



NEWS RELEASE from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

THIRD INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY FORUM ON NEW DRUGS, 27–28 JUNE 2013, LISBON

Over 100 specialists from across the globe to review international developments in new drugs field

(24.6.2013, LISBON) Leading European and international specialists will meet in Lisbon from 27–28 June to take stock of the global new drugs phenomenon. The **Third international multidisciplinary forum on new drugs**, organised by the **EU drugs agency (EMCDDA)**, in cooperation with **Europol**, will gather over 100 participants from some 40 countries ⁽¹⁾.

The event will build on the results of the **Second interdisciplinary forum on new and emerging psychoactive substances**, co-hosted by the **EMCDDA** and **NIDA** in Palm Springs in June 2012, and the **First international multidisciplinary forum on new drugs**, organised by the **EMCDDA** in Lisbon in May 2011. These events focused on the growing global nature of the phenomenon and the importance of international cooperation in responding to the issue ⁽²⁾.

Commenting ahead of this year's forum, **EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz** says: 'Only a few years ago, new drugs were generally regarded as being of limited significance to drug policy. The continued growth of the market, however — particularly driven by "legal highs" — has seen the issue develop into a complex policy challenge that is now of major international concern'.

Götz adds: 'This growth has been driven by entrepreneurs who have exploited gaps in drug regulation. It has also been fuelled by the increasingly globalised and interconnected world in which we live. We are now seeing an unprecedented growth in the number, type and availability of new drugs, the growing interplay between the new drugs and illicit drug markets and a greater involvement of organised crime'.

The **EU Early warning system (EWS)** for monitoring new psychoactive substances — operated by the **EMCDDA** and **Europol** and active since 1997 — ensures that Europe continues to be at the forefront of this rapidly changing field ⁽³⁾. Significant developments since the 2011 forum have seen the issue evolve into a complex challenge for scientists, law enforcers and policymakers. This year, experts have been invited to discuss latest developments in six thematic sessions:

- **New drugs: the big picture** — historical context, public health perspective, motivations of users, the role of law enforcement, challenges for drug policy
- **National, regional and global perspectives on new drugs** — presentations on significant developments and initiatives taking place around the globe
- **Detecting, monitoring and understanding the emerging harms of new drugs** — updates from forensic science, toxicology and healthcare disciplines
- **The only constant is change: law enforcement and new drugs** — growing interplay between the new drugs and illicit drug markets; law-enforcement initiatives
- **Reading the signals: keeping a finger on the pulse of new drugs** — good practice, novel approaches, what we can learn from the users of new drugs
- **The response to new drugs: fit for purpose?** — with a focus on the experience of, and topical developments in, New Zealand; input from subject experts and open forum.

The forum will aim to identify information gaps and research needs, anticipate future developments and challenges and explore the role that can be played by law enforcement.

The **EWS** now monitors over 300 new psychoactive substances. In 2012, 73 new substances were officially notified for the first time in the EU through the system, up from 49 in 2011, 41 in 2010 and 24 in 2009 ⁽⁴⁾. This year's forum will focus on innovative methods and mechanisms to monitor new substances and emerging trends and on responses to the phenomenon. International speakers will present updates on state-of-the-art developments and explore the added value of coordinating efforts.

A multidisciplinary approach is crucial to understanding and responding to the new drugs phenomenon in order to protect public health, which is at the very heart of this issue. The participating experts represent a wide range of disciplines, from both academic and operational backgrounds, including: epidemiology, forensic science, healthcare, law-enforcement, criminology and policy. Also participating are staff from the **European Commission**, the **European Medicines Agency** and international bodies.

The forum is organised in conjunction with the **13th annual meeting of the Reitox early warning system (EWS) network** and the **Europol second law-enforcement meeting on new psychoactive substances**.

The conference is closed to the media but experts will be available for comment via requests to the EMCDDA press office (Tel. 351 211 21 02 40) on Friday 28 June. The forum conclusions will be available in the days following the event. Full event details and programme available at www.emcdda.europa.eu/events/2013/new-drugs-forum

Notes

⁽¹⁾ www.emcdda.europa.eu/events/2013/new-drugs-forum

⁽²⁾ www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/4 and www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2011/1

⁽³⁾ The EWS provides EU Member States with an information exchange mechanism for reporting on the emergence of new psychoactive substances. It is a key element in Europe's fast-track system for assessing and responding to new drugs. For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/new-drugs/early-warning

⁽⁴⁾ For more, see *New drugs in Europe 2012* www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/implementation-reports