



Message from the Director

from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon



Charting a new course: EMCDDA work programme 2024–2026

(08.02.2024) I am delighted to announce today the publication of the latest EMCDDA work programme, which outlines our activities for 2024–2026 ⁽¹⁾. This programme represents a milestone in our history, being the very last to be launched by the agency in its current form. On 2 July, the EMCDDA will be replaced by the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA). It is therefore a special moment for me to present our activities for what is, undoubtedly, the most transformative period in the life of the agency to date.

What you will read in its pages marks the completion of 30 years of successful EU drug monitoring by the EMCDDA. It also marks the opening of a fresh chapter to be written by the EUDA — a stronger agency with an expanded and reinforced mandate. At a time when innovation-driven drug markets make drugs available everywhere and to everyone, and when we are witnessing unprecedented drug-related violence in the EU, we are acutely aware of the importance of our new mission and fully committed to its fulfilment.

Strengthening our existing monitoring capacity and developing additional capabilities for rapid response will be instrumental to achieving our upcoming mission. A new European Drug Alert System will issue warnings when high-risk substances appear on the market. A new network of forensic and toxicological laboratories will underpin our work with real-time, analytically confirmed information. And new and stronger threat-assessment capabilities, in the areas of public health and security, will increase national and EU preparedness to identify and react to emerging risks.

This expanded, integrated and innovative system for information collection and analysis will allow us to anticipate and alert our key customers to major drug threats, providing them with expert advice to act quickly. We acknowledge that the drugs problem can be tackled only through a joint effort by policymakers and professionals working in the field. Reaching frontline practitioners and helping them save lives will be paramount to our work.

In our increasingly interconnected world, where developments at global level influence those at local level, we will continue to monitor drug-related events taking place outside the EU and factor them into our analyses. Under our new mandate, international cooperation in drug policy will have a higher profile, guided by an updated International Cooperation Framework.

While we are excited to live through this historic transformation of the EMCDDA into the EUDA, we are also aware of the challenges ahead. Internally, the shift will bring significant operational growth, with a 40% increase in staff members and an 80% increase in the annual budget. We do not underestimate the importance of efficiently managing this change, while continuing to deliver on our existing commitments.

Externally, we will continue to operate in an environment which is increasingly volatile and unpredictable. Against this background, it is critical that the agency remains agile. Strengthening our foresight capacity will also be essential to our ability to navigate uncertainty and tackle a dynamic drug phenomenon.

Finally, recognising the value of partnerships and co-production will be key to our success in this current programming period. Collaborating with the Reitox network of national focal points — the very backbone of our work — we will build a new and stronger Reitox Alliance, better equipped to support the EUDA in its ambitious new mission. Also vital will be building further ties with our traditional EU and international

partners, as well as investing in additional or expanded networks, and pursuing fresh partnerships, including with civil society organisations.

As always, we will work closely with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council — all of which have entrusted us with this new mandate — to ensure that our services respond to their needs. We also count on our ever-supportive Management Board and Scientific Committee to guide and advise us on this journey. Our efforts, combined with our partners' support, will ensure that the EUDA delivers successfully on its important mission to increase EU preparedness on drugs.

(¹) [EMCDDA Single Programming Document 2024–2026](#) (available in English).