **€37 billion of cohesion money** to strengthen healthcare systems, as well as support small and medium-sized enterprises, short-term working schemes, and community-based services.

Of the total, about **€8 billion** will come from unspent pre-financing in 2019 under the structural funds. The new measure allows member states to spend unused money to mitigate the impact of the pandemic instead of returning it to the EU budget. Another **€29 billion** will be disbursed early from allocations which would have been due later this year.

Expenditure will be made available as of **1 February 2020** to cover costs already incurred in efforts to save lives and protect citizens.

Member states will also have **greater flexibility to make transfers** between cohesion policy programmes in order to redirect resources to where they are most needed.

The Council also amended the scope of the **EU Solidarity Fund to include public health emergencies** in addition to natural disasters. This will help member states and accession countries meet people's immediate needs during the coronavirus pandemic.

Next steps

Given the urgency of the situation, both legislative acts will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 31 March and will enter into force on 1 April 2020.

ESMA publishes call for evidence on credit rating information and data

Feedback to this call for evidence will enable ESMA to map the principal activities (regulatory and otherwise) undertaken by various types of users of credit ratings. ESMA aims, for each activity such as risk management, market research and regulatory reporting, to identify users' specific rating data needs (e.g. format, frequency, scope, downloadability etc) and how these correspond with the information that is currently provided on the European Rating Platform (ERP) and on credit rating agencies' (CRAs) public websites.

The call for evidence also aims to understand why users choose to subscribe to third party data fee service providers rather than rely on the information published free of charge on the ERP and CRAs' websites

ESMA, based on the feedback, will publish a report describing the current disclosure practices of CRAs including via third-party data service providers, as well as the consumption patterns of rating users. This report will consider options to improve access to and use of credit ratings including whether there is scope to improve the usability of the information provided on the ERP and/or CRAs' public websites.

The call for evidence is open until 3 August 2020 and input is welcomed from all interested stakeholders, including users of credit ratings such as public authorities and financial market participants, credit rating agencies as well as distributors of credit rating data.