



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

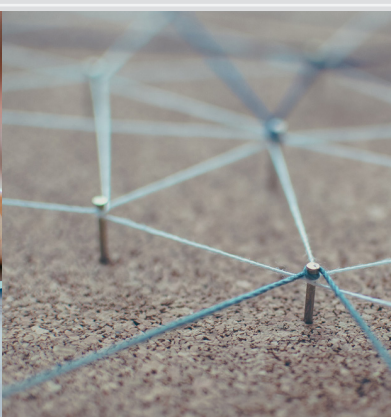
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General Report of Activities

Key achievements and governance:
a year in review

2023



Contents

2	Foreword
4	List of acronyms and abbreviations
7	Mission statement
8	Management Board's analysis and assessment
9	Executive summary
14	PART I Report of activities: key achievements of the year
14	Main area 1: Health
29	Main area 2: Security
35	Main area 3: Business drivers
62	PART IIA Management
75	PART IIB External evaluations
76	PART III Assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control systems
81	PART IV Management assurance
83	PART V Declaration of assurance
	ANNEXES
84	Annex I. Core business statistics
85	Annex II. Statistics on financial management
86	Annex III. Organisational chart
87	Annex IV. Establishment plan and additional information on human resources management
89	Annex V. Human and financial resources by activity
90	Annex VI. Contribution, grant and service-level agreements. Financial framework partnership agreements
94	Annex VII. Environmental management
98	Annex VIII. EMCDDA accounts – Financial year 2023

Foreword



Franz Pietsch
Chair of the EMCDDA
Management Board



Alexis Goosdeel
Director of the EMCDDA

We are proud to present the 29th General Report of Activities of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), which provides an overview of the agency's key achievements in 2023.

No previous year has bridged the future and the past more significantly than 2023 has done.

At the beginning of the year, we celebrated the EMCDDA's 30th anniversary, since on 8 February 1993, with the adoption of Council Regulation (EEC) No 302/93, our agency was born. This was a milestone in the history of European action on drugs, symbolising a major political decision to build drug policies on scientific evidence rather than ideology.

Also this year, on 1 July, the new Regulation of the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA), repealing and replacing the EMCDDA Regulation entered into force. Another key milestone, this marks the creation of a stronger agency and takes the European drug monitoring to a different level. It is a call for action from our key customers — the EU Institutions and the EU Member States — for a drugs agency which is their technical ally in tackling the ever-more threatening drug phenomenon.

This major event led us to embark on a one-year journey to prepare for the launch of the EUDA on 2 July 2024 (the date of application of the new Regulation), and drove much of our work throughout 2023 in all areas. Concepts for new services began to be developed, some in close collaboration with our main partners in the Member States — the Reitox network of national focal points (NFPs). New rules of procedures were also submitted to our Management Board, while the preparatory work for significantly expanding our operations was initiated. We were also excited to launch a branding project, which, with the participation of all our staff, is reimagining our brand identity and re-positioning us from being a monitoring centre — the EMCDDA — to an agency empowered to act — the EUDA.

While this preparatory work involved a significant, organisation-wide effort, the delivery of quality products and services to EU and national drug policymakers and drug professionals in the Member States and beyond remained the EMCDDA's priority in 2023.

These offerings included three digital-first flagship publications: in addition to the *European Drug Report 2023*, new modules of the *European Responses Guide* were released, and the next two modules, on amphetamine and cannabis, of the fully digital fourth edition of the joint EMCDDA-Europol *EU Drug Markets: In-depth Analysis* were launched. All these key publications were presented in innovative digital formats, which are now embedded in our communication model.

We also released new information-rich analyses in priority policy and practice areas (such as harm reduction [in collaboration with partners], cannabis developments and drug-related violence) and some 2.5 million people visited our website during the year. The 40 % higher number of requests for information from the media further confirmed the significant upward trend in the uptake of the EMCDDA's knowledge by its customers, partners and the general public.

A record number of around 3 300 health and law enforcement drug professionals benefited from the training activities organised by the EMCDDA, alone or in cooperation with our partners. This included the successful roll-out of the European Prevention Curriculum programme, which aims to sustainably develop the drug prevention force in the EU and partner third countries.

In 2023 we dedicated a substantial part of our new and upgraded services to better supporting EU institutions and EU policy on drugs, through our provision of permanent technical support to the European Commission, successive Presidencies of the Council and the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE). The now established EMCDDA briefings continued to support EU work and dialogues with third countries and regions.

We successfully completed our first bilateral project with Georgia — EMCDDA4Georgia — whose closing event took place in June in Tbilisi. Two technical cooperation projects with third countries, namely the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA8), for candidates and potential candidates to the EC, and EU4Monitoring Drugs II (EU4MD II), for neighbouring countries, were launched, continuing the successful implementation of the projects IPA7 and EU4MD, which ended in 2022. Also particularly rich in activities was the project COPOLAD III (Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drugs Policies), which entered its second year of implementation. Also worth noting is the signing of a working arrangement between the EMCDDA and the Peruvian National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs (DEVIDA), which was followed by an official visit to Peru to further discuss areas for strengthening dialogue and cooperation.

While we have embarked in an extraordinary organisational change effort, we have also maintained a very high level of performance in the implementation of our work programme and the execution of our budget.

At the end of this particularly significant year in the life of the EMCDDA, we thank our partners, in particular the Reitox network of NFPs, for their vital support of our work. As EUDA, we are also fully committed to strengthening and expanding these partnerships, and jointly contributing to the EU preparedness on drugs in the years to come. This includes enhancing collaboration with the scientific community and civil society organisations and moving towards a more all-inclusive, multi-dimensional approach to tackling drugs, in line with our new mandate.

Our special thanks also go to the EMCDDA Scientific Committee and to the members of our Management Board for their guidance, which has been more than ever paramount to our success.

As ever, we express our gratitude to our staff, for their professionalism and commitment to our mission, and for their enthusiasm in embracing organisational change. They are the pillars of this ambitious transformation and their resilience inspires our every action.

We invite you to read the EMCDDA *General Report of Activities 2023*, an exceptional year in review.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ABAC	electronic management and accounting system
CADAP	Central Asian Drug Action Programme
CBD	cannabidiol
C-EHRN	Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CEPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
CICAD	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
CICAD-OAS	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States
CLASI	Latin American Committee for Internal Security
CND	United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs
COPOLAD	Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drugs Policies
COSI	Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security
DCRs	drug consumption rooms
DEVIDA	Peruvian National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs
DG	Directorate-General
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
DMT	dimethyltryptamine
DRD	drug-related deaths and mortality (EMCDDA indicator)
DRID	drug-related infectious diseases (EMCDDA indicator)
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
ECDD	Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (World Health Organization)
ECHA	European Chemicals Agency
ECID	Extranets, Collaboration, Intranet and Document Management
EDAS	European Drug Alert System
EDND	European Database on New Drugs
EDR	European Drug Report
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
Efus	European Forum for Urban Security
EMA	European Medicines Agency
EMAS	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EMCDDA4GE	EMCDDA for Georgia project
EMPACT	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament

ERISSP	European Reporting Instrument on Sites related to Synthetic Production
ESCAPE	European Syringe Collection and Analysis Project Enterprise
ESPAD	European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs
EU	European Union
EU4MD	EU4Monitoring Drugs
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EUAN	EU Agencies Network
EU-ANSA	EU Agencies Network on Scientific Advice
eu-LISA	European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
EUPC	European Prevention Curriculum
Euro-DEN Plus	European Drug Emergencies Network
EWS	Early Warning System
FIIAPP	Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (International Ibero-American Foundation for Public Policies and Administration)
GPS	prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population (EMCDDA indicator)
HCV	hepatitis C virus
HDG	Horizontal Drugs Group
HFP	Heads of national focal points
HHC	Hexahydrocannabinol
HR	human resources
IAS	Internal Audit Service
ICF	Internal Control Framework
ICS	Internal Control Standards
ICT	information and communication technology
IILA	Italo-Latin American International Organization
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LIBE	European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
LSD	lysergide
MDMA	3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDO	national drug observatory
NEWS	national early-warning system
NFP	national focal point
NIPH	National Institute of Public Health
NPS	new psychoactive substances
OAP	operational action plan

OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
OSI	open-source information
PDU	problem drug use (EMCDDA indicator)
PLATO	Practice Training Platform
PPMT	Public Procurement Management Tool
RDF	Reitox Development Framework
Reitox	Réseau Européen d'Information sur les Drogues et les Toxicomanies (European information network on drugs and drug addiction)
RTX	Reitox and external partners
SCORE	Sewage Analysis CORE group Europe
SENDA	Servicio Nacional para la Prevención y Rehabilitación del Consumo de Drogas y Alcohol
SICAD	Serviço de Intervenção em Comportamentos Aditivos e Dependências (Portuguese General Directorate for Intervention on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies)
SLA	service-level agreement
SMART	Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends
SPD	Single Programming Document
SSC	semi-synthetic cannabinoid
TDI	treatment demand indicator (EMCDDA indicator)
TEDI	Trans European Drug Information
TOT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WA	working arrangement
WHO	World Health Organization

Mission statement

Independent, science-based information is a vital resource to help Europe understand the nature of its drug problems and better respond to them. It was based on this premise, and in the face of an escalating drugs phenomenon, that the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) was established in 1993. Inaugurated in Lisbon in 1995, it is one of the EU's decentralised agencies.

Building on the EMCDDA's founding regulation (Regulation (EC) No 1920/2006) as amended (Regulation (EU) 2017/2101 as regards information exchange on, and an early warning system and risk assessment procedure for, new psychoactive substances (NPS)), the [EMCDDA Strategy 2025](#) defines the agency's current mission and vision statements.

Mission

The EMCDDA exists to support evidence-based decisions and actions at EU and national levels by providing factual, objective, reliable and comparable information concerning drugs and drug addiction, and their consequences. The EMCDDA's mission is therefore grounded in the consensus that sound information is a prerequisite for developing effective policies in the drugs area.

Vision

The EMCDDA's vision is a healthier and a more secure Europe, achieved through better-informed drug policy and action.

To do this effectively, the agency must constantly strive to respond to the needs of its primary customers, who can be defined as:

- EU institutions;
- national decision-makers/policymakers;
- professionals working in the drugs field.

Beyond meeting the information needs of primary customers, to address its mandate the EMCDDA also needs to engage with other stakeholders, including academic institutions and researchers; the general public, civil society and those affected by drug problems; and international organisations and third countries.

Values

The EMCDDA is committed to the EU and its values. Beyond these, the agency has identified its own set of core values to inform all aspects of its work, inspire staff in their professional performance, inform future organisational policies and guide the agency's interactions with stakeholders and partners.

The EMCDDA's four core values are:

- scientific excellence;
- integrity and impartiality;
- customer focus and service orientation;
- efficiency and sustainability.

Management Board's analysis and assessment

The EMCDDA Management Board has analysed and assessed the Authorising Officer's (Director's) *General Report of Activities* for the financial year 2023.

The Management Board appreciates the performance of the EMCDDA in producing timely and high-quality information, together with strategic and situational analyses and threat assessments, to inform policy and practice. The Board highlights the launch of the digital-first, modular, *European Drug Report 2023*, and of the modules on amphetamine and cannabis of the joint EMCDDA-Europol report *EU Drug Markets: In-depth Analysis*.

The Management Board was regularly updated on the preparations for the implementation of the Regulation on the EU Drugs Agency (EUDA), which was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 27 June 2023 and will enter into application on 2 July 2024. The adoption of the new Regulation was marked at a special session at the EMCDDA Management Board meeting on 29 June, with a video statement by Commissioner Ylva Johansson, as well as remarks by the representatives of the Swedish Presidency of the Council, the European Parliament, the Chair of the EMCDDA Management Board and the EMCDDA Director, who were present at the event.

The agency continued to show operational efficiency with an agile implementation of the 2023 work programme, in addition to setting the scene for the new EUDA Regulation. The EMCDDA once again achieved an outstanding budget execution performance, with almost 100 % (99.99 %) of commitment appropriations executed.

In conclusion, the Management Board welcomes the 2023 *General Report of Activities*, which provides an excellent overview of the agency's achievements, as set out in the work programme, and shows a very good level of performance.

Executive summary

This report presents the implementation of the activities of the EMCDDA's work programme for 2023, the first year of the multiannual Single Programming Document ([SPD](#)) 2023-2025. The report mirrors the work programme for 2023, which, in line with the *EMCDDA Strategy 2025*, presents the activities of the EMCDDA within the three main work drivers: health, security and business.

While the EMCDDA has clear objectives and priorities in each area, it is important to note that the multifaceted nature of the drugs problem means that these areas are interlinked and complementary. Therefore, for the purpose of this executive summary, a section that includes transversal work is presented first.

Transversal work: health and security

In 2023 the EMCDDA continued to produce timely and high-quality information, together with strategic and situational analyses and threat assessments, to inform policy and practice. The agency's most tangible outputs are its publications, some of which are produced in cooperation with partners. In that regard, 30 scientific and institutional publications were produced in 2023. The EMCDDA also authored or co-authored 14 scientific articles and book chapters that were published in prestigious journals and publications, enhancing the agency's scientific reputation.

One of the key resources was the *European Drug Report 2023* (EDR), the EMCDDA's yearly flagship publication. For the first time, the report was delivered in a new modular digital-first format, offering innovative ways to access and interact with the content. The resource is designed to be read across various devices (PCs, mobiles, tablets) and is available in 25 EU languages. Accompanying the report is the 2023 *Statistical Bulletin* containing national datasets. The official launch of the report took place virtually on 16 June at the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium, at a joint press conference held by Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, and Alexis Goosdeel, Director of the EMCDDA.

Participation in drug-related events and in training and capacity building are complementary means for the EMCDDA to disseminate information, analysis and knowledge. In 2023 a record number of more than 3 300 professionals working in the drugs field, including health workers, law enforcement officers and policymakers in the EU and beyond, were trained. In addition, around 4 800 professionals working in the drugs field all over the world attended the eight webinars that were organised by the EMCDDA during the year.

Specific highlights from the EMCDDA's work within the three main areas — health, security and business drivers — are presented below, and details can be found in the later sections of the report and in the annexes.

Health area

Through its *EMCDDA Strategy 2025*, the agency is committed to contributing to a healthier Europe by addressing important drug-related public health concerns. Key priorities are contributing to the reduction of drug-related deaths; promoting hepatitis C testing and treatment among people who inject drugs; and backing the implementation of evidence-based prevention interventions.

In this regard, 2023 saw the release of three new miniguides under the EMCDDA flagship report *Health and social responses to drug problems: a European guide* (also referred to as the *European Responses Guide*). In a fully digital format, the guide examines some of the key public health challenges in the drugs field today and offers timely and practical advice to practitioners and policymakers for designing, targeting and implementing effective responses. The miniguides that were released in 2023 cover responses to drugs among people with vulnerabilities — migrants, older people and women. Other miniguides were in preparation in 2023, for release in 2024. Additionally, the two EMCDDA miniguides focusing on homelessness and families were made available in a further four languages: Bulgarian, German, Spanish and French.

New resources were launched during the year in all the public health areas covered by the agency. One of the most popular resources on the EMCDDA website was the page that provides answers to the most frequently asked questions about drug overdose deaths in Europe.

In the critically important harm reduction area, the EMCDDA continued to promote good practice, including the integration of evidence-based practices, interventions and policies into routine healthcare and public health settings. Specifically, the EMCDDA released a new public health guidance on *Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases among People who Inject Drugs*, in collaboration with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The main results were presented in a joint webinar organised in December with over 350 participants. With this guidance, the two agencies aim to support policymakers, drug professionals and civil society organisations by providing an evidence base for national strategies, policies and programmes for people who inject drugs. To accompany this guidance, the EMCDDA also published two technical reports.

Another joint publication, on drug consumption rooms (DCRs) in Europe, was released by the EMCDDA and the Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network (C-EHRN) in November.

In the other priority area of prevention, the European Prevention Curriculum (EUPC) continued to roll out the 'training of trainers' programme. Thirty-three professionals from 18 EU and non-EU countries were trained to be trainers in 2023. Sixty-seven other professionals benefited from the EUPC basic and advanced training programmes which were organised during the year. The EUPC is hosted on PLATO, a multilingual integrated platform that was officially launched in 2022 and was designed to facilitate e-learning and exchange through a virtual community of practice.

In partnership with the University Institute of Lisbon, the EMCDDA implemented the European Drugs Winter School with the theme of displaced populations and drug-related issues, and the European Drugs Summer School, which focused on drugs and mental health.

In the area of NPS, the EMCDDA continued to implement the EU Early Warning System (EWS) in collaboration with its EU partners. During the year the EWS was formally notified of 26 NPS for the first time, bringing the total number of NPS currently monitored to around 950. New resources were released in this area, including a technical report on Hexahydrocannabinol (HHC) and related substances.

The growing interest from EU and global policymakers in analysis on synthetic opioids, and fentanyl in particular, continued in 2023. The EMCDDA provided a briefing note to EU drug decision-makers and held a presentation at the Ministerial Meeting hosted in July by the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to launch a Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats.

As well as contributing to the new EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025, many of the agency's efforts in the policy area have continued to focus on following up on the developments in the evolving cannabis market, to promptly inform the EU policy debate. Some EU Member States have started to change their policy approaches to recreational cannabis use. The EMCDDA has seen an increasing number of requests from Member States in this field, and has provided support to national initiatives, specifically with regard to cannabis indicator development and monitoring the impact of cannabis policy changes in this area.

To that end, throughout the year the EMCDDA provided regular support and information on cannabis policies to national policymakers and coordinated preparatory scientific reviews of cannabis-related harm, treatment and harm-reduction practices. A particularly popular publication was the *Cannabis laws in Europe: questions and answers for policymaking* with a high number of downloads, and an associated webinar on cannabis regulation. Among other activities, the agency contributed a presentation on 'Low THC cannabis products' at a workshop on 'Hemp in the CAP reform' organised by the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development. A technical report on cannabis laws in Europe was also released to inform policy decisions in this high-interest area. The information in the health area was complemented by an in-depth analysis of the EU drug market in cannabis, published under the joint EMCDDA-Europol *EU Drug Markets Report* series, which is part of the security area of the EMCDDA's work.

Briefings and support were provided to both the Swedish and Spanish presidencies in 2023. This included input on the theme of drugs and gender for the Swedish presidency, while for the Spanish presidency the priority was psychiatric co-morbidity, which the EMCDDA assisted with presentations at the Horizontal Drugs Group (HDG) and through support for the presidency's conclusions paper.

Briefing notes were produced for the EU Presidency, the members of the HDG and the European Commission on topics such as the national drug monitoring system in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Further briefing notes were drafted to inform the EU-Colombia, EU-Brazil and EU-US dialogues on drugs.

The information and analysis provided by the EMCDDA in the health area were supported by the ongoing underlying monitoring work carried out by the agency throughout the year. The core monitoring activity (based on the five EMCDDA key epidemiological indicators) was further strengthened by a significant contribution from the Reitox network of NFPs, the agency's main data providers in the Member States.

New data sources also continued to be developed and implemented, providing timely and complementary data on drug use in Europe. Moreover, the EMCDDA further strengthened its collaboration with a number of innovative initiatives, in areas such as wastewater analysis, web surveys, hospital emergencies, drug checking and syringe analysis. Data collected from these collaborations fed into many of the analyses that the EMCDDA produced and published during the year. For example, latest findings were published from the web surveys (*Party Panel web survey*), the wastewater analysis, and the most recent *ESCAPE data-collection round (2022)*. The EMCDDA also published a new manual on *Health Risk Communication Strategies for Drug-checking Services in Europe*, as well as a new analysis titled *European Drug Emergencies Network (Euro-DEN Plus): Data and Analysis*, providing the latest findings on acute drug-toxicity presentations to hospital emergency services. In addition, new interactive tools were made available allowing customers to search some of these datasets online for the first time.

Security area

Much of the work in 2023 was dedicated to the preparation, in close collaboration with Europol, of the fourth edition of the joint *EU Drug Markets: In-depth Analysis*. The digital, modular approach of this flagship report was launched in 2022 when the first two modules, on cocaine and methamphetamine, were released. In 2023 these were followed by the modules on amphetamine and cannabis, which were launched at webinars featuring presentations by the agencies' experts.

These modules offer a comprehensive range of interactive graphics as well as the all-important source data underpinning the analysis. This innovative digital format will ensure that this product continues to provide ever-more useful recommendations and enhance its role as a key resource for policy and action. Several other modules were also in preparation in 2023 for release in 2024.

In the policy area, much of the work of the agency was carried out to ensure its continued contribution to the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) and the operational action plans (OAPs) of the EU policy cycle on organised and serious international crime. The agency implemented all its tasks under the 2023 OAP on Cannabis, Cocaine and Heroin and the OAP on Synthetic Drugs and NPS, and further contributed to the planning and drafting of the respective OAPs for 2024.

The report *Captagon Trafficking and the Role of Europe* was published during the year. The report is the culmination of operational action 1.2 of the EMPACT 'Synthetic Drugs and NPS' OAP of 2022, 'Improve and analyse the criminal intelligence picture on the production and trafficking of captagon tablets and the role of Europe'. The action was led by Germany (Bundeskriminalamt, BKA) and the EMCDDA.

Addressing pressing policy questions, the report *The Nexus between Drug Markets and Gun Violence in the European Union* was published in collaboration with the Flemish Peace Institute. This report discusses the connection between the illegal drugs trade and firearms trafficking, focusing on systemic drug-related gun violence. It also examines the societal impact of this violence within the EU.

The EMCDDA delivered drug-related training activities for almost 3 000 law enforcement professionals from the EU and technical cooperation project partners, alongside the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL).

Contributions to policy also involved providing technical input and advice throughout the year, on request, to EU institutions, including via briefing notes on emerging international drug issues. This included a briefing note on drug trafficking into the EU to inform the Schengen thematic evaluation carried out by the European Commission. The agency also supplied early input, as requested, to the preparation of the new EU Roadmap to step up the fight against drug trafficking and criminal networks, which was adopted by the

Commission in October. The Roadmap sets out 17 targeted actions in four priority areas and the EMCDDA will be responsible for the implementation of several actions.

Furthermore, on 7 February, the EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel, together with a representative of Europol, accompanied the European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson and the Belgian Minister of the Interior Annelies Verlinden on a visit to the Port of Antwerp, following the continued rise in the quantity of cocaine seized at the port. The visit was followed by a press conference.

To support the comprehensive analytical effort in the security area, work continued in 2023 on improving the quality and availability of core supply data, in close collaboration with the Reitox NFPs and with our EU partner Europol. In terms of new sources of data and innovative monitoring approaches, the EMCDDA further developed its capacity for open-source information (OSI) and darknet monitoring.

Business drivers

Institutional and strategic developments

2023 marked the entering into force of the Regulation of the EU Drugs Agency

This year saw the entering into force on 1 July of the new Regulation of the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA). As of 2 July 2024, the date of its application, this Regulation will repeal and replace the EMCDDA founding Regulation (recast) (EC) No 1920/2006. On that day, the EMCDDA will become the EUDA, a new agency with a stronger mandate.

This is the outcome of the EU ordinary legislative procedure for the adoption of a new, broader mandate for the EMCDDA, which had its roots in the proposal put forward by the European Commission on 12 January. This process culminated in the adoption of the EUDA Regulation by the Council of the EU on 27 June 2023, which followed the endorsement of the provisional deal as a result of inter-institutional negotiations on creating the EUDA by the European Parliament, held on 13 June.

The event was marked at a special session of the EMCDDA Management Board meeting on 29 June, with remarks by Commissioner Ylva Johansson (in a video statement), as well as by the representatives of the Swedish Presidency of the Council, the European Parliament, the Chair of the EMCDDA Management Board and the EMCDDA Director, who were all present at the event.

The entering into force of the EUDA Regulation set the EMCDDA on a one-year transition course to prepare for the application of this Regulation on 2 July 2024. In that regard, in parallel with ensuring the continuation of its core deliveries, the agency's number one priority in the second half of the year was to accelerate this preparation process in all areas. Updates were provided to the Management Board by the EMCDDA Director at the December Board meeting, while new rules of procedure for the functioning of the EUDA statutory bodies had already been submitted for adoption at the same meeting.

Communication and service delivery to meet evolving EMCDDA customer needs

In 2023 the transformation in this area continued along the core principles of customer centricity and the digital-first approach for our services and products. Much of the work in this area during the year was dedicated to ensuring that timely products and services were provided to EMCDDA customers, often in a redesigned format and via digital channels. In that regard, the launch of the digital-first, modular *European Drug Report 2023* was one of the highlights.

These efforts were accompanied by activities to enhance engagement with the agency's audiences, mainly via online communication channels. The results of this collective effort were notable. Among other achievements, the EMCDDA website, the main dissemination channel of the agency, reached some 2.5 million unique visitors. We also saw the continuation of the upward trend in the number of social media followers, with double-digit percentage increases (compared to the figures for 2022) for two key social media channels, namely Instagram (+36 %) and LinkedIn (+29 %). The number of views of EMCDDA videos on the YouTube Channel also rose in 2023, to 1.77 million, which means an overall increase in lifetime views of

13.5 % compared to 2022. A total of 579 media requests were also serviced, 40 % above the number of requests dealt with in 2022 (413 requests).

This year also saw the launch of the branding project, which aims to reposition the agency from being a monitoring centre — the EMCDDA — whose primary role is observation, to an agency empowered to act — the EUDA.

Working in partnership

In fulfilling its tasks, the agency relies on a large number of partners, in particular the Reitox network of NFPs, which plays a critical role in sustaining the EU core monitoring system. In 2023 the NFPs continued to implement the second *Reitox Development Framework (RDF) Roadmap* (2021-2025). At the same time, a period of reflection began on the definition of a new *Reitox Alliance*, a strategic document which will replace the RDF as of 2025 and guide the network as the main EUDA partner in the Member States in the years to come.

In this regard, a joint working group was set up, by decision of the EMCDDA Management Board, to address and discuss the process for the announced definition and adoption, by the end of 2025, of the new 'Reitox Alliance', and, on this basis, the EUDA's (new) co-financing and possible additional funding for the Reitox NFPs, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2023/1322.

In performing its work and achieving its objectives, the EMCDDA relies on its other EU and international partners. During the year, the agency provided active contributions to the work of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies' network, as well as to several of the sub-networks of the EU Agencies Network (EUAN), of which the EMCDDA is a member.

Regarding cooperation with third countries, the agency continued to work with candidates and potential candidates to the EU, and with European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) partner countries, as part of the projects IPA8 (the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance technical cooperation) and EU4Monitoring Drugs (EU4MD II). These programmes started in 2023 and continued the successful work carried out until 2022 under projects IPA7 and EU4MD respectively.

In 2023 the EMCDDA also successfully ended its first bilateral project with Georgia — EMCDDA4GE — and the results were celebrated on 14 June at the closing event in Tbilisi.

The agency entered into the second year of collaboration with COPOLAD III (Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drugs Policies), with a series of training sessions and events organised with the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries.

In 2023, the EMCDDA also continued strengthening its bilateral cooperation with key third countries through the negotiation and signature of working arrangements (WAs). The WA with DEVIDA/Peru was signed in May and negotiations with Colombia, Chile and Ecuador were launched in July.

Corporate performance

For another year, the EMCDDA managed to achieve a very good level of performance (see Annex Ib).

A limited number of activities could not be fully implemented, due to a lack of resources, specific implementation conditions, or factors external to the EMCDDA (see Annex Ia).

It is worth noting the intensive efforts that were required in all areas to prepare for the new mandate. Among others initiatives, 11 internal working groups were set up, involving staff from every unit, in addition to four joint working groups with the Reitox NFPs, to ensure a smooth transition to the new agency in the core business areas. Measures were also started to support the significant increase in the agency's operations in terms of its corporate areas (operational and budget planning, human resources management, procurement, logistics and ICT) under the new mandate.

With regard to budget execution, once again the agency reached an outstanding level, with almost 100 % of commitment appropriations executed.

PART I

Report of activities: key achievements of the year

Main area 1: Health

Core monitoring

The annual core data-collection and management activities are the agency's key tasks, as established in the EMCDDA's founding regulation. These are implemented yearly in close collaboration with the agency's main data providers, namely the Reitox network of NFPs in the EU Member States, Norway and Türkiye.

Unprecedented changes, both in the extent and nature of the drug problem and in our world today, have called for constant reflection, innovation and agility to keep pace with new developments and rethink existing routines. This is why, in response to a fast-moving drug problem, the EMCDDA adopts a multi-indicator approach to monitoring.

Central to this core monitoring activity are the five key epidemiological indicators:

- GPS describes the prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population;
- PDU focuses on the prevalence and patterns of high-risk drug use;
- TDI is the treatment demand indicator;
- DRD describes drug-related deaths and mortality among drug users;
- DRID describes drug-related infectious diseases.

Monitoring the prevalence and patterns of drug use plays a vital role in our understanding of the drug situation in Europe. Existing national data-collection tools and networks have been enhanced and supported throughout the year. Annual expert meetings for each indicator were organised, and analytical work was further developed. Data were analysed for each indicator to inform key EMCDDA outputs, particularly the *European Drug Report 2023* (EDR) package.

Drug use is a major cause of harm and premature deaths among European adults. The EMCDDA is committed to monitoring and providing accurate information and data on the health risks of drug use and on the drug treatment and harm-reduction responses which save lives in Europe. This data is indispensable in informing policymaking and improving Europe's preparedness in this area.

On 31 August, International Overdose Awareness Day, the EMCDDA published '[Frequently asked questions \(FAQs\): drug overdose deaths in Europe](#)'. This resource illustrates new trends and developments through various maps and graphics with a gender and age breakdown. The digital, modular and accessible format of the FAQs makes it easier to explore and share the data and analysis on drug-related deaths and responses. This resource was among the most viewed on the EMCDDA website in 2023.

Frequently asked questions (FAQ): drug overdose deaths in Europe

Page last updated: 31 August 2023

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Introduction

This page provides answers to the questions most often asked about drug overdose deaths in Europe. Also known as drug-induced deaths, they are deaths directly attributable to the use of illicit drugs. The information presented here is based on the latest data from the Member States of the European Union (2) and the EMCDDA affiliates Norway and Türkiye. It draws on contributions from specialists from these countries, as well as on information provided by European countries in the annual reporting exercise to the agency.

The latest European Drug Report (EMCDDA, 2023) estimated that over 6 100 deaths involving one or more illicit drugs were reported in 2021 in the European



European Drug Report 2023: in the spotlight



On 16 June the EMCDDA published its *European Drug Report 2023: Trends and Developments*, the latest annual review of the drug situation in Europe.

For the first time, the report was delivered in a new modular, digital-first format, offering innovative ways to access and interact with the content. The resource is designed to be read on a range of devices (PCs, mobiles, tablets) and is available in 25 EU languages.

The depth and scope of the analysis have been considerably expanded, with a broader range of topics covered in greater detail.

Over 100 interactive graphics complement the analysis, while interactive dashboards allow users to visualise data and trends at European and national level. Data journalists and researchers can access the underlying data for easier sharing and re-use. Accompanying the report is the *Statistical Bulletin 2023* containing national datasets.

The EMCDDA shared its experiences regarding the new approach to data sharing with the European Commission's Open Data Steering Committee in December, resulting in very positive feedback.

'It's been such an inspiration to watch how you turned your flagship publication into a digital-first one ... Thank you for sharing an experience from which we have much to learn and for doing so in such a clear and focused way.'

Maria Apostolou, European Data and Related Services, European Commission, Publications Office of the EU

Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, and Alexis Goosdeel, Director of the EMCDDA, gave a joint press conference on the launch of the *European Drug Report 2023*, held on 16 June at the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium.

All elements of the report, as well as speeches and press material, are [available online](#).



EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel and EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson on the occasion of the EDR launch press conference

Collaboration between the EMCDDA and the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) continued in 2023 on the preparation of the next survey to be launched in 2024. ESPAD, the largest global cross-national research project on adolescent substance use, combines independent research teams from more than 40 European countries.

New trends and health threats

New and flexible monitoring tools are required to complement the EMCDDA's core monitoring system to improve the timeliness of reporting.

Work in this area included further development of the EMCDDA's web survey activities and strengthening the relationships between the EMCDDA and networks of data-generating experts, such as: the Sewage Analysis CORE group Europe (SCORE) for the analysis of wastewater; the European Drug Emergencies Network (Euro-DEN Plus), a network of emergency rooms; the Trans European Drug Information (TEDI) project, which is engaged in the forensic analysis of drug samples; and the European Syringe Collection and Analysis Project Enterprise (ESCAPE), which focuses on syringe residue analysis.

Web survey on drugs and the trendspotter method

In January, the EMCDDA published the eighth and final web survey paper in a series dedicated to monitoring drug use in the digital age. The paper describes the development and results of the [Party Panel web survey](#), which addresses emerging risks in Dutch nightlife settings. Web surveys are a key element in today's toolkit for monitoring the drug problem. The EMCDDA prepared the next round of web surveys to be launched in May 2024.

Since 2011 the EMCDDA has complemented its routine drug monitoring methodologies by conducting regular trendspotter studies. No trendspotter studies were conducted in 2023. However, the EMCDDA worked on a concept to develop health and security threat assessment capabilities in order to make the EU better prepared to detect and respond to these new threats, which will be one of the main tasks of the EUDA.

In addition, the EMCDDA released a [Ukrainian translation of its trendspotter study](#), published in 2022. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, neighbouring EU countries have delivered a rapid humanitarian response, providing urgent support to meet the health and social needs of those fleeing the country. In this briefing, the EMCDDA looks at how these countries are responding to the needs of displaced persons who use drugs and how they can be better prepared for the future. EMCDDA trendspotter studies are designed to examine emerging drug-related trends.

Wastewater analysis

The [latest findings](#) from the largest European project in the science of wastewater analysis were revealed in March and published by the Europe-wide SCORE group in association with the EMCDDA.

The project analysed wastewater in a record 104 European cities from 21 countries (20 EU + Türkiye) to explore the drug-taking behaviours of their inhabitants. Ketamine was included in the analysis for the first time in 2022, bringing the total number of substances examined to six.

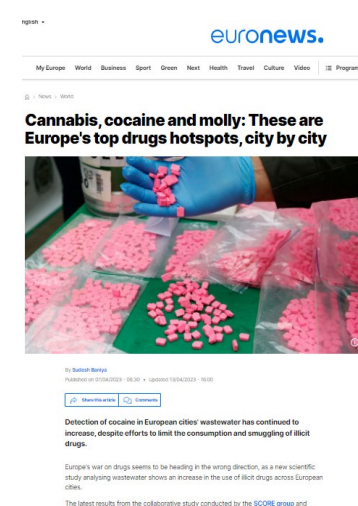
Wastewater samples from some 54 million people were analysed for traces of five illicit stimulant drugs (cocaine, amphetamine, methamphetamine, MDMA/ecstasy and ketamine) as well as cannabis.

The results provide a valuable snapshot of the drug flow through the cities involved, revealing marked geographical variations, and are available in English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish. The findings of the project have received considerable attention from media across Europe (see Figure 1.)

Drug checking and syringe testing

Health risk communication strategies for drug-checking services in Europe are the focus of a new EMCDDA [manual](#) launched in November. The resource provides staff working in these services with practical guidance on communicating drug-related risks at both the individual and community level. Drug-checking services are available in 11 EU Member States and other parts of the world. They provide

FIGURE 1. Article released in [Euronews](#) on 7 April 2023



potentially life-saving information on the content of drugs based on chemical analysis of samples submitted to them by people who use drugs.

In 2023 the EMCDDA finalised a first trial on [hair drug testing](#) in four countries (Portugal, France, Italy and Lithuania), which can detect illicit drugs in hair as well as their breakdown products (metabolites).

The latest patterns of injecting drug use gathered from a selection of European cities were presented in July in a new analysis from the EMCDDA. The findings are from the agency's ESCAPE project, which investigates the substances used by people who inject drugs by chemically analysing the content of used syringes. In the latest [ESCAPE data-collection round \(2022\)](#), the contents of 1 845 used syringes were analysed via a sentinel network of harm-reduction sites in 10 EU cities, plus Oslo, Odessa and Tunis. The results show that a highly diverse range of drugs are being injected in Europe, with a total of 54 psychoactive substances identified.

Emergencies network

The EMCDDA also collects and analyses data on emergency department presentations with acute drug toxicity via the European Drug Emergencies Network (Euro-DEN Plus). Since its creation in 2013, the network — now composed of over 30 sentinel hospitals in 22 countries — has recorded over 65 000 presentations to emergency services. In July the EMCDDA published a new analysis, [European Drug Emergencies Network \(Euro-DEN Plus\): data and analysis](#), providing the latest findings on acute drug-toxicity presentations to hospital emergency services.

Responding to new psychoactive substances: EU Early Warning System and risk assessment

In 2023 the EMCDDA continued to ensure the robust implementation of the EU EWS on NPS, under the EU legislative framework on NPS ⁽¹⁾ and in close collaboration with its partners in the Member States (the Reitox network of EWS correspondents), Europol, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and other partner EU agencies (the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)).

The signals of serious harms, reported by the network and detected through the toxicovigilance and OSI monitoring systems, continued to be validated, analysed, prioritised and assessed through the signal management system, leading to informed recommendations for action. One of the key outputs from the EWS included risk communications issued to the EWS network, namely: rapid formal notifications of the first detection in Europe of new substances; public health alerts on NPS and controlled drugs; the dynamic exchange of forensic and toxicological analytical data; and outputs relating to the implementation of the new NPS legislation.

In a nutshell, the EMCDDA's main activities in this area were as follows.

- Case reports on the identification of 26 NPS detected for the first time in the EU were reported in a timely manner to the EU EWS, processed and analysed; the available literature on each of these substances was assessed, and the existing information was appraised prior to issuing the formal notifications to the EU EWS network.
- Almost 950 NPS were monitored by the EU EWS, as of the end of 2023.
- Eight public-health-related communications, including alerts, were issued to the EU EWS network.

⁽¹⁾ From 23 November 2018, Council Decision 2005/387/JHA was replaced by Regulation (EU) 2017/2101 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2017 amending Regulation (EC) No 1920/2006 as regards information exchange on, and an early warning system and risk assessment procedure for, new psychoactive substances.

Operation of the EU EWS

Network management and the provision of technical assistance on a daily basis to the members of the Reitox EWS network continued to be among the EMCDDA's central activities.

The 23rd EWS meeting took place on 21-22 June. The meeting brought together around 80 participants (of whom 30 joined online) from across Europe, including delegates from national early warning systems (EU 27, Türkiye and Norway), as well as from Europol, the European Commission, the EMCDDA and other bodies. Experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) provided an international perspective.



Participants at the 23rd annual EU EWS meeting in Lisbon

All the presentations given at this meeting and the minutes of the proceedings were published in the European Database on New Drugs (EDND).

Support for situational awareness, preparedness and responses

Reflecting the world-leading expertise of the EMCDDA and its role in the NPS area, particularly in relation to early warning, the agency provided high-quality technical input to a total of 105 institutional requests, including from the European Commission, the Council, the Parliament and international organisations.

Dissemination of knowledge and expertise on NPS

In 2023 the EMCDDA proactively engaged with forensic science and toxicological networks (such as the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes, the European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists, the European Customs Laboratories, the International Alliance of Clinical and Forensic Toxicologists, and the International Association of Forensic Toxicologists) and participated in key scientific events, including conferences organised by these groups.

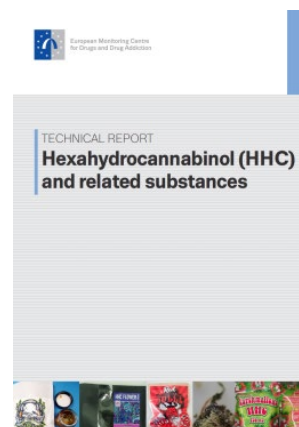
The EMCDDA was also a keynote speaker (online) in the session 'Towards strengthened preparedness and response to New Psychoactive Substances in Europe', at the X International Conference on Novel Psychoactive Substances that took place in Abu Dhabi from 6 to 8 November. This prestigious annual conference aims to share knowledge and strengthen collaboration on NPS among multidisciplinary professionals at the international level, in order to benefit society and improve lives.

The update 'New psychoactive substances – the current situation in Europe' was presented on a dedicated [web page](#) which was part of the digitally revamped *European Drug Report 2023*.

In April the EMCDDA published the new technical report [Hexahydrocannabinol \(HHC\) and Related Substances](#). Synthesised from cannabidiol (CBD) extracted from low-THC cannabis plants (hemp), HHC is the first semi-synthetic cannabinoid (SSC) to be reported in the EU (it has been monitored as a new psychoactive substance by the EU EWS since October 2022).

The purpose of this report is to raise awareness of the rapidly evolving market for HHC and related SSCs and to provide an authoritative first overview of what is known so far. The report was informed by the technical expert meeting which took place online on 16 December 2022, for around 150 participants.

Drawing on the analysis prepared for the *European Drug Report 2023* and the *EU Drug Markets Report* (drafted jointly with Europol; see 'Main area 2: Security' below), the EMCDDA also prepared the briefing note *Understanding the Role Played by Synthetic Opioids in Europe's Opioid Situation with a Focus on Fentanyl and Other New Synthetic Opioids*. This note was produced by the EMCDDA at the request of the Swedish Presidency of the Council and the European Commission and the European External Action Service to support the preparation of the EU-US JHA Ministerial Meeting and exchanges within the framework of the EU-US Dialogue on Drugs. It feeds into the development of knowledge and evidence-based EU-US cooperation.



Work with international organisations and third countries

Reflecting the world-leading expertise of the EMCDDA and its role in the NPS area, particularly in relation to early warning, each year the agency provides information, expertise and advice to the UNODC and the WHO. To that end, periodic submission of data took place in 2023, on behalf of the EU Member States, on NPS formally notified by the EU EWS in 2022 and 2023, in addition to the submission of data on all NPS detected in 2022, by country, through annual situation reports.

The EMCDDA also provided the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD) with data for the prioritisation process and for the preparation of critical reviews, which informed the discussions held at the 46th ECDD meeting.

The agency's work with EU priority third countries, namely candidates and potential candidates to the EU, continued in 2023 under the framework of the IPA8 project. In that regard, all 26 formal notifications on NPS detected in Europe were issued in a timely manner to the IPA8 beneficiaries, as required.

Two participants from the IPA8 beneficiaries Serbia and Montenegro participated online at the annual meeting of the EU EWS network.

Thirteen participants from neighbouring countries (project EU4MD II) participated online in a dedicated session of the EU EWS annual meeting on 22 June.

Furthermore, as part of the bilateral technical assistance project with Georgia (EMCDDA4GE), on 25–26 March, 15 Georgian experts attended a workshop in the region of Kakheti on the development of the Georgian national early-warning system (NEWS) for new psychoactive substances. Staff from the Georgian National Drug Observatory (NDO) were joined by representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Healthcare, the Central Criminal Police Department, the Customs Department of the Revenue Service, the State Regulation Agency for Medical and Pharmaceutical Activities and the Forensic Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The aim of the workshop was to provide a better understanding of the functioning of a NEWS, its different components and partners and its importance for drug policy. The workshop was delivered by experts from the EMCDDA and the Belgian NFP.

Finally, a regional seminar on new methodologies (wastewater and web surveys) and early warning systems for CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) countries took place in Chile, from 24 to 28 April, under the COPOLAD III project, which the EMCDDA became an official partner of in July 2022. The meeting was attended by 68 participants, out of which 39 were from COPOLAD III beneficiaries.

More information on the technical cooperation projects implemented by the EMCDDA can be found below in 'Business driver 2: Partnership'.

On 7 July, the EMCDDA, represented by Director Alexis Goosdeel, attended the virtual Ministerial Meeting to launch the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats, which was hosted by the United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The event gathered together nearly 100 countries and international organisations committed to accelerated action on synthetic drugs. The EMCDDA delivered a presentation in 'Panel Two: Detect Emerging Drug Threats and Use Patterns', featuring highlights from the EMCDDA's experience of almost 30 years of drug monitoring in Europe and 26 years of implementing the EU EWS on NPS. Mr Goosdeel also introduced the future European Union Drug Agency (EUDA). This intervention was praised by the US hosts, who acknowledged the EMCDDA's central role in EU drug monitoring.

'... On behalf of INL, please accept my sincere gratitude for playing an important role in launching the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats at the virtual Ministerial hosted by Secretary Blinken on July 7. It was an exceptional event, with almost 100 countries and international organizations attending, and EMCDDA's participation provided a significant contribution. We greatly appreciated your presentation during the second panel on Detecting Emerging Drug Threats and Use Patterns. We commend the EMCDDA for its impactful work in monitoring the evolving drug markets in the European Union and are grateful that your findings could be shared with the Coalition members ...'

Todd D. Robinson, Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, USA — by letter to the EMCDDA Director

Risk assessments on NPS, and control measures within the EU

No risk assessments on NPS were required in 2023.

Prepare the implementation of the new EUDA mandate in the area of NPS

Much of the work in the area of NPS in 2023 was dedicated to the preparation for the EUDA expanded mandate, due for application in July 2024. While under the new Regulation the functioning of the EU EWS will not change, the NPS area will be required to make an even greater contribution to the EU preparedness to tackle drugs.

In that regard, and closely linked to the EU EWS activities, the EUDA will establish and operate a European Drug Alert System (EDAS), as well as a network of forensic and toxicological laboratories. To this end, work to conceptualise the two new tasks started in 2023. This included the development of new projects, the coordination of dedicated transversal working groups and defining the requirements for the additional expertise that the EUDA will need to implement the expanded mandate in this area.

Importantly, in December the EMCDDA Management Board adopted the terms of reference concerning the establishment and operation of the EUDA network of forensic and toxicological laboratories. The Board also adopted the rules and procedures for the appointment of national representative laboratories to this new network.

Furthermore, in November the agency launched a call for experts to support the risk assessment of NPS under the EUDA. The selected experts will be included on a list to be approved by the EUDA Management Board for a four-year period. For the purpose of assessing the risks of NPS, the Scientific Committee may be extended as considered necessary by the Executive Director, acting on the advice of the Chair of the Scientific Committee. This entails designating experts from the list who represent the scientific fields relevant for enabling a balanced risk assessment of the substance(s) concerned.

Health and social interventions for drug-related problems

The EMCDDA has an important responsibility to act as a catalyst for improving the quality and delivery of responses to reduce the health and social consequences associated with drug use.

[*Health and social responses to drug problems: a European guide*](#) examines some of the key public health challenges in the drugs field today and offers timely and practical advice to practitioners and policymakers for designing, targeting and implementing effective responses. This guide and the associated package of online materials provide a reference point for planning and delivering health and social responses to drug problems in Europe.

In 2023, the EMCDDA published a set of three miniguides on the following topics:



Additionally, the two EMCDDA miniguides focusing on homelessness and families are now available in a further four languages: Bulgarian, German, Spanish and French.

All miniguides and spotlights published are [available online](#).

Best practice portal

The EMCDDA continues to identify best practices in interventions throughout the EU and beyond, as well as the factors that determine their effectiveness. The main dissemination channel for this information is the best practice portal. Full details and up-to-date references can be found on the [EMCDDA best practice portal](#).

Training and capacity building

Training measures are another effective means of disseminating best practices. Several such events were held during the year, including Reitox Academies and other training initiatives. One example is the RTX Academy on 'Implementation of data collection on drugs and prison', which took place in Cyprus in June (see 'Business driver 2: Partnership' for details)

In 2023 the EMCDDA and the University Institute of Lisbon continued their fruitful cooperation and organised a European Drugs Winter School and a European Drugs Summer School:

- Winter School: 13-24 February 2023 (online): 27 students of 18 different nationalities participated;
- Summer School: 26 June-7 July 2023 (Lisbon): 51 students of 29 different nationalities participated.



EMCDDA staff with Summer School students in Lisbon

EUPC training

The EMCDDA's European Prevention Curriculum (EUPC), which aims to professionalise prevention workers, is an initiative that contributes to improving the overall effectiveness of prevention efforts. More than 25 EU Member States and neighbouring countries now have national EUPC trainers.

In 2023, the following 'Training for Trainer (ToT)' workshops were organised:

- 27-31 March: 19 EUPC trainers-to-be from Armenia, Estonia, Brazil, Belgium, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland, Latvia, Cyprus, Portugal, Poland, Croatia and Germany followed an intensive back-teaching and group training;
- 13-17 November: 14 EUPC trainers-to-be from Portugal, the Netherlands, Norway, Italy, Estonia, Poland, Lebanon and Sweden followed an intensive back-teaching and group training.

In addition, four EUPC basic and advanced courses with 67 participants were organised.

'I had the privilege of attending the EUPC [European Prevention Curriculum] training to improve my skills and become an advocate of this practice, aiming to better influence the opinions and decisions of decision-makers on prevention issues, particularly in the field of addiction.'

The training allowed me to meet professionals from different countries, strengthening our capacity to contribute positively to changing how our society approaches prevention issues related to addiction.'

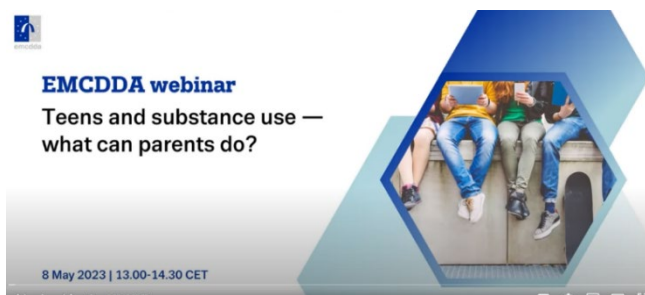
Tamara Maziashvili. Project Officer, Public Health Research & Management, France



Within its partnership with the COPOLAD III programme, the EMCDDA prepared a culturally adapted version of the basic EUPC training course for Latin America and the Caribbean, with training delivered in the second half of 2023 (see 'Business driver 2: Partnership' for details).

EMCDDA webinars

Throughout the year the EMCDDA continued to organise webinars, which are designed to give a voice to professionals working in the drugs field and are conceived as conversations around key topics of interest and emerging challenges. During 2023 a record number of more than 4 800 participants from all over the world attended eight [EMCDDA webinars](#) (see Figure 2).



The event with most participants (around 1 000) was held in May on the topic 'Teens and substance use: what parents can do'. The recording of the webinar had been seen by more than 750 people by the end of 2023.

The recordings of all webinars organised during the year were made available on the [EMCDDA YouTube channel](#) and reached a total of around 4 600 views by the end of 2023.

FIGURE 2. EMCDDA webinars 2023



Harm reduction

In 2023 the EMCDDA continued to promote good practices in harm reduction, including the integration of evidence-based practices, interventions and policies into routine healthcare and public health settings.

Through monitoring the achievement of health sector targets regarding viral hepatitis in the WHO European Region, specifically those relating to people who inject drugs, the centre supported the evaluation of progress made at the European level towards eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030. This includes the assessment of epidemiological trends and evaluating the results of the EMCDDA's work on promoting hepatitis C virus (HCV) testing in drug treatment settings and further disseminating HCV capacity-building materials and the sharing of national experiences. A key partner in this area is the ECDC.

Key interventions to prevent and control infections among people who inject drugs: in the spotlight

In November the EMCDDA released a new [public health guidance](#) on *Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases among People who Inject Drugs*, in collaboration with the ECDC. The main results were presented in a joint webinar organised in December with over 350 participants.

With this guidance, the ECDC and EMCDDA aim to support policymakers, drug professionals and civil society organisations by providing an evidence base for national strategies, policies and programmes for people who inject drugs.

To accompany the guidance, the EMCDDA also published two technical reports.

- [Evidence](#) for the Effectiveness of Interventions to Prevent Infections among People who Inject Drugs: Drug Treatment, Needle and Syringe Programmes and Drug Consumption Rooms for Preventing Hepatitis C, HIV and Injecting Risk Behaviour
- [Evidence](#) for the Effectiveness of Interventions to Prevent Infections among People who Inject Drugs: Review of Mathematical Modelling Studies of Opioid Agonist Treatment and Needle and Syringe Programmes for Preventing Hepatitis C Transmission

To mark World AIDS Day on 1 December, the EMCDDA showcased the latest data on [HIV among people who inject drugs](#), exploring how countries are performing in terms of global health sector objectives to tackle HIV/AIDS.



In December the EMCDDA and the C-EHRN published the latest [overview on drug consumption rooms \(DCRs\) in Europe](#).

The report aims to inform discussions on these facilities by examining the available evidence and reviewing the various models adopted. According to the report, the geographical distribution of DCRs is uneven at both the international and regional levels.

In June the EMCDDA organised a technical meeting with around 40 participants to discuss new trends, recent developments and challenges for DCRs in Europe.

In November the EMCDDA held its first technical meeting on 'Mental health and substance use: understanding and addressing dual disorders in Europe' with high-level European and international experts in the field. Issues related to the specific combination of mental health and substance use, social issues related to mental health (COVID, economic recession) and interventions were discussed.

Better access to drug-related services for asylum seekers, and empowering reception centre workers through training in drug-use response, are among the priorities highlighted in a new EMCDDA report released in October.

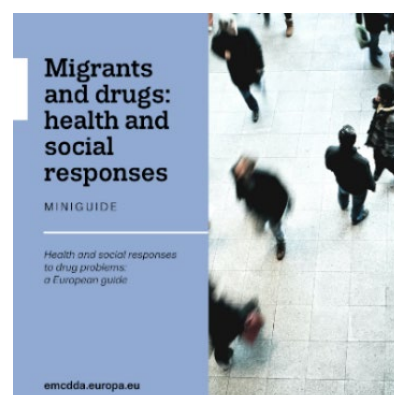
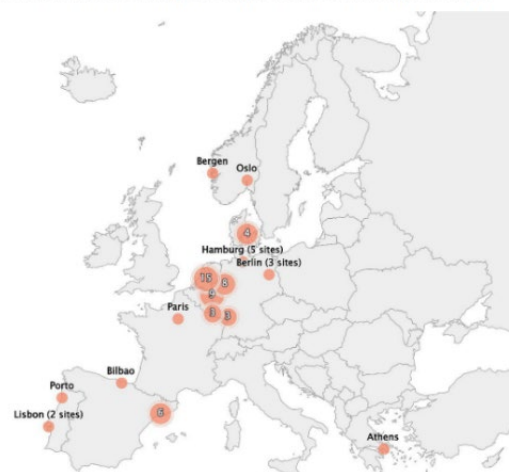
The study — [Professionals Working in Reception Centres in Europe: An Overview of Drug-Related Challenges and Support Needs](#) — is a joint endeavour between the EMCDDA and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). The two agencies joined forces in 2021 to identify the needs and challenges faced by national reception authorities in the EU-27 plus Norway and Switzerland (EU+ countries).

As the first European analysis to explore this issue, the report aims to inform future activities to help implement related responses in reception settings. It describes the context of substance use and the utilisation of healthcare services among applicants for international protection in EU+ countries.

Health and social responses for migrants who use drugs are also explored in a new [EMCDDA miniguide](#) launched on 18 December to mark International Migrants Day.

The resource is one of a series of miniguides making up the agency's latest overview of actions and interventions that respond to the consequences of illicit drug use.

Location and number of drug consumption facilities throughout Europe



Drug policies

Support for drug policy at EU level

At the level of the EU institutions, the agency supported sound policymaking through high-quality technical input to requests, events, processes and relevant institutional meetings.

The EMCDDA Director had meetings with members of the European Parliament. He presented the main findings of the *European Drug Report 2023* to the Committee for Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE). He also had regular meetings throughout the year with the Commission's services (see 'EMCDDA Director — main activities').

In February, the EMCDDA delivered a presentation on 'Low THC cannabis products' at a workshop on 'Hemp in the CAP reform' organised by the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

In terms of the Council's activities, the EMCDDA supported the Swedish EU presidency in their thematic focus on gender and drugs, as well as the Spanish EU presidency with regard to the topic of mental health. This latter included input into the Council's conclusions on people who have drug use disorders that co-occur with other mental health disorders. By invitation, the agency participated in a number of institutional and technical meetings, such as the meetings of the Horizontal Drugs Group (HDG) and the EU's Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI), the meetings of the National Drugs Coordinators, the policy dialogues of the EU with third countries and the Dublin Group meeting.

The EMCDDA prepared briefing notes for the EU Presidency, the members of the HDG and the European Commission on various topics, for example the national drug monitoring systems in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Further briefing notes were drafted to inform the EU-Colombia, EU- Brazil and EU-US dialogues on drugs.

In March the EMCDDA attended the [66th session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs \(CND\)](#) to provide technical support to the European Commission and the EU Member States. During this event, the EMCDDA delegation participated in several side events on topics ranging from international cooperation and research to overdose prevention and drug policy.

The EMCDDA also contributed to the EC enlargement package, providing a briefing note based on the agency's ongoing cooperation (EMCDDA-IPA8 EU-funded project) and exchange with the competent institutions in the region.

Monitoring and reporting on key policy developments

The EMCDDA monitors and follows important policy developments. Changes in the field of cannabis present countries with new challenges in dealing with the most commonly used illicit drug in Europe. Throughout the year the EMCDDA provided regular support and information on cannabis policy to national policy- and decision-makers. For example, the agency commented on a draft law in Belgium on regulated cannabis.

Five EU Member States (Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic) and Switzerland are currently introducing or planning new approaches to regulating the supply of cannabis for recreational use. In September the EMCDDA participated in the 2nd Ministerial Consultation on the legal regulation of cannabis for non-medical, non-scientific use in the European Union, which took place in Malta.

In response to the high political interest in the topic, the EMCDDA maintains an innovative rapid information system for cannabis policy news called 'Regulatory Cannabis – news feed'. This tool provides policymakers with timely updates on cannabis policy and serves as an interactive digital platform to improve information exchange.

Cannabis laws in Europe: in the spotlight

The speed, and possible scope of changes in cannabis policy, together with the potential impact of these changes on public health and safety, are among the factors which prompted the EMCDDA to publish the report [Cannabis Laws in Europe: Questions and Answers for Policymaking](#).

This publication answers some of the more frequently asked questions raised in discussions about cannabis legislation, and was one of the most viewed resources on the EMCDDA website in 2023.

The report outlines some of the recent changes in cannabis policy in Europe. Over the last 20 years, the general trend in national laws across Europe has been to reduce, or even remove, prison sentences for minor cannabis possession offences.



In November the EMCDDA and Europol released a joint publication under the title [EU Drug Market: Cannabis](#) analysing the illegal European market for cannabis products, from production and trafficking to distribution and use. It also details the processes, materials and criminal actors involved at different stages and levels of the market (see 'Main area 2: Security'). Two webinars were organised around the topic of cannabis (see Figure 3):

- Launch: EU Drug Markets – cannabis (EMCDDA-Europol Webinar)
- Cannabis regulation in Europe: country experiences

In October the EMCDDA organised a technical cooperation visit to Montevideo to launch the technical dialogue on cannabis policy in Uruguay, alongside a workshop on cannabis policy evaluation. During the year, the centre also prepared an update for the publication of *Monitoring and Evaluating Changes in Cannabis Policies: Insights from the Americas*, due for release in 2024.

Additional information on the topic can be found on the [EMCDDA Cannabis hub](#).

Prison and drugs

The EMCDDA has been monitoring the field of drugs and prison as a central component of its work over the past few decades. In February the agency participated in the launch of the [Status Report on Prison Health in the WHO European Region 2022](#) at an event hosted by the Portuguese Government. The report provides an overview of health problems in prison and the performance of prison health systems in the region, based on survey data from 36 countries.

The EMCDDA collaborated further with WHO Europe on this topic as a member of both the steering committee of the WHO's Health in Prisons Programme (HIPP) and the technical expert group of the WHO's Health in Prisons European Database. In June the EMCDDA organised an RTX Academy on 'Implementation of data collection on drugs and prison', which was attended by 50 participants from more than 10 countries (see 'Business driver 2: Partnership').

Additional information on the topic can be found on the EMCDDA [prisons topic page](#).

Women and drugs

Women make up approximately a quarter of all people with serious drug problems in Europe and around one-fifth of all entrants to drug treatment. Yet much still needs to be done to provide interventions tailored to their needs, with many drug services remaining male-oriented. These issues were explored by the EMCDDA in a new miniguide, [Women and drugs: health and social responses](#), released on International Women's Day. This guide outlines key considerations for planning and delivering health and social responses for this group, reviews the availability and effectiveness of existing services and explores the implications for policy and practice.

In addition to providing support for the Swedish Presidency on the topic of gender and drugs, the agency also led a series of gender-focused mini-conferences on themes including gender responsive interventions, gender-based violence and drugs, and narcofeminism.

More resources on the topic can be found on the [EMCDDA gender and drugs topic page](#).

Impact of economic recession

In November the EMCDDA organised a meeting on 'The impact of the economic recession on drug use', attended by around 20 experts nominated by the national RTX focal points, and 12 international experts in the field. The EMCDDA also co-authored a scientific article entitled '[Identifying the impact of the business cycle on drug-related harms in European countries](#)', published in the December issue of the *International Journal of Drug Policy*.

Medical use of psychedelics

In February the first 'Technical meeting on the medical use of psychedelic substances: opportunities and concerns' was organised in Lisbon, bringing together 20 experts from 17 different European organisations and academic institutions. This multidisciplinary exchange contributed to creating a better understanding of key developments across the fields of policy, research and practice, as fast-paced developments have raised important questions about the evidence for their effectiveness in medical use, as well as potential harms and policy responses.

In addition, the EMCDDA worked on the findings from a recently launched initiative on the medical use of controlled psychedelic substances (e.g. LSD, psilocybin, DMT and MDMA).

Support for drug policy in the Member States and priority third countries

National policymakers constitute one of the key customer groups identified in the *EMCDDA Strategy 2025*, and the agency carried out several activities in relation to this group in 2023.

The EMCDDA supported national policymakers by assessing national drug strategies and action plans, providing technical assistance upon request and carrying out proactive capacity-building activities.

In 2023 capacity-building support was provided to Hungary and Kosovo for policy formulation and evaluation and to develop their new national drug strategies. In addition, the EMCDDA provided comments on draft legislation in Belgium (regulated cannabis) and Portugal (NPS).

Throughout the year, the EMCDDA provided numerous contributions and advice to the Irish 'Citizens' Assembly on Drug Use', which was established to consider legislative, policy and operational changes to reduce the harmful impact of illicit drugs on individuals, families, communities and Irish society in general. The EMCDDA's input was used to publish a [final report](#) containing 36 recommendations for a new Irish model to reduce the harm caused by illicit drug use.



'I'd also really like to thank the EMCDDA as an institution. Its multiple contributions to this process have been invaluable in informing public discourse, providing a reliable source of data, knowledge and expertise, and ultimately, I hope, helping to reshape drugs policy in Ireland.'

Cathal O'Regan, Secretary to the Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use

During the year, the EMCDDA Director had high-level contacts with authorities in several Member States. For example, he made an official visit to Austria, where he met with high-level officials, including Minister of Health Johannes Rauch and Minister of Justice Dr Alma Zadić. The Director was accompanied by an EMCDDA delegation and by Franz Pietsch, Chairman of the EMCDDA Management Board and Member for Austria (see 'EMCDDA Director — main activities').

In June the EMCDDA organised the 24th meeting of the Network of Legal and Political Correspondents (hybrid meeting). Topics for discussion included: the latest developments in proposals to regulate cannabis in Europe; data sets on the outcomes of criminal offences related to cannabis use; semi-synthetic cannabinoids; and the unlicensed 'medicinal' use of psychedelics.

In March, a former EMCDDA colleague, Julián Vicente, was awarded the Spanish 'Cruz Blanca de la Orden al Mérito del Plan Nacional sobre Drogas' (White Cross of the Order of Merit of the National Plan on Drugs) in a ceremony conducted by the Spanish Minister of Health on 28 February, which recognised the work of some 20 individuals, entities and public bodies working in the drugs field.

Main area 2: Security

Drug market monitoring and identification of new trends

To support the comprehensive analytical effort in the security area, work continued in 2023 on improving the quality and availability of core supply data, in close collaboration with the Reitox NFPs and the agency's EU partner, Europol.

This core monitoring was complemented by new sources of data and innovative monitoring approaches, such as OSI and darknet monitoring, which have become increasingly important in recent years. In that regard, regular OSI monitoring reports were produced to inform EMCDDA analysis. Furthermore, data on darknet markets were analysed and integrated into routine EMCDDA reporting, while national darknet drug dashboards, underpinned by darkcloud data, continued to be produced and delivered to the Member States participating in the project.

Much of the work in 2023 was dedicated to the preparation of new modules for the fourth edition of the joint publication, *EU Drug Markets: In-depth Analysis*, in close collaboration with Europol. Following on from the modules on cocaine and methamphetamine which were released in 2022, the modules on amphetamine and cannabis were launched in 2023.

EU Drug Markets: In-depth analysis: in the spotlight

EU Drug Market: Amphetamine

Amphetamine is the most common synthetic stimulant available in Europe, constituting a large and stable market worth a minimum of EUR 11 billion annually.

In a new analysis, [EU Drug Market: Amphetamine](#), the EMCDDA and Europol highlighted the existence of sophisticated EU-based amphetamine production, as well as its environmental impact. The study, released on 16 October, covers the supply chain from production and trafficking to distribution and use. It also details the processes, materials and criminal actors involved at different stages and levels of the market.

The report was launched at the webinar 'EU Drug Markets – focus on amphetamine', featuring presentations by three of the agencies' experts.

EU Drug Market: Amphetamine — In-depth analysis



Table of contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	SEARCH WITHIN THE BOOK
Introduction	Key findings and threat assessment
Production in Europe	Global context
Retail markets	Criminal networks
Effects, risks and harms of use	Prices and purities
	Actions to address current threats and increase preparedness

EU Drug Market: Cannabis



Cannabis products are becoming increasingly potent and diverse, while collaboration between criminal groups is creating new security risks in Europe.

These are among the conclusions of the new analysis — [EU Drug Market: Cannabis](#) — released on 16 November by the EMCDDA and Europol. The analysis describes the illegal European market for cannabis products, from production and trafficking to distribution and use. It also details the processes, materials and criminal actors involved at different stages and levels of the market.

The innovative digital format of *EU Drug Markets: In-depth analysis* ensures that this product continues to provide ever more useful recommendations and enhances its role as a key resource for policy and action.



The EMCDDA and Europol will publish further modules in 2024 to complete the strategic analysis. These will cover heroin, MDMA and NPS, as well as impacts and drivers.

Another EMCDDA webinar, 'Methamphetamine in Europe — past and present' was held in February. It explored the origins, development and current problem of methamphetamine in Europe, with a specific focus on Czechia and Spain.

This year also saw the launch of two technical reports, which are presented below.

The report [Captagon Trafficking and the Role of Europe](#) was published in September and examines the role of Europe in the production and trafficking of captagon tablets. It includes the historical background, current production and trafficking, seizures, the consumer market, production within the EU, forensic analysis and purported links to terrorism, based on information provided by seven countries — Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Romania. Further contributions were provided by various countries at an EMCDDA expert meeting in October 2022. The report is the culmination of operational action 1.2 of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) Synthetic Drugs and NPS operational action plan of 2022, 'Improve and analyse the criminal intelligence picture on the production and trafficking of captagon tablets and the role of Europe'. The action was led by Germany (Bundeskriminalamt, BKA) and the EMCDDA.

[The nexus between drug markets and gun violence in the European Union](#) was the focus of a new report from the EMCDDA and the Flemish Peace Institute. This report discusses the connection between the drugs trade and firearms trafficking, focusing on systemic drug-related gun violence. It also examines the societal impact of this violence within the EU. For those interested in understanding the complex nexus between firearms trafficking, drug trafficking and the resulting violence, this report provides valuable insights and analysis.

Support policy and operational responses to drug security challenges

In the policy area, the EMCDDA provided technical input and advice to its key partners, in particular the European Commission. This included the preparation of briefing notes on topics such as the drug situation and markets in Colombia and Ecuador — to support Commissioner Johansson's visit to these two countries — and drug trafficking between Latin America and the EU, as well as several country profiles — to support the Commission in preparing for the visit of President von der Leyen to Latin America from 11 to 16 April 2023 — and methamphetamine production in Afghanistan.

The EMCDDA also contributed input to a security briefing for Commissioner Johansson in February.

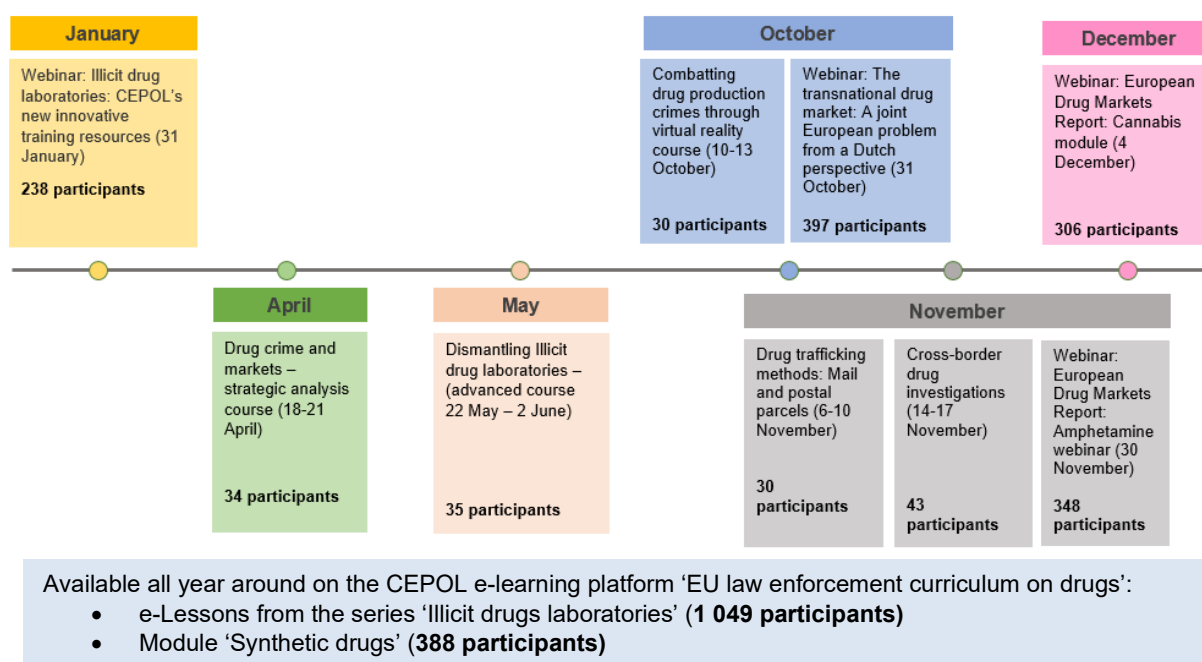
'... I would like to thank you for your excellent presentation at the security briefing for Commissioner Johansson held last Tuesday. Your contribution was truly appreciated, and the questions asked show the high interest of the Commissioner, her Cabinet and DG HOME Senior Management for these policy issues and the role that EMCDDA plays to better understand the drug threats and better counter it. I believe this briefing offered an additional occasion to show the good work that the agency is carrying and I hope that we will have similar occasions in the future ...'

Floriana Sipala, Director for Internal security and counter-terrorism coordinator; DG Migration and Home Affairs

The agency continued to contribute to key EU policy documents and initiatives, such as the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025 and the EMPACT OAPs of the EU policy cycle on organised and serious international crime. In that regard, and within the available resources, the EMCDDA implemented all its tasks under the 2023 EMPACT OAP on Cannabis, Cocaine and Heroin, and the OAP on Synthetic Drugs and NPS. The agency also contributed to the planning and drafting of the OAPs for 2024. A key contribution to the EMPACT OAPs was the newly released modules on amphetamine and cannabis of the fourth edition of the joint EMCDDA-Europol *EU Drug Markets: In-depth Analysis* (see the earlier section of this Security area).

Also contributing to the OAPs, the EMCDDA, together with its partner, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), continued to organise and deliver training activities for law enforcement professionals. Almost 3 000 attendees joined these training activities (online or residential), as presented in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3. CEPOL-EMCDDA training activities 2023



Acknowledging the close cooperation between the two agencies, on 16 February, Montserrat Marín López, Executive Director of CEPOL, paid her first visit to the EMCDDA. The talks focused on cooperation between the two agencies and the EMCDDA's current and future role in the light of the new mandate in 2024. In 2023, the agencies continued to build on the working arrangement signed in 2022 to improve their capacity to deliver training to the European law-enforcement community and reinforce the drug-related content of training curricula.



CEPOL Executive Director Montserrat Marín López and EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel with staff from CEPOL and the EMCDDA.

[EMPACT: keeping the European Union safe](#) is a new EMCDDA web page that describes the agency's involvement in the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT). Formerly known as the EU Policy Cycle, EMPACT is a security initiative that prevents, detects and reacts to threats to the EU, helping to keep it safe. The web page presents the 10 EMPACT crime priorities for the period 2022-2025 and the EMCDDA's involvement in this work. Also provided are links to resources (videos, infographics, factsheets) highlighting results.

In 2023 the EMCDDA also provided input, as required, to the Schengen thematic evaluation carried out by the European Commission. This included a briefing note on *Drug trafficking into EU: Insights to inform Schengen thematic evaluation*, which analysed the trends in drug seizures in the EU from 2011 to 2021, identifying patterns in the changing numbers of seizures and the quantities reported to have been seized. The EMCDDA also participated in the visit to the port of Hamburg, Germany, on 25-26 October.

Furthermore, on 18 October, EU Anti-Trafficking Day, the European Commission adopted an [EU Roadmap](#) designed to step up the fight against drug trafficking and criminal networks, building on the legislative and operational initiatives put forward so far. The drugs trade is one of the most significant security threats faced by the EU today. The Roadmap sets out 17 targeted actions in four priority areas. The Commission will work closely with Member States and its partners to achieve the goals set out in the Roadmap. The EMCDDA provided input to the early drafts when consulted and will be responsible for the implementation of several of the Roadmap actions.

Official visit to the Port of Antwerp following the continued rise in cocaine seizures: in the spotlight

On 7 February the EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel and a representative of Europol accompanied the European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson and the Belgian Minister of the Interior Annelies Verlinden on a visit of the Port of Antwerp, following the continued rise in the quantity of cocaine seized at the port. In recent years, Belgium has seized the largest quantities of cocaine in the EU.



EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel with European Commissioner Ylva Johansson and Belgian Minister of Interior Annelies Verlinden with their respective delegations during the visit to the Port of Antwerp

The EMCDDA Director commented:

'High levels of cocaine production in South America have resulted in record quantities being seized in Europe, with Belgium seizing the largest amounts of the drug in the EU. The exceptionally large cocaine seizures made in Antwerp, and in other European ports, indicate that the growing flow of cocaine now threatens the entire European Union. I am deeply concerned that the expanding EU cocaine market is bringing a rise in violence and corruption and a strain on public institutions and governance. It also increases the risk of crack and cocaine use in all EU Member States. Based on available data and scientific evidence, we must adapt our responses to reduce drug supply and demand.

This requires a more holistic and strategic analysis to capture the complexity of the drug market's transformation in recent years and to design new and innovative approaches to the problem.

We stand together with the European institutions and national authorities to reduce the availability of cocaine, protect our neighbourhoods and communities, and keep our citizens and their families safe from this drug's harmful health and social effects.'



Press conference in the framework of the visit to the Port of Antwerp.

On 28 March the EMCDDA welcomed a delegation from Europol, headed by Executive Director Catherine De Bolle. During the visit new ways of cooperating were explored in the light of the two agencies' revised mandates. Europol's new mandate entered into force in June 2022, with the aim of strengthening its capacity to better support the EU Member States in combatting serious and organised crime and terrorism.

The annual meeting and proceedings of the reference group on drug supply indicators took place on 6-7 November at the EMCDDA in Lisbon. The event gathered together representatives of the Member States along with key partners, namely the European Commission, Europol, Eurojust, Frontex and CEPOL. Participants from the candidates and potential candidates covered by the IPA8 project also attended.

The meeting included presentations on the amphetamine, cannabis and heroin modules of *EU Drug Markets: In-depth Analysis*, as well as co-production sessions on the next modules of the report — on MDMA, NPS and on the key strategic insights, — to be published in 2024. A plenary session to present the new mandate of the EU Drugs Agency was also organised by the EMCDDA.

The EMCDDA expert Laurent Laniel was presented with the medal of excellence of the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre-Narcotics ([MAOC \(N\)](#)) by its Executive Director, Sjoerd Top, at a ceremony held on 18 October in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Mr Laniel received the award for his professionalism, expertise, dedication and collaboration in tracking drug trafficking in the Atlantic and Mediterranean maritime domains. Medals were also awarded to distinguished national law enforcement and military officials as well as to staff members from Frontex and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).



Europol Executive Director, Catherine De Bolle, with EMCDDA Director, Alexis Goosdeel, at the EMCDDA in Lisbon

Main area 3: Business drivers

Business driver 1: Institutional

Governance and institutional developments


In the year of the 30th anniversary of the EMCDDA founding regulation, the new EUDA regulation entered into force, expanding the mandate of the agency.

The most significant development in this area was the entering into force on 1 July of the [new Regulation of the European Union Drugs Agency \(EUDA\)](#), which grants Europe stronger powers to tackle current and future drug problems. The new Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council revises the mandate of the EMCDDA, in order to keep pace with an ever-more complex and rapidly changing drug phenomenon. Consequently, the EMCDDA will become the EUDA on 2 July 2024, the day on which the regulation enters into application.

On 8 February 1993, the adoption of Council Regulation (EEC) No 302/93 marked the birth of the EMCDDA. This was a milestone in the history of European action on drugs, symbolising a major political decision to build drug policies on scientific evidence rather than on ideology. Since its creation, the EMCDDA has provided strategic analysis in a policy area that cuts across health and security.


However, in recent years, there has been an increasing disconnect between the complexity and developments of today's drug phenomenon and the provision of the current mandate. With a more proactive remit, adapted to the current reality, the new EUDA will be better equipped to support the EU and its Member States in addressing emerging issues in this field. This support will focus on three key areas: monitoring, preparedness and competence development for better interventions.

The new legislation has its roots in a proposal from the European Commission on 12 January 2022, which called for a stronger mandate for the agency that would empower it to perform the tasks needed to address current and future challenges related to illicit drugs. After the endorsement by the European Parliament of the provisional deal from inter-institutional negotiations on creating the EUDA on 13 June 2023, the Council of the EU adopted the EUDA Regulation on 27 June.

 Council of the EU Press release 27 June 2023 12:15


Council gives final green light to creation of EU drugs agency

The Council today adopted a legislative act which will replace the existing European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) with a European Union Drugs Agency. The agency will play a key role in the EU's response to new health and security challenges posed by illicit drugs. The seat of the agency will continue to be in Lisbon, Portugal.



Illicit drugs and drug trafficking cause immense harm to our society. It is often one of the root causes of violent organised crime, and is both a national and global security problem. Thanks to the EU Drugs Agency, the EU will be better equipped to tackle these challenges in the future.

— Gunnar Strömmer, Swedish minister of justice



I welcome that the role of the EU Drugs Agency in preventing and addressing the health and social implications of drugs and drug addictions will be strengthened.

— Jakob Forssmed, Swedish minister for social affairs and public health

Press release published on the [Council's webpage](#) on 27 June

Ahead of the publication of the new regulation, a special session was held at the EMCDDA Management Board meeting on 29 June to mark the event. In a [video statement](#), the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson congratulated the agency and noted:

‘... With more staff and double the budget, the Drugs Agency will be in a prime position to help the European Union tackle the drug threats we face today ...’

The Commissioner’s statement was followed by contributions from the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the European Parliament, and remarks from the EMCDDA Director and the Chair of the EMCDDA Management Board.



Screenshot of Commissioner Ylva Johansson’s video statement



Alexis Goosdeel,
EMCDDA Director

‘Over the last 30 years, we have seen revolutionary changes in the extent and nature of the drug phenomenon and, today, we witness growing diversity in drug supply and use in Europe. With the new mandate, we will support the EU and its Member States in addressing this situation and will strengthen the EU’s preparedness.

To achieve this, we will provide four service categories: anticipating new and future challenges; alerting on emerging risks and drug-related threats; assessing needs and available responses; and evaluating and disseminating new knowledge and best practice.

We are ready to take on this endeavour and look forward to seeing you in a year to launch our new agency.’

Towards a new European Drugs Agency

‘Today’s legislation represents an important milestone in improving how Europe tackles present and future challenges in the drugs field.

We are confident that, from 2024, the European Union Drugs Agency, with its new fit-for-purpose mission, will provide better support to European and Member States’ policymakers and professionals in the drugs field in addressing the causes and consequences of drug use.

We convey our sincerest thanks to the European Commission for having launched the legislative proposal, and to the French, Czech and Swedish Presidencies of the Council of the EU, along with the European Parliament, who all worked so swiftly towards its adoption.’



Franz Pietsch, Chair of the
EMCDDA Management Board

The EMCDDA began a one-year transition period to prepare for new mandate

The entering into force of the new regulation marked the start of a new phase for the agency — its official transition period towards becoming the EUDA.

In that regard, the transformation has involved the entire organisation and all areas of its operations. At the core business level, in parallel with the work carried out to ensure the delivery of the existing commitments to the agency's customers, and in line with the EMCDDA work programme for 2023 (see 'Main area 1: Health' and 'Main area 2: Security' for more details on the EMCDDA products and services), another priority was preparation for the upcoming expanded mandate. Among other initiatives, 11 internal working groups, involving staff from every unit, were set up to that end. They were complemented by four joint working groups with the Reitox NFPs (see 'Business driver 2: Partnership').

At the corporate level, intensive work was conducted to develop a plan for recruiting new staff members who will join the agency in 2024. This started with a competence mapping project, which was carried out with support from an external consultant with a view to identifying the capacity gaps that need to be filled for the successful implementation of the new mandate.

The substantial increase in the agency's operations will also bring greater needs in the support areas, including planning and procurement activities, and measures have been initiated to mitigate that progressively.

At the governance level, the EMCDDA Management Board adopted new rules and procedures for the functioning of the EUDA from 2 July 2024 (see '2.1 Management Board' in Part IIA). The EMCDDA Director also presented the progress made in the preparation for the launch of the new agency at the Board meetings in June and December. Mr Goosdeel also made presentations at several important events and met with key stakeholders at EU level and in the Member States to discuss the future of the EMCDDA (see 'EMCDDA Director — main activities').

Furthermore, representatives of the European Parliament (EP) visited the EMCDDA on 30 and 31 October to discuss how the agency will adapt to its new mandate in 2024. The delegation was composed of two members of the EP's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) — Isabel Santos, rapporteur for the EUDA Regulation (PT, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats) and shadow rapporteur Ramona Strugariu (RO, Renew Europe Group). The MEPs were accompanied by a political adviser of the Renew Europe Group, Indra Mangule, and Gareth Goldsmith, Administrator at the LIBE Secretariat. Professor Meni Malliori, representative of the EP on the EMCDDA Management Board was also present. Adria Cots Fernandez, from the International Drugs Policy Consortium, member of the Core Group of the Civil Society Forum on Drugs and Chair of the CSFD Working Group on International Drug Policy, participated online in the agenda item on the 'Preparation of the Agency for the implementation of the Regulation on the European Union Agency on Drugs (EUDA), including the dialogue with civil society' and made an intervention. The purpose of the mission was to examine how the agency will proactively adapt to its new mandate before the Regulation enters into application.



EMCDDA staff with representatives of the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament, Ramona Strugariu and Isabel Santos, and Meni Malliori, representative of the EP on the EMCDDA Management Board

Internally, regular internal communications and updates were also provided by the Director to the agency's staff throughout the year.

Communication and service delivery to meet evolving EMCDDA customer needs

As an information agency, the EMCDDA has communication at its core. The *EMCDDA Strategy 2025* defined customer centricity as one of the agency's core values. The strategy gives 'central importance to identifying our customers' needs, developing services and effective communication, as these all represent essential elements for our work to have impact'. This is a prerequisite for the EMCDDA to fulfil its vision of contributing to a 'healthier and more secure Europe' through better-informed drug policy and action.

In 2023 this area continued its transformation in line with the following drivers of change, which were set up in 2022 as part of the EMCDDA new business model initiative:

- customer centricity, boosted by the new business model initiative;
- digital transformation;
- reimagined internal communication, prompted by changing organisational needs.

While customer centricity is the guiding principle in the agency's effort to increase the delivery of value to its key customers, digital transformation enables it.

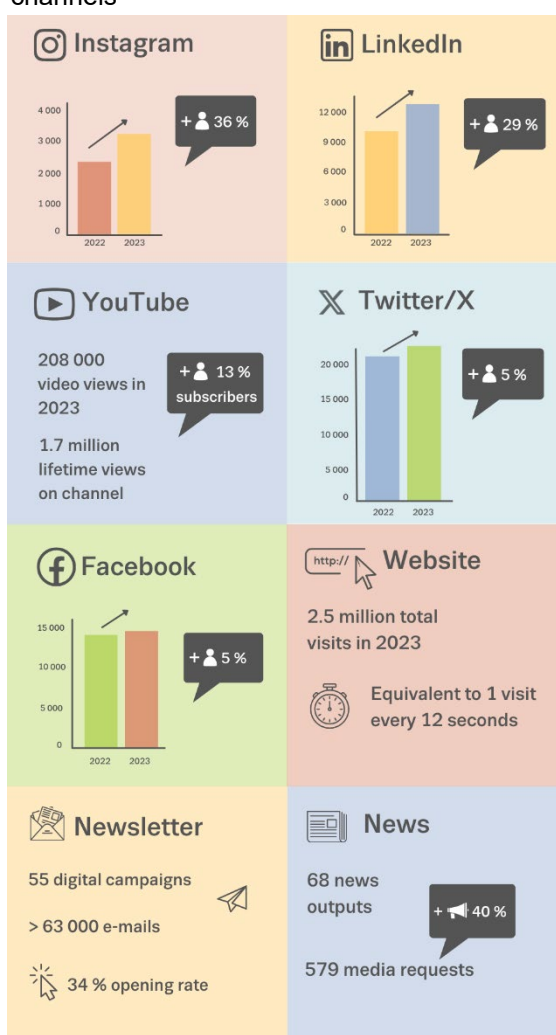
In that regard, enhancing the EMCDDA's digital maturity allows the agency not only to increase this value delivery, but also to thrive as an organisation in a fast-evolving, technology-driven environment. To that end, in 2023 priority continued to be given to ensuring that timely products and services were provided to the agency's key customers via digital channels. This included online training courses and events (e.g. webinars) and digital product launches (see 'Main area 1: Health' and 'Main area 2: Security' for details).

One of the most significant developments in this area was the agency's launch of the digital-first, modular, *European Drug Report* (EDR 2023 – see 'Main area 1: Health'). This completes the transformation of the EMCDDA flagship reports, following the release in similar digital formats of the miniguides comprising the *European Responses Guide* (see 'Main area 1: Health') and the fourth edition of the joint EMCDDA-Europol *EU Drug Markets* report (EDMR – see Main area 2: Security).

The EMCDDA's communication efforts were further focused on ensuring the production of high-quality publications, and a total of 30 scientific and institutional publications were produced in 2023 ⁽²⁾. The agency also authored or co-authored 14 scientific articles and book chapters.

These efforts were accompanied by activities to enhance engagement with the agency's audiences, mainly via online communication channels (see Figure 4 for details). This included some 2.5 million unique visitors to the [EMCDDA website](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications-database_en?f%5B0%5D=pub_date%3A2023) over the course of the year (the equivalent of 1 visit every 12 seconds).

FIGURE 4. EMCDDA online communication channels



⁽²⁾ A full list of publications is available on the EMCDDA website: https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications-database_en?f%5B0%5D=pub_date%3A2023

The upward trend in the number of social media followers also continued in 2023, with the highest increase on Instagram (+36%) and LinkedIn (+29%).

The number of views of EMCDDA videos on the YouTube Channel also rose in 2023, to 1.77 million, which means an overall increase in lifetime views of some 13.5 % compared with 2022 (there were 1.56 million total views by the end of 2022).

Positive engagement with the media also continued in 2023. The EMCDDA serviced 579 requests in the course of the year, 40 % above the number of requests fielded in 2022 (413 requests).

More data on communications metrics can be found in Figure 4 and Annex Ib.

Considerable progress was made in the agency's multilingual work, with the deployment of a new web translation module allowing a more efficient process for the translation of online content. The agency continued exploring the innovative services offered by the Translation Centre — automatic translation, summarisation and light post-editing. During 2023 new additional multilingual content was made available on the agency's website.

Further progress was also achieved in the area of internal communication and collaboration. An internal communication and action plan was developed, while the agency's intranet and internal communication activities continued to improve during the year.

The European Union Drugs Agency branding project

The transition of the EMCDDA to the EUDA represents a change in the very nature of our organisation. We move from being a monitoring centre with a primary role as observer, to an agency empowered to act. In 2023 we launched a branding project to help position ourselves for this fundamental shift.

This shift will have an impact on multiple dimensions, such as:

- organisational culture — values, beliefs, attitudes;
- content — new contents and formats;
- processes — agility, communication, interaction, timeliness;
- people — internal evolution, human resources, new skills and roles, pace of work;
- targets — new target groups, new expectations, new channels.

The branding project sets out to clarify who we are, the breadth of the field we are working in, what we are trying to do, why we are doing it and for whom. The project aimed at delivering a *Brand Guide*, which will act as the tool for guiding communication as the agency develops into its new role.

The drafting of our *Brand Guide* was facilitated by an external consultant with expertise in strategic branding. The core team is composed of members of the Communication unit and colleagues from other units with outward-facing roles or in key related functions, such as strategic planning and human resources. The *Brand Guide* was rolled out across the agency — first to the heads of unit and heads of sector for further discussion and feedback, and then to all EMCDDA staff members. This shared branding now serves as an important element in preparing the organisation for the transition into the EUDA. The branding project was also presented to the Reitox NFPs attending the Reitox Academy on communicating with professionals (19 and 20 September) and the Reitox technical meeting on 4 October. The project was welcomed by the NFPs, who have proposed following the same approach for the Reitox network with regard to the preparation of the 'Reitox Alliance' (see also 'Business driver 2: Partnership').

This project is linked to ongoing work on the agency's corporate identity (new logo and visual identity), which will ensure overall consistency in the agency's communication activities.

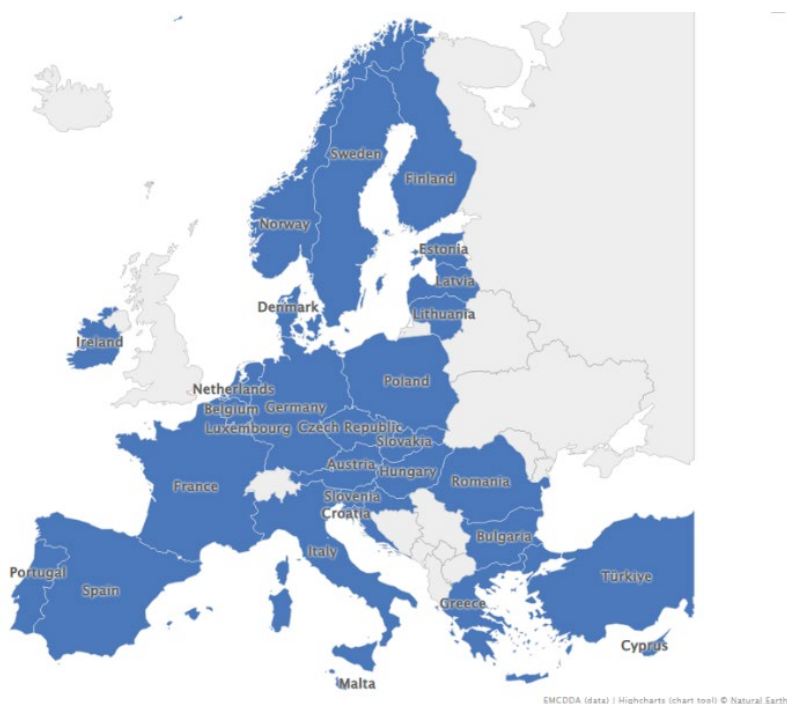
Business driver 2: Partnership

Reitox network activities

Reitox is the European information network on drugs and drug addiction created in 1993, at the same time as the EMCDDA. The abbreviation 'Reitox' is derived from the French 'Réseau Européen d'Information sur les Drogues et les Toxicomanies'. Members of the Reitox network are designated national institutions or agencies responsible for data collection and reporting on drugs and drug addiction. These institutions are called 'national focal points' (NFPs) or 'national drug observatories' (NDOs).

The Reitox network is composed of 29 NFPs in the 27 EU Member States, Norway and Türkiye, as well as a focal point at the European Commission (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5. Member countries of the EMCDDA Reitox network



The NFPs — from which the agency draws the bulk of its data — collect and analyse national information on drugs, drawing on various sectors including health, justice and law enforcement. The NFPs and their activities form the backbone of the agency's work.

The activities of the network are defined every year in the grant agreement signed between each NFP and the EMCDDA, while longer-term strategic options are guided by the Reitox Development Framework (RDF), which was adopted by the network in 2017. These activities are complemented by more operational key tasks and milestones: for the period 2021-2025 these were defined in the second RDF Roadmap — *Roadmap 2025* — which was adopted by the network in 2021 and endorsed by the EMCDDA Management Board.

Ongoing support was provided to the Reitox network in 2023 to assist the NFPs in the implementation of these core documents, and overall, in their activities. This support included regular coordination meetings held by the EMCDDA with the Reitox network spokespersons, and minutes being made available to the entire network. Furthermore, communication with the members of the network continued on EMCDDA Connect, the platform that the agency opened for the network in 2022 to facilitate interactive exchange and collaboration.

The Reitox meetings were one of the preferred means of sharing information and networking.

Two meetings of the Heads of NFPs (HFP) took place in 2023:

- 68th meeting: 24-26 May, and 11th Extended Reitox network meeting (see 'Cooperation with third countries' below): 23 May (Lisbon);
- 69th meeting: 21-23 November (Lisbon).

These were complemented by two technical meetings that took place online on 7 March (23 NFPs participated) and 4 October (28 NFPs).

These events provided opportunities to agree on the national reporting package and tools for 2023, as well as to discuss key topics, such as the revision of the EMCDDA mandate and its impact on the work of the Reitox network, reporting updates, and policy and institutional developments.

Concerning the impact of the new mandate, a joint working group was set up, by decision of the EMCDDA Management Board, to address and discuss the process for the announced definition and adoption, by the end of 2025, of the new 'Reitox Alliance', and, on this basis, the EUDA's (new) co-financing and possible additional funding for the Reitox NFPs, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2023/1322.

Four other joint working groups were established between the EMCDDA and the NFPs, on: Polydrug use and data architecture framework; European Drug Alert System, threat assessment and risk communication; Best practice, awareness raising and treatment; and Research, Innovation and Foresight.

Capacity building

NFP Certification programme

Good progress continued to be made in implementing the EMCDDA Reitox certification process, which formally acknowledges the competence of an NFP and confirms that it meets the minimum criteria to fulfil the tasks of a national focal point as set out in the EMCDDA regulation. Certification aims to increase the legitimacy of each NFP at national level by demonstrating how well it contributes to the EMCDDA's core tasks of collecting and reporting consistent, harmonised and standardised information on drugs in Europe. It is also designed to increase the degree of assurance at EU level that the NFPs are fulfilling their role as national interfaces with the agency. Certification covers the institutional context, the NFP mandate, data collection, analysis and interpretation, reporting and dissemination.

In that regard, providing support to the NFPs engaged in the implementation of the certification system was a key task in 2023. Dialogues took place during the year with several NFPs and the topic of certification was also discussed at the meetings of the Reitox network. Furthermore, certification meetings were organised in Estonia (January), Belgium (February), Croatia (March), Italy (October) and the Netherlands (November).



The French, Croatian and Estonian NFPs obtained their certification in 2023, joining the (previously certified) Irish, Austrian, Greek, Cypriot and Slovenian NFPs on the list of NFPs that have formally completed the process. Work also advanced on the certification of the Belgian, Italian and Dutch NFPs, which is expected to be completed in the first half of 2024.

Reitox Academies

In terms of the training activities, four Reitox Academies took place for the network in 2023, benefiting 143 participants in total.

Importantly, the results of the evaluation carried out at the end of the training courses showed an average satisfaction rate of 100 % for the three Academies that were evaluated (in line with the established procedure, evaluation is not foreseen for national activities such as the 'Reitox National Academy on Addiction and Suicide' in Austria).

More details on the events are presented below.

Reitox Academies in 2023

Reitox Regional Academy for Baltic countries on Drug-related Deaths and Harm Reduction Interventions

When	6-7 June
Where	Riga, Latvia
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide updates on the current overdose situations in the participating countries; review strengths and limitations in monitoring and responding to the threats related to the re-emergence of strong opioids in these countries; – Find ways forward to improve the monitoring of drug-related harms; – Provide updates on interventions to reduce overdose deaths; discuss current barriers and the way forward.
For whom?	17 participants from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and Croatia



Participants at the Reitox Regional Academy in Riga

Reitox Academy: Implementation of Data Collection on Drugs and Prison

When	14 June
Where	Nicosia, Cyprus
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Discuss and exchange ideas about how to access prison, including obtaining authorisation from prison administration, establishing relations with prison staff; – Identify and understand the main issues related to ethics and ethical approval in prison; – Have an overview of the main sampling and procedures; – Be able to set up the logistic for collecting data in prison.
For whom?	50 participants from Cyprus, Belgium, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Greece, Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Romania and Croatia



Participants at the Reitox Academy in Nicosia

RTX Academy on Communicating with Professionals

When	19-20 September
Where	Brussels, Belgium
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Better understand the needs of professionals; – Provide professionals with information that will make a difference; – Learn about the concept of branding, as well as the new EUDA brand and how it applies to NFPs; – Strengthen the role of NFPs in improving their capacity to contribute to better informed professionals.
For whom?	28 participants from Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Hungary, Czechia, Slovenia, Italy, Malta, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal



Participants at Reitox Academy in Brussels

Reitox National Academy on Addiction and Suicide

When	28 November
Where	Vienna, Austria
Why	Better understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the epidemiological situation regarding (addiction-associated) suicides; – the relevance of the topic of suicide in addiction support; – the relevance of the topic of addiction in suicide prevention; – what networking possibilities are needed between addiction support and suicide prevention.
For whom?	48 participants

Management of the Reitox grants

An important part of the EMCDDA's work with the network relates to the management of the Reitox grants. The 2023 grant applications were assessed, and grants were awarded, committed and signed off to a total value of some EUR 1.6 million. Although similar to 2022, this amount was 20 % lower than the value of the Reitox grants awarded in 2021 as a consequence of the significant restrictions faced by the EMCDDA budget in 2022 and 2023. This placed a substantial strain on the capacity of the Reitox network members to carry out their work and fulfil their contractual obligations.

As noted, a working group was set up by the EMCDDA Management Board in June to discuss the Reitox co-financing system in light of the EUDA Regulation entering into application in 2024. The outcome of this work informed the decision made by the Board in December to reinstate the appropriations for the annual Reitox co-financing to the 2013 level (before the two major budget reductions), subject to actual budget availability. The Reitox co-financing beyond 2025 will be addressed in the framework of the joint working group on the new 'Reitox Alliance'.

In parallel, all of the financial and narrative reports relating to the 2022 grants were analysed, the balance payments were executed and the grants were subsequently closed, in line with the applicable procedure. Four field verifications took place (on-site audits) — at the Estonian NFP on 24-27 January, the Belgian NFP on 15-16 February, the Croatian NFP on 7-10 March and the Dutch NFP on 29-30 November. The final reports of the first three onsite visits were subsequently sent to the concerned NFP, the last one will be completed in the first half of 2024.

Cooperation with EU agencies and international partners

EU agencies

Cooperation with EU agencies continued to be strengthened in 2023. Key EMCDDA partners included the ECDC, the ECHA, the EFSA, EMA, the EUAA, Europol and CEPOL.

For details on core business activities implemented with partners, see 'Main area 1: Health' and 'Main area 2: Security'.

The Directors of two EU agencies visited the EMCDDA in 2023. Montserrat Marín López, Executive Director of CEPOL, and Catherine De Bolle, Executive Director of Europol, together with their delegations, visited the EMCDDA on 16 February and 28 March respectively. The discussions focused on cooperation between the agencies and the EMCDDA's current and future role in the light of its new mandate in 2024.

The EMCDDA also contributed to the work of the JHA agencies' network ⁽³⁾, which in 2023 was chaired by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). This included participation and making active contributions to the meetings as well as the provision of input to various initiatives during the year. A [brochure](#) was published in October, providing a concise overview of the mission and core values of these agencies as well as a short description of the work of the network.

Throughout the year, the EMCDDA contributed to the work of other technical networks of EU agencies, including the Coordination Group on Trafficking in Human Beings, the EU Agencies Network on Scientific Advice, the EU Joint Taskforce on Artificial Intelligence, the Performance Development Network, the Heads of Communication and Information Network, the Information and Communication Technology Network and the JHA networks on external relations.

⁽³⁾ The JHA agencies' network connects the EU agencies protecting the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. It includes nine agencies: CEPOL; the European Institute for Gender Equality; the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA); the EMCDDA; the EU Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice; the EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation; Europol; the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights; and Frontex.

Particularly fruitful was the EMCDDA's continuing contribution to the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security ⁽⁴⁾. The EMCDDA is an active member of the EU Innovation Hub team that meets every two weeks to coordinate work in the area of research and innovation with other EU agencies, the European Commission and the Council Secretariat. Among other initiatives, in October the EMCDDA co-organised and contributed to the Annual Event of the Hub organised in Brussels. The agency is also implementing a joint project led by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and with active contributions from the EMCDDA and Europol, which aims to develop a darknet monitoring tool.

Global organisations

The EMCDDA's main partners at the global level are the UNODC and the WHO.

On a general basis, the EMCDDA contributes to technical discussions with the UNODC and other international partners on how to improve data collection and how to facilitate inter-agency collaboration.

The EMCDDA is also an active member of the international expert working group on drug epidemiological statistics led by the UNODC and the WHO.

Since 2014 the EMCDDA and the UNODC have collaborated regularly with respect to data on NPS, in line with an agreement from the Member States on data sharing and in the context of international discussions regarding increased cooperation and exchange of information on NPS (see 'Main area 1: Health'). Each year the EMCDDA provides the UNODC Early Warning Advisory with a list of NPS notified to the EU EWS and a list of the NPS seized by each EU Member State, Norway, Türkiye and the United Kingdom.

The EMCDDA is a member of the steering Committee of the Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends (SMART) project (on improving amphetamine-type stimulants data) and the Scientific Advisory Group for the *World Drug Report*.

The EMCDDA participated in various meetings that took place in 2023, including the 66th session of the CND (March, Vienna), the World Drug Report Scientific Advisory Committee meeting (September, Vienna) and the UNODC Informal Technical Consultation: Principles for Treatment and Care for People with Drug Use Disorders in Contact with the Criminal Justice System: Alternatives to Conviction or Punishment (October, Vienna).

The EMCDDA cooperates with both the WHO headquarters (in Geneva) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe (in Copenhagen). Cooperation with WHO Europe in recent years has covered the topics of prison and infectious diseases, while cooperation with WHO headquarters has focused on intervention quality standards and the monitoring of treatment systems.

The EMCDDA, WHO Europe and the ECDC have been working closely to assist countries in the elimination of viral hepatitis, in line with the WHO hepatitis elimination agenda.

Cooperation with WHO Geneva also takes place in the area of NPS. Among other activities, the EMCDDA supports the prioritisation of NPS, which are to be assessed each year by the Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD) through the EWS. In March 2023 the EMCDDA provided the WHO with a list of substances currently not under international control that are of concern to Europe and that could be considered for review at the ECDD, as well as providing data on these substances. In September the EMCDDA was asked to participate in an ECDD review with stakeholders to explore their drug control information needs and their experiences of using the ECDD website. The agency also participated in the 46th meeting of the ECDD, as well as delivering a presentation on DRD in Europe at the Fourth WHO Forum on alcohol, drugs and addictive behaviours in Geneva in June.

⁽⁴⁾ The EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security was established on the basis of the outcomes of the JHA Council of 7/8 October 2019 (12837/19) and further specified in the COSI documents 5757/20 of 18 February 2020 and 7829/20 of 7 May 2020. The hub is a collaborative network of innovation labs of the EU agencies, Member States, the JRC and the European Commission.

Regional organisations

The main EMCDDA partners at the regional level are the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD).

Cooperation with the Pompidou Group followed an agreement signed between the two organisations in December 2022 regarding the new areas of cooperation in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2010.

The EMCDDA continued to cooperate with CICAD within the framework of the MoU signed in October 2000 and in line with the new work programme for 2019-2024 signed in January 2020 in Washington. This cooperation involves the participation of the EMCDDA as an observer in CICAD regular sessions on an ad hoc basis, and that of CICAD experts in EU expert meetings, also on an ad hoc basis.

Furthermore, on 25-27 April in Santiago (Chile) the EMCDDA and CICAD-OAS, with the support of Servicio Nacional para la Prevención y Rehabilitación del Consumo de Drogas y Alcohol (SENDA), organised the event 'Analytical capacity of the national Early Warning Systems and the National Drug Observatories: updates and new perspectives'. This event, organised under the framework of COPOLAD III (see 'Cooperation with third countries within the framework of EU-funded technical assistance projects' below), included two capacity-building workshops and two working group meetings, and was attended by 39 participants from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

Cooperation with third countries

The work of the EMCDDA with third countries is guided by the EMCDDA's *International Cooperation Framework*, which charts the direction of work in this area for the period 2018-2025, and by the *EMCDDA Strategy 2025*, which identifies partnerships as one of the agency's main business drivers.

At the technical level, cooperation with third countries was carried out mainly within the EU-funded technical cooperation projects IPA8, EU4MD II, EMCDDA4GE and COPOLAD III (see 'Cooperation with third countries within the framework of EU-funded technical assistance projects' below).

At the institutional and political levels, cooperation took place within the framework of the working arrangements signed between the EMCDDA and third countries, and in line with the EU priorities in the area. These working arrangements are an expression of the willingness and commitment of both sides to work together for mutual benefit. They allow for cooperation in collecting, processing, summarising and analysing information on the drug situation at the national level. Among other advantages, the arrangements illustrate the importance of having a sound national drug information system, headed by a national drug observatory, as the basis for effective drug policy and action. They will also contribute to the EU's preparedness to face drug-related threats, an issue of particular relevance for the agency's upcoming new mandate. The working arrangements also allow the active participation of the partners' experts in EMCDDA expert meetings and other relevant EMCDDA events.

In terms of new working arrangements, cooperation with Peru was enhanced following the signing in May of a WA between the EMCDDA and the Peruvian National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs (DEVIDA). This is the first working arrangement signed between the EMCDDA and a Latin American country. The agreement was signed via an exchange of letters between EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel and the Executive President of DEVIDA Carlos Figueroa. Among other elements,



EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel with the Executive President of DEVIDA Carlos Figueroa in Lima, Peru

the arrangement allows for cooperation in collecting, processing, summarising and analysing information on the drug situation at the national level.

Within the framework of this working arrangement, the EMCDDA Director made an official visit to Peru in October. The purpose of the visit was to meet representatives of DEVIDA, Peruvian authorities and other relevant actors to further discuss areas for strengthening dialogue and cooperation. The strategic and operational aspects of the working arrangement and the role of national and international partners in its implementation were also assessed and an annual work programme was agreed.

In February, the EMCDDA signed a working arrangement with the International Ibero-American Foundation for Public Policies and Administrations (FIIAPP) on the implementation of activities under the latest Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP 7). These activities include facilitating the exchange of knowledge between experts in the EU and Central Asia and offering EMCDDA internships to Central Asian nationals. CADAP is a drug demand reduction initiative designed to promote the development of effective, comprehensive drug policies, based on scientific evidence and best practice. Five Central Asian countries participate in the programme: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



The EMCDDA delegation with representatives from the International Ibero-American Foundation for Public Policies and Administration (FIIAPP)

As part of a trip to reinforce the bilateral counterdrug efforts between the United States and Portugal, the US Senator Kyrsten Sinema and her delegation also paid a visit to the EMCDDA in July. The topics discussed were the cross-border security and counterdrug effort, as well as new drug threats and developments in Europe. A presentation on the new EUDA mandate, which foresees a strengthening of the international cooperation area, was also delivered by the agency's staff.



The EMCDDA delegation with US Senator Kyrsten Sinema and her delegation at the EMCDDA

Cooperation with third countries within the framework of EU-funded technical assistance projects

Building on the results of the IPA7 and EU4MD — the EU-funded technical assistance projects which ended in 2022 — in January the EMCDDA launched the IPA8 and EU4MD II, the new phases of these programmes for beneficiaries from the Western Balkans and the European Neighbourhood Policy area (ENP) respectively. Taking place within the agency's mandate for cooperation with third (non-EU) countries, these projects will run until the end of 2026 (IPA8) and 2027 (EU4MD II) and will support national and regional readiness to identify and respond to drug-related health and security threats.

Strategic partnerships and international cooperation were the focus of an EMCDDA stakeholder event in Brussels on 19 April, held in the context of the agency's new mandate in 2024. Two consultative meetings were held on the agency's cooperation with the Western Balkans and the European Neighbourhood Policy area, while a special session was dedicated to 'Strategic partnerships today and in the future'. Videos on EMCDDA projects with the two regions were promoted around the event.

The EMCDDA also implemented the bilateral technical cooperation project EMCDDA4Georgia (EMCDDA4GE) until the project ended in June 2023.

This year was also the second year of implementation for the project COPOLAD III (the EMCDDA became an official partner of the COPOLAD III programme in 2022). For more details on these projects, see Table 1.

TABLE 1. Technical cooperation projects with third countries implemented by the EMCDDA in 2023

Title	<u>IPA8</u>	<u>EU4MD II</u>	<u>EMCDDA4GE</u>	<u>COPOLAD III</u>
Beneficiaries	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo ^(a) , Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia	Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus ^(b) , Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine ^(c) , Tunisia and Ukraine	Georgia	Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, Uruguay
Objective	To promote and support the uptake by the Western Balkans of EU best practices and approaches in the areas of health and security and to strengthen the strategic and operational cooperation both within the Western Balkans and between the region and the EU in terms of drug monitoring and information, using EU standards and tools.	To support national and regional readiness in the ENP area to identify and respond to drug-related health and security threats	To contribute to enhanced national responses on drug-related health and security threats in Georgia	To support the Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP) and the Italo-Latin American International Organization (IILA) in strengthening the technical capacity and role of the NDO; to improve drug-demand-reduction policies; and to support cooperation in drug trafficking investigations
Duration	48 months (January 2023 to December 2026)	60 months (January 2023 to December 2027)	24 months (3 May 2021 to 2 May 2023)	28.5 months (15 July 2022 to 30 November 2024)
Total budget	EUR 1.5 million	EUR 4 million	EUR 800 000	EUR 800 000

^(a) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

^(b) Due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and in line with the EU position, ongoing and planned bilateral engagement between the EMCDDA and representatives of Russia and Belarus has been suspended since early April 2022.

^(c) This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

Main outputs and results in 2023: IPA8, EU4MD II, EMCDDA4GE and COPOLAD III

Knowledge exchange and capacity building

In line with the projects' main objectives, 2023 saw new training activities that were implemented by the EMCDDA based on a synergies and efficiency gains creation approach. It is worth noting that many of these activities involved participants from all the projects. Where possible, these initiatives were integrated with the training activities that were organised by the EMCDDA for drug policy and practice professionals in the EU Member States.

In 2023 over 300 professionals from all the projects' beneficiaries (58 IPA8 participants, 63 EU4MD II participants, 38 EMCDDA4GE participants and 143 COPOLAD III participants) attended capacity-building activities organised by the EMCDDA, alone or in collaboration with its partners.

A key activity was the EU Prevention Curricula (EUPC) training (see also 'Main area 1: Health'). The EUPC is designed to train professionals involved in shaping prevention decisions and policies in Europe in the science-based prevention of substance use.

In July 16 experts from five Latin American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela) participated in an online European Prevention Curriculum (EUPC) basic training course in Spanish.

Within its partnership with the COPOLAD III programme, the EMCDDA prepared a culturally adapted version of the basic EUPC training course for Latin America and the Caribbean, and training courses were delivered in September and November.

A summary of the EUPC trainings delivered for COPOLAD III in 2023 is presented below.

July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16 experts from five Latin American countries participated in a five half-days online EUPC basic training course in Spanish.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 29 participants from Spanish-speaking Latin American countries participated in a five half-days online EUPC basic training course. 19 participants attended the 1st culturally adapted basic training course in Portuguese in Brazil. 20 experts from eight Caribbean countries embarked on a five half-days online EUPC basic training course in English.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 participants attended the 2nd culturally adapted basic training course in Portuguese in Brazil.

Law enforcement professionals (police and customs) participated in training organised by the EMCDDA and CEPOL (see 'Main area 2: Security'). Although these activities were initially for professionals in the EU Member States, participation was extended to the EMCDDA's technical cooperation project partners.

In addition to the training activities, experts from the IPA8 (44 experts), EU4MD II (39 experts) and EMCDDA4GE (two experts) beneficiaries participated in the EMCDDA key expert meetings held in 2023: the annual meetings of the key epidemiological indicators (GPS, DRID, DRD, TDI, PDU), in the annual meeting of the reference group on drug supply indicators, and in the EU EWS annual meeting. Under the IPA8 project, specific satellite meetings for experts from the Western Balkan region were organised for most of the EMCDDA key expert meetings. For details on these expert meetings, see 'Main area 1: Health' and 'Main area 2: Security'.

Skills in focus at the 2023 Reitox week

Representatives from a record 80 countries joined members of the EMCDDA for the agency's 11th Reitox week, which took place between 22 and 26 May. The purpose of this annual event is to provide a platform for the Reitox network and the agency's international partners to share success stories and challenges in the drugs field and build collaborative partnerships. In the context of the European Year of Skills, the focus this year was on 'empowering through upskilling and learning'.

The 2023 Reitox week gathered participants from 29 Reitox NFPs (EU 27, Türkiye and Norway), six partners of the Western Balkans (IPA8 beneficiaries), 12 European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) partners

participating under the EU4MD II and EMCDDA4GE projects, and included five representatives from the Central Asia region (CADAP 7 project) and Switzerland. Also taking part in this meeting, for the first time, were 27 representatives from the Latin American and Caribbean countries participating in the COPOLAD III programme.



Participants at the Reitox week organised by the EMCDDA

The Reitox week also encompassed international cooperation events:

- 22 May: IPA8 project coordination meeting — The objective of this first coordination meeting was to introduce the EMCDDA-IPA8 project to the IPA beneficiaries and to discuss and agree on future activities to be implemented under the project.
- 22 May: EU4MD II project coordination meeting — This half-day EMCDDA-EU4MD II meeting was dedicated to discussing the collection and reporting of drug supply data.
- 22-26 May: Meeting of the LAC National Drug Observatories — Representatives of national drug observatories (NDOs) from Latin America and the Caribbean convened in Lisbon to exchange knowledge on drug policies in the EU and LAC countries, to reflect on best practices in this area and to discuss challenges and needs in the region.

First EMCDDA4GE stakeholder meeting

On 18–19 March, the EMCDDA4GE project and the Georgian National Drug Observatory (NDO) jointly organised the first EMCDDA Georgian stakeholder meeting in the region of Kakheti. The event gathered together the country's main actors in the field of drug monitoring, prevention and treatment to reinforce collaboration and discuss the challenges faced. During technical sessions, the participants reflected on the state of play regarding drug-related data collection, monitoring and reporting in Georgia and discussed the national drug strategy 2023-2030 and the latest action plan.

Georgian national EWS workshop

On 25–26 March 15 Georgian experts attended a workshop in the region of Kakheti on the development of the Georgian national early-warning system (NEWS) for new psychoactive substances. Staff from the Georgian National Drug Observatory (NDO) were joined by representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Healthcare, the Central Criminal Police Department, the Customs Department of the Revenue Service, the State Regulation Agency for Medical and Pharmaceutical Activities and the Forensic Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The aim of the workshop was to provide a better understanding of the functioning of a national early-warning system, its different components and partners and its importance for drug policy. The workshop was delivered by experts from the EMCDDA and the Belgian NFP.

EMCDDA4GE: Results of two-year cooperation project celebrated at closing event in Tbilisi: in the spotlight

The results of a fruitful cooperation between the EMCDDA and Georgian drug experts were celebrated on 14 June at the closing event of the two-year EMCDDA4Georgia project in Tbilisi.

Among the dignitaries attending the ceremony were: Beka Dzamashvili, Deputy Minister of Justice of Georgia, and Agata Nieboj, Team Leader for Rule of Law, Security and Human Rights at the EU Delegation to Tbilisi.

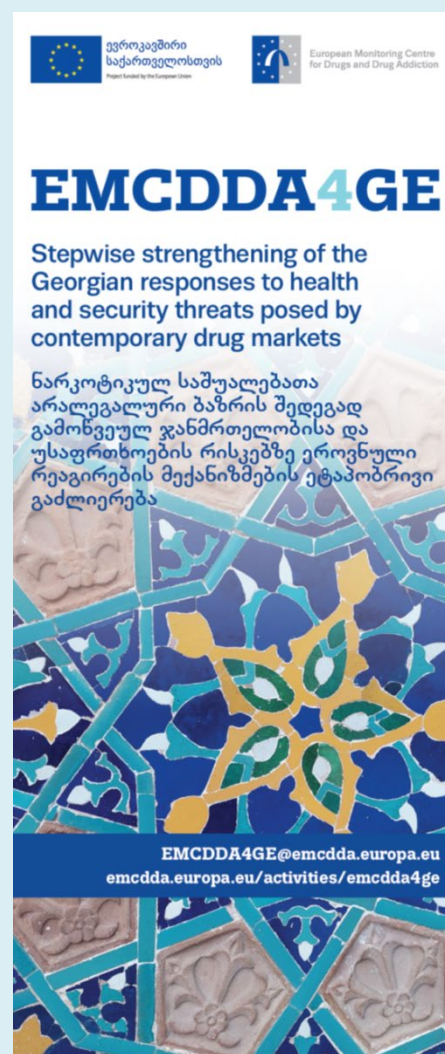
Representatives from 'Alternative Georgia', the Ilia State University, the Georgian National Drug Observatory (NDO) and the EMCDDA presented the project's key achievements. These included:

- implementing a general population survey in Georgia;
- translating and adapting the European Prevention Curriculum to the Georgian context;
- applying EMCDDA standards for collecting and reporting on key indicators; and
- developing a training programme for drug treatment professionals.

The event was attended by representatives of the Delegation of the EU to Georgia, the Ministry of Justice, the NDO and the Council of Europe, experts/observers from a variety of Georgian ministries and civil society, and EMCDDA staff.

Launched in May 2021, EMCDDA4GE was the first bilateral project between the EMCDDA and Georgia, running from 2 May 2021 to 30 June 2023. The project aimed to enhance national responses to drug-related health and security threats and to familiarise Georgian partners with the EU drug information system, its methodologies and tools. The project focused primarily on knowledge transfer and capacity building in the areas of drug monitoring, reporting, prevention and treatment.

A [video](#) is available offering an overview of the results achieved by the project.



First EMCDDA visit to Azerbaijan

An EMCDDA delegation was in Baku on 19-20 September for the agency's first visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan under the EU4MD II project. The visit was organised in close cooperation with the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the EU Delegation to the Republic of Azerbaijan. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the role of the EMCDDA (both within the EU and beyond its borders), the drug situation in Europe and Azerbaijan, and cooperation between the EMCDDA and Azerbaijan until 2027.

Increasing knowledge on early-warning systems and complementary data-collection methods was among the aims of a training event held in Santiago de Chile from 25 to 27 April. Taking place under the COPOLAD III programme, the event was co-organised by the EMCDDA and CICAD-OAS, with the support of the *Servicio Nacional para la Prevención y Rehabilitación del Consumo de Drogas y Alcohol* (SENDA). Participants included representatives of national drug observatories from the Latin American and Caribbean region and regional and international organisations, as well as national and international experts.

Publications and communication

While the main focus of the technical cooperation projects is capacity building and knowledge transfer to the relevant EMCDDA partners, the projects produced some other important results in the course of the year.

In January, the EMCDDA released a [Ukrainian translation](#) of its 'trendspotter' study, published in July 2022. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, neighbouring EU countries have delivered a rapid humanitarian response, providing urgent support to meet the health and social needs of those fleeing the country. In this briefing, the EMCDDA looks at how these countries are responding to the needs of displaced persons who use drugs and how they can be better prepared for the future. EMCDDA 'trendspotter' studies are designed to examine emerging drug-related trends.

Translations of other EMCDDA publications were also released during the year.

Celebrating the international day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking with key partners

On 26 June, World Drug Day, the EMCDDA organised a reception for the diplomatic corps in Lisbon. The event offered the opportunity for the agency to share updates on the international drug situation with its guests. Speeches were given by António Lacerda Sales, Portuguese State Secretary for Health, and Alexis Goosdeel, EMCDDA Director.

Business driver 3: Scientific capacity

Scientific Committee activities

As the guardian of the EMCDDA's reputation for scientific excellence, the Scientific Committee plays a key role in ensuring and improving the quality of the work carried out by the agency.

During the year, the committee — composed of 15 high-level scientists selected from the EU Member States, Norway and Türkiye — met twice in Lisbon, on 2-3 March and 26-27 October.

During the meeting in March, the Scientific Committee re-elected its Chair and Vice Chair and welcomed four new members. Chair Prof. Dr Catherine Comiskey (Ireland) and Vice-Chair Prof. Dr Henri Bergeron (France) will continue in their positions until the new Regulation of the agency (COM(2022)18) becomes applicable in 2024. The four new members are Prof. Dr Thomas Clausen, Dr Charlotte Colman, Dr Laura Ferrer-Wreder, and Dr Jo-Hanna Ivers.

During the year, the Scientific Committee adopted a formal opinion on the EMCDDA's Single Programming Document (SPD) 2024-2026. It provided input on the agency's main projects and scientific publications, in line with the guiding principles for reviewing selected publications. The Scientific Committee also contributed to the HDG's annual dialogue on research. In 2023 the committee continued to make a significant contribution to upholding the agency's scientific integrity, covering the most relevant scientific fields linked to the problems of drugs and drug addiction today.

In November the EMCDDA launched a call for the expression of interest in membership of the Scientific Committee of the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA), which will begin operations on 2 July 2024, the day its founding regulation enters into application. Also launched simultaneously was a call to scientists interested in applying to be on a list of experts who may assist the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) in the risk assessment of new psychoactive substances.

Enhancing the EMCDDA's scientific capacity

The Lisbon Addictions Programme and Organising Committee, co-chaired by the EMCDDA, met throughout the year to organise the upcoming Conference, which will take place on 23-25 October 2024. The new call for abstracts was launched on 23 October and received a record number of more than 1 300 submissions.

The EMCDDA also played a key role in the activities carried out in 2023 by the EU Agencies Network on Scientific Advice (EU-ANSA). The EMCDDA attended the two regular network meetings organised on 15 June and 16 November, which also marked the 10th anniversary of the network, and in April the EMCDDA hosted the 5th meeting of the 'futures cluster' of the EU-ANSA. This was the first face-to-face encounter since the group was formed in 2019.



Participants at the 5th meeting of the 'futures cluster' of EU-ANSA

The 'futures cluster' gathers together 13 technical EU agencies, the EC Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the European Commission (DG RTD). The event provided a platform for networking, knowledge exchange and planning upcoming outputs. The EMCDDA attended an additional 'Futures cluster meeting' online in November.

The analysis of potential futures to support decision-making is increasingly used today in a world characterised by rapid, volatile and complex change. More and more organisations, including EU institutions, are now integrating foresight methods into their activities.

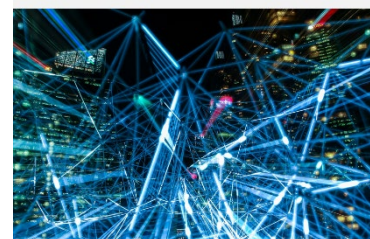
Against this backdrop and dynamic developments in the drug field, the EMCDDA conducted its first futures exercise between 2019 and 2020. In March, the agency released a technical report, [The Future of Drug Monitoring in Europe until 2030](#), summarising the findings and lessons learnt from this initiative.

Finally, in 2023, the EMCDDA contributed to EU and international research, activities and projects. Among other initiatives, in February the EMCDDA co-organised a research workshop with DG HOME, focusing on drugs and the new mandate of the EMCDDA, which took place in Brussels.



The future of drug monitoring in Europe until 2030

A report summarising the findings and lessons learnt from the EMCDDA's 'futures study'



Business driver 4: Management

EMCDDA Director — main activities

The Director, through his external activities, contributed to increasing the visibility of the EMCDDA and consolidating the credibility of its work by building and improving partnerships. Some examples are listed below.

The objectives of these activities were multiple: to inform on the performance of the EMCDDA in delivering on its mandate and implementing its annual work programme; to communicate the scientific evidence resulting from the agency's monitoring and analytical work; to strengthen the EMCDDA's relationships with its key partners; and, last but not least, to provide high-level input, as required, to the discussions regarding the new agency's mandate.

These high-level communication efforts, which mainly involved the participation of the EMCDDA Director in online events and missions, were focused on the agency's key customers, namely the drug policymakers at EU and Member States level and the practitioners working in the field. Important institutional exchanges also took place with high-level representatives of some international organisations and third countries.

EU bodies

In terms of EU policymakers, the Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, travelled to Antwerp on 7 February 2023 for a joint visit with the Belgian Minister of the Interior, Institutional Reform and Democratic Renewal, Annelies Verlinden, to the Port of Antwerp in connection with the EU fight against organised crime and drug trafficking. They were joined by the EMCDDA Director and a representative of Europol (see 'Main area 2: Security' for details).

The Director presented the main findings of the *European Drug Report 2023: Trends and Developments* (EDR) at the launch on 16 June 2023, with the participation of the Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, and the Chair of the EMCDDA Management Board Franz Pietsch (video statement) (see 'Main area 1: Health' for details). He also presented a preview of the EDR 2023 on 14 June at the meeting of the HDG of the Council under the Swedish Presidency, and to the members of the LIBE Committee at the EP in Brussels on 27 November.

Mr Goosdeel gave a presentation on the opportunities for cooperation with the law enforcement community offered by the new mandate for the EMCDDA at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) at the Council of the EU in Brussels on 16 May.

The Director made an intervention at the meeting of the HDG of the Council on 24 May on the implementation of the new mandate of the agency, and met with members of the team for the incoming Spanish Presidency.

The Director participated in the National Drug Coordinators meeting under the Swedish Presidency in Malmö on 2-4 May on the theme 'Drugs and children and young people'. He further participated in the online EU National Drug Coordinators meeting on 'Risk and harm reduction' under the Spanish Presidency on 31 August and made an intervention on 'Harm/risk reduction in the EU'.

On 28 September Mr Goosdeel took part in a working lunch in Brussels with the Ministers of Home Affairs and the Ministers participating in the Latin American Committee for Internal Security (CLASI). He made an intervention at the EU-CLASI Joint Declaration of the Ministers for the Interior of the Member States of the EU and the Ministers with responsibility for security matters of the Member States of the Latin American Committee on Internal Security at the EU-CLASI Ministerial meeting.

On the same day he participated in a high-level side event with Colombia and in the second edition of the EU-Colombia dialogue on drugs, which took place at the political level on 29 September in Brussels. On this occasion he presented the main findings of the EDR 2023.

The Director met a delegation of the LIBE Committee, which paid a visit to the EMCDDA on 30-31 October. The purpose of the mission was to examine how the agency will proactively adapt to its new mandate before it enters into application (see 'Business driver 1: Institutional' for details).

In regard to relationships with other EU agencies, a delegation from CEPOL, including the Executive Director Montserrat Marín López, paid a visit to the EMCDDA on 16 February to discuss ways to further enhance the cooperation between both agencies.

On 23 February the Director attended an event organised by the ECDC to inform stakeholders of the agency's amended mandate, which entered into force in December 2022, and how it will impact the work of ECDC and cooperation with its partners.

The Director welcomed the Executive Director of Europol, Catherine De Bolle, and a Europol delegation at the EMCDDA on 28 March. The visit's aim was to exchange views on ways to strengthen the cooperation between both agencies in the context of the new mandate of the EMCDDA.

Mr Goosdeel participated in an online joint ECDC-EMCDDA press conference on 7 November for the launch of the public health guidance, *Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases among People who Inject Drugs*.

The Director took part in the February and October meetings of the Heads of EU Agencies (both online). He also gave a presentation on the EUDA mandate at the annual meeting of Directors of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Agencies organised by the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) on 20-21 November in Valletta.

Mr Goosdeel had regular meetings with representatives of the European Commission during the year.

EU Member States

The EMCDDA Director had extensive contacts with representatives of the EU Member States.

On 26 January the Director hosted a visit from the German Ambassador to Portugal, Dr Julia Monar, and the BKA (Bundeskriminalamt — Federal Criminal Police Office) liaison officer Rahudas Manoharadas to the EMCDDA.

The Secretary of State for European Affairs of Portugal, Tiago Antunes paid a visit to the EMCDDA on 15 February.

On 27 February Mr Goosdeel delivered a presentation on 'Everywhere, everything, everyone: new challenges and perspectives for drug policy and drug-related research' in an online meeting of the Scientific Committee of the 'XXV Seminário Iberoamericano sobre Drogas y Cooperación'.

On 7 March the Director welcomed a delegation of members of the Danish Social Affairs Committee of Parliament and representatives of the Embassy of Denmark to the EMCDDA. Mr Goosdeel gave them an overview on the drug situation in Europe.

The Director paid an official visit to Austria on 20-22 March, hosted by Franz Pietsch, Chair of the EMCDDA Management Board and member for Austria. The visit included meetings with high-level officials such as the President of the National Council, Wolfgang Sobotka, the Minister of Health, Johannes Rauch, and Minister of Justice, Alma Zadić. The programme included visits to the Federal Drug Coordination unit at the Ministry of Health and to the Austrian Reitox national focal point. Further meetings took place with, among others, the Viennese Drug Coordinator, the Director-General of Public Security, the Director of the Criminal Intelligence Service and the Head of Office of the Drug-Related Crimes Brigade.

On 22 May the Director gave a presentation at a hearing of the Committee for Transversal Issues of the Belgian Senate on the information report on the evaluation of the drugs legislation of 24 February 1921 and the efficiency of drug policies, in particular those related to cannabis.

Mr Goosdeel delivered an opening speech at an event organised on 30 May on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) of Slovenia, in Ljubljana. During the same trip he also had a meeting with members of the Commission for Drugs of the Slovenian Government, organised by the Ministry of Health, and paid a visit to the NIPH, where he had a discussion with the General Director, Scientific Director and experts from the Institute on the role of a national focal point within the new mandate of the EUDA.

Croatia celebrated its 10th anniversary of EU membership in July. The Director paid an official visit to the country on 6-7 July. He participated in the thematic session of the Health and Social Policy Committee of the Croatian Parliament in Zagreb, during which he gave a presentation on the topic 'From the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction to the European Union Drugs Agency'.

He also had meetings with Marija Bubaš, State Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Krunoslav Capak, the Director of the Croatian Institute of Public Health, the member for Croatia on the Management Board, Željko Petković, Assistant Director, the substitute member Sanja Mikulić, Head of the Service for Combating Drug Abuse, and Lidija Vugrinec, Head of the National Information Unit.



EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel with Marija Bubaš, State Secretary Ministry of Health, Krunoslav Capak, Director of the Croatian Institute of Public Health, and Željko Petković, Assistant Director of the Service for Combating Drug Abuse, at the Croatian Institute of Public Health, in Zagreb, Croatia

On 19 September the Director participated in the closing panel of the conference 'Exposure to cannabis during adolescence and health', which was organised by the Citizens' Initiative for a Responsible Regulation of Cannabis for Adults ('A Iniciativa Cidadã para a Regulamentação Responsável da Canábis para Adultos (ICC)') at the Portuguese Parliament.

Mr Goosdeel made an intervention on harm reduction in Europe at the plenary session of the seminar to mark 30 years of the Association Modus Vivendi on 26 September in Brussels.

On 10 October the Director participated in the second national meeting of professionals in the area of addictive behaviours and dependencies in Aveiro, Portugal, and delivered a keynote speech on 'New substances, new uses, new risks: consequences for treatment and harm reduction'.

The Director welcomed a delegation of the Belgian Parliamentary Committee on Internal Affairs of the Brussels-Capital Region to the EMCDDA on 6 November. Ine Van Wymersch, Belgian National Drug Commissioner, visited the EMCDDA on 23 November.

During the year, Mr Goosdeel gave lectures to the participants of a Summer School of the Laboratory for Medical Law and Bioethics of the Law School of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and to the students of the Postgraduate 'Addictions' Programme of the Psychiatric Clinic at the University of Athens.



EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel with professionals at OKANA in Thessaloniki, Greece

The Director visited ARGO (Alternative Therapeutic Program for Addicted

Individuals), a non-residential, drug-free therapeutic programme, and had meetings with the Greek Deputy Minister of Health and with professionals at the Organisation Against Drugs (OKANA) in Thessaloniki.

International organisations and third countries

The Director attended the 66th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and participated as panel speaker in the side event organised by the Swedish Presidency on 'Gender and drug overdose — trends and evidence for improved responses and drug policies'.

On 4 May the Director gave an online presentation at the opening session of the 3rd International Conference on drug consumption rooms organised by the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe. On the same day he had an online coordination meeting with C-EHRN (Correlation Harm Reduction Network).

The Director made an intervention on 22 May during the opening session of the meeting of the National Drug Observatories from Latin American and Caribbean Countries in the framework of the COPOLAD III project.

On 27 November the Director had a meeting in Brussels with Elizabeth Johnston, Executive Director of the European Forum for Urban Security (Efus), to discuss how to develop cooperation. Efus is the only European network dedicated to fostering discussion, cooperation and support among local and regional authorities in the field of crime prevention and urban security.

Data protection activities

Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on data protection was fully observed during the year and the activities required regarding data protection records in particular were carried out.

Strategic planning and corporate performance monitoring and reporting

Regarding operational planning and monitoring, the EMCDDA ensured the efficient implementation of the annual work programme 2023, which was part of the [SPD 2023-2025](#). The agency reached 97 % of the results defined in the work programme as level 1 priorities, 88 % of the level 2 priority results and 88 % of the level 3 priority results (see Annexes Ia and Ib).

The next SPDs — for 2024-2026 and 2025-2027 (preliminary draft) — were delivered in a timely manner to the EMCDDA's stakeholders, and the Management Board adopted both documents in December 2023.

Concerning corporate reporting, the main output was the [General Report of Activities 2022](#), adopted by the EMCDDA Management Board through written procedure and published on 6 June. The report highlighted that 2022 was a year of solid progress for the agency as it moved forward with designing and delivering

more innovative and faster services to its key customers. It was also a year of renewed hope for the future, with the launch of the EU procedure for adopting a new and broader mandate for the agency.

Financial resources management

The priorities in financial resources management were effective and timely planning, monitoring and execution of the EMCDDA budget and optimising all related processes. The efficient use of material resources complemented these aims. In this context, the EMCDDA achieved optimal performance in terms of budget execution, with close to 100 % of commitment appropriations executed (see Table 2). In terms of procurement execution, the procurement plan was put in place and successfully executed in close collaboration with all units.

TABLE 2. Budget execution

Commitment appropriations	99.97 %
Payment appropriations	96.97 %
Consumption of 2023 (C8) credits	97.70 %

In the second half of the year intensive effort was invested in preparing for the increase in procurement operations that will be required under the EUDA as a result of the significant scaling up of the agency's resources and activities.

The [Final EMCDDA Annual Accounts for the Financial Year 2022](#) were drawn up and signed off by the Accounting Officer on 30 May and approved by the Director on 31 May. The favourable opinion of the Management Board was given on 29 June. The present annual accounts, together with the opinion of the Management Board, were sent to the Commission's Accounting Officer, the Court of Auditors, the European Parliament and the Council on 30 June.

Human resources management

As required by the applicable Staff Regulations and their implementing provisions, in 2023 the EMCDDA ensured the sound management of its human capital.

The agency engaged in a complex review of existing policies and procedures, with a view to preparing for the transition to the new mandate. The human resources (HR) function plays a key role in supporting all organisational change, and significant progress was achieved in 2023 in laying the ground for the new regulation of the EUDA entering into application on 2 July 2024. This will bring about an increase in the agency's staff of around 40 %, and, in order to succeed, it is paramount that the appropriate policies and procedures are put in place, while, at the same time, measures to enable a smooth cultural adjustment are designed and launched.

In that regard, new policies were developed on important aspects, such as: recruitment guidelines; traineeship and staff training policies; the onboarding of new staff; and hybrid working.

Furthermore, internal communications and updates on the new policies were disseminated to the staff throughout the year.

To understand the future human resources needs of the new agency, a competency mapping project was carried out with support from an external consultant. The results of this project have informed the decisions concerning the profiles of the new staff to be recruited for the EUDA.

In that regard, much of the organisational effort in the second half of 2023 was dedicated to the preparation of these recruitment processes, with a view to having the new colleagues joining the EUDA as soon as possible after 2 July 2024. Thirteen new positions will be filled as part of the first wave of recruitment in 2024, which represents a significant increase compared to the average recruitment rate of the EMCDDA up until now.

Another priority was the organisation of training for the agency's staff to support the effective implementation of the EMCDDA's objectives. In 2023 the average number of training days per staff member was 2.3 (KPI 2.3; see Annex 1b).

Facilities support services

In logistics and infrastructure management, ensuring a healthy and safe working environment continued to be of central importance in 2023.

Identifying health and safety risks to staff remained one of the main priorities for the agency, as did increasing effectiveness, efficiency gains and cost savings, including through further synergies with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). The information in the risk registry was adapted following the annual risk assessment in 2023.

The agency has also taken further steps to ensure the efficient use of the EMCDDA's infrastructure. Particular attention has been paid to controlling utility costs and building possible further synergies with EMSA, as well as taking measures to ensure a safe working environment. In 2023 the agency was able to reduce the cost of utilities by 30.3 % compared to 2022 (see Annex 1b for more details)

The EMCDDA made substantial progress in complying with requirements of the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), which will ultimately lead to the agency receiving an EMAS certification (planned for 2024). To this end, the centre:

- published an [environmental policy statement](#) in October, providing a unifying vision that will guide the actions of the EMCDDA's employees, management, shareholders, customers and suppliers. The original environmental policy was updated to reflect the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) registration of the EMCDDA;
- provided a yearly environmental report; and
- produced a management review and a Manual for the environmental management system, following the EMAS requirements.

More details on this issue can be found in Annex VII.

ICT support services

The EMCDDA's ICT programmes and services are developed and delivered in line with the triennial objectives: to implement and support core business and corporate projects and processes; and to provide a continuously stable environment that supports existing basic and advanced services.

The internal ICT Steering Committee supported the optimal allocation and prioritisation of ICT resources by refining priorities and deciding on the intensity of work to be devoted to each activity, depending on the most critical organisational needs.

In terms of supporting the core business areas, one of the priorities in 2023 continued to be ensuring that teleworking conditions function smoothly and that EMCDDA staff can carry out their activities remotely with a high degree of efficiency. Further investments were made in upgrading the meeting rooms at the agency's headquarters and equipping them with a more suitable video conferencing system that allows for the organisation of larger online and hybrid meetings.

At a strategic level, under the umbrella of the EMCDDA's ICT Steering Committee, discussions continued on how this area should support the preparation for the agency's new mandate, which will become applicable in July 2024 and will bring with it a significant scaling-up in terms of ICT investments.

The Business Enterprise Architecture project is another initiative intended to increase the EMCDDA's digital maturity. With the support of an external contractor and close synergy and complementarity with the new business model initiative, further progress was made on this project in 2023.

Further progress was made in implementing the Extranets, Collaboration, Intranet and Document Management (ECID) programme. Scheduled to run until 2025, with its elements rolled out sequentially, the

ECID programme aims to transform the EMCDDA's internal platforms for communication and collaboration to enable more interactivity and greater overall work efficiency and transparency, accompanied by modern security and data protection measures.

The ICT area was also important in ensuring the EMCDDA's compliance with several fundamental EU regulations, such as the upcoming European Cybersecurity Regulation and the General Data Protection Regulation. In this regard, the EMCDDA stepped up its efforts in 2023 to ensure the cybersecurity of its operations in line with the applicable policies and directives of the EU institutions, which will continue to be a priority in the coming years.

Synergies and efficiency gains

Synergies with EMSA were further pursued in staff training, infrastructure management and ICT.

PART IIA

Management

2.1. Management Board

Main decisions

As usual, the Management Board met twice during the year, in hybrid format (in Lisbon and by video conference). The first meeting took place on 29 June and the second on 7-8 December 2023.

At the June meeting, the Management Board held an exchange of views on the situation concerning cannabis and amphetamines, on the basis of the modules of the joint EMCDDA-Europol *EU Drug Markets* report (EDMR) on cannabis and amphetamines in Europe.

Ylva Johansson, Commissioner for Home Affairs, congratulated the Management Board members in a video statement at their first meeting after the adoption of the new Regulation on a European Union Drugs Agency by the EP and the Council, one and a half years after she proposed it. Following interventions from the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU and the representatives of the EP on the Management Board, the Director and the Chair made some remarks. The Director updated the Management Board members on the progress made so far in preparing for the implementation of the new Regulation. The Board adopted the procedures for the nomination of the EUDA Management Board members, as well as its rules on procedure and on the nomination of the Reitox national focal points. It also adopted the procedures for establishing the EUDA Scientific Committee and creating a new list of experts to extend the Committee for the purpose of carrying out risk assessments for new psychoactive substances. The Management Board decided to set up a working group to discuss the Reitox co-financing, and adopted the procedure to establish a network of forensic and toxicological laboratories.

The Management Board mandated the Director to negotiate working arrangements with Colombia, Ecuador and Chile.

The Board delivered a favourable opinion on the EMCDDA's final annual accounts for 2022 and congratulated the Director and his staff on the excellent budgetary execution. The Director presented the performance of the agency in the past year.

The Board also endorsed an EMCDDA action plan further to the 2023 IAS Audit on coordination between DG HOME and the EU decentralised agencies EMCDDA, EUAA, Europol, CEPOL and eu-LISA.

At its 68th meeting on 7-8 December 2023, the Management Board held an exchange of views on the drugs situation concerning heroin.

The Director updated the Management Board members on the preparation of the EUDA. The Board adopted the rules and procedures for the appointment of national representative laboratories to the EUDA network of forensic and toxicological laboratories, as well as the terms of reference for the establishment and operation of this network. The Director informed the Board on the progress of the EUDA branding project.

As usual at the December meeting, the Management Board adopted the EMCDDA's 2024 budget and preliminary draft budget for 2025. It decided to reinstate the appropriations for the annual Reitox co-financing to the level of 2013, subject to actual budget availability, and taking into account the annual budget made available to the EMCDDA/EUDA, which relies and depends on the amount of the annual EU subsidy to the agency. In 2024-2025 the current 50/50 percent co-financing scheme will be maintained, without prejudice to its possible revision from 2026 onwards, as a result of the envisaged new 'Reitox Alliance' to be adopted by the EUDA Management Board by the end of 2025.

In line with the provisions of Article 32 of the Framework Financial Regulation applicable to EU agencies and of the EMCDDA Financial Regulation, the Management Board adopted the EMCDDA's SPD for the period

2024-2026, including the 2024 work programme. The Board also adopted the EMCDDA's preliminary draft SPD for 2025–2027, which includes the preliminary draft work programme for 2025.

In restricted session, the Management Board decided to extend the mandate of Elina Kotovirta (Finland) as Executive Committee member until the new Regulation becomes applicable.

The Management Board approved the working arrangement between the EMCDDA and Colombia and mandated the Director to sign the working arrangement on a date and place to be jointly decided. The Board also mandated the Director to negotiate a working arrangement between the EMCDDA and Montenegro.

Furthermore, the Board adopted the Charter of the accounting officer and endorsed the EMCDDA Action Plan further to the 2023 IAS Audit on international cooperation in the EMCDDA.

The Management Board took note of the outcome of the assessment of the latest declarations of conflict of interest by members, substitute members and observers conducted by the EMCDDA Director, which has revealed that there are no conflicts of interest. The Board also adopted new modalities for the publication of the CVs of members, alternate members and observers of the Management Board.

2.2. Major developments

As mentioned in the report, the development with the greatest impact on the future of the EMCDDA, and of EU drug monitoring, was the entering into force on 1 July of the new Regulation of the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA). As of 2 July 2024, the date on which its application will begin, this Regulation will repeal and replace the EMCDDA founding Regulation (recast) (EC) No 1920/2006. On that day, the EMCDDA will become the EUDA, a new agency with a stronger mandate.

This is the outcome of the EU ordinary legislative procedure for the adoption of a new, broader mandate for the EMCDDA, which has its roots in the proposal put forward by the European Commission on 12 January 2022. This process culminated in the adoption of the EUDA Regulation by the Council of the EU on 27 June 2023, which followed the endorsement of the provisional deal from inter-institutional negotiations on creating the EUDA by the European Parliament on 13 June.

The entering into force of the EUDA Regulation set the EMCDDA on a one-year transition course to prepare for the application of this Regulation on 2 July 2024.

2.3. Budgetary and financial management

Information on budgetary and financial management is provided by the report included in the EMCDDA's annual accounts for 2023 (see Annex VIII).

In terms of procurement execution, the 2023 procurement plan was put in place in line with the EMCDDA 2023 Management Plan and was successfully executed in close collaboration with all units.

The negotiated procedures launched during the course of the year are outlined in Tables 3 and 4.

TABLE 3. EMCDDA negotiated procedures in 2023

Tendering	2023 figures	Number of direct contracts	Number of framework contracts
Negotiated procedures — see Annex I, Section 11.1(a) of the financial regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union (exceptional procedures)	1	1	0
Negotiated procedure — single tender ^(a)	88	87	1
Negotiated procedure — at least three candidates	3	3	0
Negotiated procedure — at least five candidates	5	5	0
Open procedures	2	1	1
Inter-institutional frameworks joined ^(b)	4	0	4

^(a) Including appointment letters and very-low-value contracts.^(b) including the European Commission, the European Parliament and agencies

TABLE 4. EMCDDA negotiated procedure values in 2023

	Works		Supplies		Services		Total for 2023			
	Number of contracts	Volume of contracts (EUR)	Number of contracts	Volume of contracts (EUR)	Number of contracts	Volume of contracts (EUR)	Number of contracts	%	Volume of contracts (EUR)	%
EUR > 1 000 and ≤ 15 000	7	23 500	5	13 169	77	498 823	89	92	535 492	37
EUR > 15 000 and ≤ 60 000					5	124 920	5	5	124 920	9
EUR > 60 000 and ≤ 144 000			1	120 000	1	75 000	2	2	195 000	13
Negotiated procedure (Annex I Section 11.1.a)			1	600 000			1	1	600 000	41
Total	7	23 500	7	733 169	83	698 743	97	100	1 455 412	100

Summary of budgetary operations, revenue and expenditure

The information about the appropriations transferred in 2023 can be found in the report on budgetary and financial management, as included in the EMCDDA's annual accounts for 2023 (see Annex VIII).

The results achieved under the main financial/performance indicators for 2023 are: 99.99 % execution of commitment appropriations, 96.97 % implementation of payment appropriations, 97.70 % execution of appropriations carried forward from 2022 and 0.06 % cancelled/unused payment appropriations.

Information on grants, contribution and service-level agreements

Pursuant to the decision taken by the relevant EU authorities, in 2023 the EMCDDA received EUR 360 000 from the EU budget as the second annual instalment of EU financing for the second year of execution of the COPOLAD III programme.

Pursuant to the decision taken by the relevant EU authorities, in 2023 the EMCDDA received EUR 1 500 000 (100 % of the total financing) from the EU budget as the single instalment of EU financing for the execution of the IPA8 programme.

Pursuant to the decision taken by the relevant EU authorities, in 2023 the EMCDDA received EUR 912 514 from the EU budget as the first annual instalment of EU financing for the first year of execution of the EU4MD II programme.

Further cooperation with third countries was carried out during the year within the EU-funded bilateral technical cooperation project with Georgia (EMCDDA4GE), which ended in June. No further budget appropriations were received in 2023 for this project.

Concerning service-level agreements (SLAs) concluded by the EMCDDA, the following were in force in 2023:

- SLA between the EMCDDA and the European Commission (DG Human Resources and Security) for the provision of services (upon agreed compensation, the amount of which depends on the actual services provided) relating to staff training, health/medical services, safety and security;
- SLA between the EMCDDA and the European Commission (Office for the Administration and Payment of Individual Entitlements) for the provision of services (upon agreed compensation, the amount of which depends on the actual services provided) relating to the management of staff's pecuniary rights;
- SLA between the EMCDDA and the European Commission (DG Budget) for the provision of services (upon agreed compensation, the amount of which depends on the actual services provided) relating to the use of the electronic management and accounting system (ABAC) system;
- SLA between the EMCDDA and the European Commission (DG Informatics) for the provision of services (upon agreed compensation, the amount of which depends on the actual services provided) relating to the hosting of the ABAC, ICT procurements, e-procurement (e-Prior services) and secure connectivity/access to Commission-hosted applications (Rachel);
- SLA between the EMCDDA and the European Commission (DG Informatics) for the provision of services by the EU Computer Response Team — CERT-EU — relating to ICT security (computer emergency response);
- SLA between the EMCDDA and EMSA relating to the shared management of the premises of their headquarters and the sharing of the associated services and costs;
- SLA between the EMCDDA and EMSA relating to synergies for the sharing of ICT services and equipment;
- SLA between the EMCDDA and Europol (Siena) relating to access to the Europol database.

Further information can be found in Annex VI.

2.4. Delegation and sub-delegation of the powers of budget implementation to the agency's staff

The EMCDDA has set its internal procedures for budget execution and internal control while defining and implementing a partially decentralised management model, in accordance with the EMCDDA financial regulation, which transposes in its entirety the text of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 2019/715.

As a consequence, both the operational and financial decisions required for the implementation of the EMCDDA's SPD and budget have been delegated to the heads of unit. The administration unit provides support to managers for budgetary and financial management execution and the implementation of financial transactions, as well as for internal budget planning, monitoring and reporting.

These procedures have been codified, and all of the EMCDDA's deputy authorising officers have received specific training and information on their roles, duties and liabilities, in accordance with the provisions of financial regulation and the Staff Regulations.

The key actors in all steps of the EMCDDA's procedures for financial execution can be summarised as follows (see also Tables 5 and 6 below).

- Project manager: initiates and provides operational input for the administrative and financial operations related to project implementation (e.g. technical specifications for procurement procedures, cost estimates and 'certified correct' for payments).
- Financial management team: undertakes financial and procurement planning and monitoring, checking for consistency with the programming document. Financial and contractual support officers provide assistance in the preparation of administrative, financial and contractual documents with the input of the project manager involved. Specifically, financial initiating officers carry out operations using the EMCDDA's ABAC system, prior to decisions of the authorising officer.
- Executive office unit: the verifying officer carries out *ex ante* financial verification.
- Accounting officer: executes and records payments and recovery orders.

The procedures presented above are consistent with the EMCDDA's project-based working methods, which aim to integrate activity and resource management, in accordance with activity-based management. In this context, the EMCDDA has established procedures for planning, monitoring and reporting, with a clear indication of the actors involved and their roles and responsibilities.

According to the 'Operating framework for the Reitox system' (January 2003) agreement model for annual co-financing activities by Reitox NFPs, an external audit may be carried out each year by an independent body or expert, in order to certify that any financial documents submitted to the EMCDDA comply with the financial provisions of the agreement, that the costs declared are the actual costs and that all receipts have been declared.

TABLE 5. Key features of the EMCDDA's partially decentralised management mode

Level of operations (and actors)	Role/operations
Decentralised level (operational and technical units)	Operational initiative/input and operational and financial decisions by delegation in order to implement the work programme and budget
Central level (executive office unit and administration unit)	Coordination and management of executive planning, monitoring, reporting and assessment of the implementation of the work programme and budget. Administrative and financial support, management and control of implementation

TABLE 6. Key actors involved in implementing the EMCDDA's partially decentralised management model

Level of operations	Actors	Role/operations
Decentralised level (operational and technical units)	Project manager and head of the unit concerned	Initiates and provides operational input into the operations required to implement projects
Central level (administration unit)	Budget planning and monitoring team	Checks the consistency of operations with the adopted work programme and budget. Budgetary appropriations to be committed are set aside
	Human resources management team	Defines rights and checks compliance with Staff Regulations for staff-related management and expenditure
	Financial management team	Prepares the required administrative and legal supporting documents, controls compliance with applicable regulations and processes the required financial operations
Central level (executive office unit)	Verifying officer	<i>Ex ante</i> verification
Decentralised level (operational and technical units)	Head of unit or deputy authorising officer	Authorises budgetary and legal commitments and payments
Central level (directorate)	Accounting officer	Executes and records payments and recovery orders

The EMCDDA's activities and operations are scrutinised by several processes and actors:

- external audits by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) (twice a year);
- external audits for specific projects (IPA-funded projects, etc.);
- discharges by the European Parliament (once a year);
- internal audits by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) of the European Commission (in line with the agreed audit plans);
- opinions of the European Commission's services on the agency's SPD (once a year);
- external periodic evaluations (set at every six years in the EMCDDA founding regulation);
- agreements by the European Commission on implementing rules for the Staff Regulations (one agreement for each rule);
- consent by the European Commission on the possible deviation of the EMCDDA financial regulation from the Commission's framework financial regulation for decentralised agencies;
- the European Data Protection Supervisor, for compliance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 (by prior notification and upon complaint);
- the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) (upon complaint);
- the Ombudsman (upon complaint);
- the Court of Justice of the European Union (upon complaint).

Ex ante controls of financial transactions were applied exhaustively throughout 2023 to verify their compliance with the EMCDDA financial regulation and the corresponding implementing rules. These controls were carried out swiftly to ensure that payment deadlines were met, legal commitments were concluded in a timely manner and income was recovered promptly, without prejudice to the application of corrections, if required.

Financial workflows were properly defined and a sound system of authorisation of access to the ABAC was put in place. The manual of procedures was applied and updated, as required.

2.5. Human resources management

Human resources developments

The work to align the EMCDDA's human resources processes and policies with the reform of the EU Staff Regulations continued in 2023. As in previous years, the EMCDDA participated in the work carried out by inter-agency working groups in this area.

As regards the EMCDDA 2023 establishment plan, the total number of authorised posts was equal to that in the EMCDDA establishment plan for 2022 (i.e. 76 posts), pursuant to the relevant decision of the EU budget authority.

Brief description of the results of the screening/benchmarking exercise

The results of the EMCDDA 2023 staff screening exercise reflect the EMCDDA's efforts to ensure the effective and efficient allocation and use of its resources (see Annex IV). The results show that 72.22 % of the EMCDDA's human resources capacity was devoted to operational activities in 2023 and 18.35 % was allocated to administrative support and coordination; the remaining 9.43% was assigned to operations considered neutral.

2.6. Strategy for efficiency gains

As far as efficiency gains are concerned, and as they result from the EMCDDA's past and present performance in the use of assigned resources, the EMCDDA is committed to constantly improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its activities and to maximising the use of its resources. In this context, the EMCDDA has pursued action to further rationalise and reduce the running costs of its premises — namely through measures aimed at reducing energy consumption — to offset the impact of the extension of staff working time pursuant to the entry into force of the revised Staff Regulations (e.g. by installing solar shading on glass areas, solar power panels, climate-control switches on windows and an intelligent lighting system, and by optimising heating and cooling cycles at the EMCDDA's premises).

Cooperation and synergies with EMSA have been intensified beyond those resulting from the implementation of the agreement in force between the two agencies to share the use of common areas in the compound where their headquarters are located (namely the canteen, underground parking area and conference facilities). This agreement was updated and revised in 2023 in order to reflect the upcoming needs of the EUDA in 2024. Further cooperation and synergies have been developed, in a common effort to proactively exploit the opportunities provided by the geographical proximity of the two agencies, while safeguarding the autonomous legal personality and capacity assigned to each agency by the EU legislature. These developments concern in particular the joint procurement of shared services to increase critical mass and obtain better conditions (e.g. for maintenance, security, cleaning and medical services); the joint organisation of training activities of common interest for the staff of both agencies; and the sharing of some services/bodies, such as the EMCDDA medical officer and the invalidity and disciplinary committees. Following up on the economies achieved with the common implementation of a business continuity facility with EMSA, the EMCDDA is committed to extending the agreement.

As the new digital workplace programme develops, the EMCDDA will seek to match technological developments and to achieve further economies by updating its current infrastructure architecture. Progress in this area will depend, however, on the availability of resources.

Further synergies could be achieved through the assistance provided by EMSA in the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) certification process for the EMCDDA by providing the templates of required documents and sharing experiences. In response, the EMCDDA will provide timelines and comments on the documentation received from EMSA, in order to provide EMSA with the necessary feedback to develop a model EMAS documentation package for other EU agencies that would like to obtain EMAS certification.

2.7. Assessment of audit and *ex post* evaluation results during the reporting year

Internal Audit Service

The IAS audit plan for 2023 included the following audit engagements for the EMCDDA:

1. Audit on coordination between DG HOME and the EU decentralised agencies ⁽⁵⁾;
2. Audit on international cooperation ⁽⁶⁾;
3. Strategic internal audit plan (in-depth risk assessment).

The IAS concluded the audits and issued the respective reports in 2023, as well as the strategic internal audit plan for 2024-2026.

The objective of the audit on the coordination between DG HOME and the EU decentralised agencies was to 'assess the adequacy of the design and the effective and efficient implementation of the coordination arrangements between DG HOME and the audited decentralised agencies, ... to support the achievement of their respective objectives in line with relevant regulations and the Common Approach' ⁽⁷⁾. The audit report includes neither 'critical' nor 'very important' audit findings. It has two 'important' audit findings and recommendations on the multiannual planning and on the coordination with DG HOME which tackle the Management Board oversight responsibility and communication issues between the EMCDDA and DG HOME. The EMCDDA has accepted the recommendations and prepared an action plan with target dates from December 2023 to December 2025. The IAS considered the action plan adequate to mitigate the risks identified.

The objective of the audit on international cooperation was to 'assess the adequacy of the design, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal control system put in place by the EMCDDA for managing its international cooperation activities to contribute to the achievement of the EU objectives in the field of combatting drugs' ⁽⁸⁾. The audit report includes a 'very important' audit finding on the monitoring of progress towards the international cooperation objectives and two 'important' findings, on standardised project reporting and on the traceability of international cooperation requests and events. These findings tackle, respectively, the development of monitoring tools for international activities, including SMART objectives; improving guidance for preparing country reports; and developing criteria and record keeping on the requests for international activities. The EMCDDA has accepted the recommendations and prepared an action plan with target dates from December 2024 to June 2025. The IAS considered the action plan adequate to mitigate the risks identified.

The objective of the in-depth risk assessment undertaken by the EMCDDA was the preparation of the 2024-2026 IAS strategic internal audit plan (SIAP) for the agency, which will be subject to an annual review that may lead to adjustments and additions to the audit topics following the annual risk assessment updates. As it stands, the SIAP includes the following prospective topics:

1. Planning, budgeting and monitoring;
2. Human resources (HR) management and ethics.

This is complemented by the 'continuous desk review of the recommendations reported as implemented and on-the-spot follow up as required' ⁽⁹⁾. Furthermore, it also includes two potential reserve audit topics: Tendering and Information security management.

⁽⁵⁾ Carried-over from the 2022 audit plan.

⁽⁶⁾ Carried-over from the 2022 audit plan.

⁽⁷⁾ Final audit report on coordination between DG HOME and the EU decentralised agencies: EMCDDA, EUAA, EUROPOL, CEPOL and eu-LISA.

⁽⁸⁾ Final audit report on international cooperation in the EMCDDA.

⁽⁹⁾ IAS 2024 – 2026 strategic internal audit plan, for the EMCDDA/EUDA.

European Court of Auditors

The report issued in 2023 by the ECA on the EMCDDA's 2022 annual accounts confirmed their reliability and the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying them.

2.8a. Follow-up of recommendations and action plans for audits and evaluations

European Court of Auditors

In its report on the EMCDDA's 2022 annual accounts, the ECA issued the following observations:

ECA Observation 3.32.8: 'We found that the budgetary management system used by the EMCDDA had flagged 7 % of the budgetary payments (107 out of 1 595) as late payments. However, most of the flagged payments were not actually late. The EMCDDA paid interest only in the case of one late payment. This discrepancy is caused by incorrect parametrisations and/or incorrect data inputs regarding the due date of payment or the reception of the documents entailing a payment obligation. Having a significant number of "false positives" due to improper parametrisation and/or data quality may expose the EMCDDA to financial and reputational risk.'

Agency answer: The referred inconsistent 'flagging' (of late payments) resulting from the EMCDDA's electronic system for financial and accounting management (ABAC), did not affect the regularity of the operations involved, namely the payment of the sums due and the payment of the interest, as required in the referred case. In this context, the EMCDDA has adopted some measures to minimise the referred risk for 'false positives' and to further ensure that its ABAC system may provide for a clear and accurate picture of the actual late payments, if any. These measures address both the detected issues of parametrisation and the quality of the data input/entry (into the ABAC system) of the due date of payment, or the date of reception of the documents supporting a request/obligation for payment.

ECA Observation 3.32.9: 'We noted that for one contract concluded in May 2021, amounting to €75 000, the legal commitment had not been preceded by a budgetary commitment of the same amount. The budgetary commitment had first been created in April 2021, for an amount of €55 000. Therefore, €20 000 of the legal commitment of €75 000 was initially not covered by a corresponding budgetary commitment. In December 2021, this deficit was reduced to €3 000, when the initial budgetary commitment was increased to €72 000. The same situation took place in 2022, when the renewal of the contract for an amount of €75 000 was not fully covered by a corresponding budgetary commitment, with a deficit amounting to €8 000. This is not in line with the requirements of Articles 10.3 (budgetary accounting) and 73.2 (expenditure operations) of EMCDDA Financial Regulation.'

Agency answer: Pursuant to the agreements in place for the sharing of the costs/expenditure relating to the areas of the EMCDDA premises whose use is shared with two other entities, the EMCDDA had to bear just a part of the total cost/expenditure for the contract at stake. In this context, the cost/expenditure to be borne by the EMCDDA relied on corresponding budgetary commitments, whilst the remaining cost (to be borne by the two other parties according to the agreements in place) relied on offsetting/clearing accounting operations, as applied according to the relevant rules. This solution has been implemented on the basis of the above referred agreements in place, and in order to maximise the efficient use of the limited budget resources available, due to the significant constraints affecting the EMCDDA's budget. By considering the expected next substantial increase of the EMCDDA budget, the latter will be better placed to take the measures that may be required to ensure the budget commitment of the total/'gross' cost of the referred contract, without prejudice to the agreed sharing of this cost with third parties.

Internal Audit Service

The IAS report on human resources management and ethics, issued in 2021, made six recommendations. The status of implementation at 31 December 2023 was as follows:

1. Ethics management (very important) — delays in implementation;
2. Workload and performance management (very important) — delays in implementation;
3. Security controls over personal files (very important) — implemented and closed by the IAS;
4. Selection and recruitment (important) — implemented and closed by the IAS;
5. Training and development policy (important) — implemented and closed by the IAS;
6. Internal communication (important) — implemented and closed by the IAS.

Recommendation No 1 had an initial target date of 01/09/2023 which was then updated to 31/01/2024. Eventually it was submitted to the IAS, as 'ready for review', in early February 2024.

Recommendation No 2 had an initial target date of 31/12/2023, and although the EMCDDA has made progress in the implementation of the action points related to the establishment of a competency framework and dealing with underperformance, it still needs to work further on some of those issues, as well as on matters related to workload assessment and the activity-based management (ABM) method for the allocation of staff/FTE (full time equivalent) and relevant cost budget. The adoption of the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) Regulation and the inherent operational and organisational changes (in budget, staff, activities, organisation) impacts the implementation of this recommendation and the agency is to set a more realistic target deadline for its implementation.

2.8b. Follow-up of recommendations issued following investigations by the European Anti-Fraud Office

The EMCDDA has not been the subject of an OLAF investigation in previous years and, therefore, there are no outstanding recommendations.

2.9. Follow-up of observations from the discharge authority

Measures taken in light of the observations accompanying the decision on the discharge of the EMCDDA for the financial year 2021

Observation No 8 of the discharge decision

'Notes with concern that the Centre reported to have two women (22 %) and seven men (78 %) in its senior management, while it has 20 women (38 %) and 32 men (62 %) in its management board; notes that the staff overall is composed of 29 men (45 %) and 36 women (55 %); recalls the importance of ensuring staff gender balance and calls on the Centre to take this aspect into consideration with regard to future appointments within its senior management; further calls on the Member States to take this into account when nominating their members of the management board; recalls also the importance of ensuring a balanced geographical representation among both the Centre's management and staff personnel.'

Measures taken by the EMCDDA to follow up on Observation No 8

The EMCDDA is engaged in ensuring, as much as possible, the gender balance of its staff in management positions. For this purpose, special attention is given to this balance within the context of the EMCDDA recruitment procedures, as a criterion for priority choice in the case of suitable candidates who are on equal footing in terms of compliance with the established selection requirements. Furthermore, there has been a wider dissemination in EU Member States of information about the EMCDDA recruitment/selection processes on top of the publication channels required by the relevant rules. In this context, the referred

situation has evolved and, at present, the EMCDDA's senior management is composed of three women (33 %) and six men (66 %).

Meanwhile the Chair of the EMCDDA Management Board has taken action to address the relevant authorities of EU Member States, Norway and Türkiye in order to stress the importance of ensuring gender balance in the nomination of their members to the EMCDDA's Management Board.

Observation No 9 of the discharge decision

'Regrets that the Centre has not yet implemented any modules of the SYSPER human resources management system; calls on the Centre to enhance the digitalisation of its staff management system in order to increase its efficiency.'

Measures taken by the EMCDDA to follow up on Observation No 9

The agency has developed and has in place its own ICT tools for digitalised human resources management.

Observation No 11 of the discharge decision

'Notes with appreciation that the Centre uses eTendering, eSubmission and eInvoicing; encourages the Centre to continue its progress towards digitalising its procurement procedures and explore options for starting the implementation and use of the PPMT digital procurement tool.'

Measures taken by the EMCDDA to follow up on Observation No 11

The agency applied the PPMT digital procurement tool from the date set for its entering into application in October 2023.

Observation No 12 of the discharge decision

'Acknowledges the Centre's existing measures and ongoing efforts to secure transparency, prevent and manage conflicts of interest, and provide whistle-blower protection; welcomes that the Centre published on its website the declarations of interest of its senior management staff, management board members and the external experts who are members of the scientific committee; welcomes that the Centre also published on its website the CVs of the external experts who are members of its scientific committee; notes the Centre's reply to have published on its website all summaries of the CVs of its management board members and senior management staff; regrets, however, that a summary of only their current professional activities is available on the Centre's website; calls on the Centre to update their website as to include CVs listing the full professional background of its management board members and senior management staff.'

Measures taken by the EMCDDA to follow up on Observation No 12

In 2023 the EMCDDA Management Board addressed the feasibility/implementation of the referred observation by taking into account, in particular, that the appointment of its members falls within the remit of the EU Member States.

Observation No 14 of the discharge decision

'Notes that in 2021 the Internal Audit Service (IAS) carried out an audit on the Centre's internal control system and compliance with rules and procedures regarding the management of the Centre's human resources; notes that the IAS's final audit report included three "very important" recommendations on ethics management, workload and performance management, and security controls over personnel files, plus three "important" recommendations on selection and recruitment; calls on the Centre to execute the agreed action plan for the implementation of the IAS's recommendations and to inform the budgetary authority on the progress made in this matter.'

Measures taken by the EMCDDA to follow up on Observation No 14

The EMCDDA has implemented the recommendations relating to the following topics:

- Security controls over personnel files;
- Selection and recruitment;
- Training and development policy;
- Ethics management;
- Internal communication.

Observation No 17 of the discharge decision

'Notes, that the Centre adopted a revised anti-fraud strategy in 2021, with three strategic objectives and an action plan to be implemented in 2022; calls on the Centre to report to the discharge authority on the progress made in this matter.'

Measures taken by the EMCDDA to follow up on Observation No 17

The revised EMCDDA anti-fraud strategy was adopted by the EMCDDA Management Board in December 2021. The state of implementation of the relevant action plan can be summarised as follows:

- Objective and activities to promote further and maintain the EMCDDA's commitment to ethics and integrity: Implemented
- Objective and activities to raise awareness and promote prevention of fraud: Implemented by considering that the planned staff survey has been designed and will be executed in January 2024;
- Objective and activities to strengthen the EMCDDA's internal controls for fraud prevention, detection and reaction: Implemented with the exception of the definition of 'significant spending' for *ex ante* and retrospective evaluations, which will be finalised for the date of entry into application (02/07/2024) of the Regulation that transforms the EMCDDA into EUDA and substantially increase its current mandate, tasks and budget.

Observation No 18 of the discharge decision

'Is concerned about the ongoing observation from the Court in the use of external staff and interim workers; is concerned that, according to the Court's report, the Centre hired these interim workers through a framework contract without respecting the requirements of Directive 2008/104/EC and of the Portuguese labour law; calls on the Centre to analyse the working conditions of its interim workers and ensure they are in line with Union and national labour law; further calls on the Centre to rely as much as possible on permanent staff and calls once again on the Commission to ensure appropriate human resources allocations for this purpose; welcomes the proposal made by the Commission to transform the Centre in a Union Drugs Agency; recalls that the new agency should be provided with the necessary human and financial resources to fulfil the objectives, tasks and responsibilities assigned to it under a regulation on a European Union Drugs Agency.'

Measures taken by the EMCDDA to follow up on Observation No 18

Without prejudice to the fact that the contracts for the engagement of the referred interim workers were concluded and implemented in accordance with the applicable EU and Portuguese legislations, since the end of 2021 the EMCDDA has not employed any interim staff and relies, as much as possible, on temporary and contract agents.

2.10. Environmental management

The EMCDDA has actively monitored its environmental performance and CO₂ footprint since 2014. Continuous improvement cycles have reduced its CO₂ footprint over the years in relation to the baseline established in 2014. The EMCDDA decided to obtain EMAS registration in 2022, and the registration process will be completed in 2024.

Annex VII to this report provides further details on this matter.

2.11. Assessment by management

Based on the information provided in the previous subsections, the conclusion of the management assessment is that the EMCDDA's internal procedures for budget execution and internal control, including the definition and implementation of a partially decentralised management model, in accordance with the EMCDDA financial regulation, which transposes in its entirety the text of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 2019/715 on the framework financial regulation for EU agencies (see Section 2.4. above), are fully effective and function well.

PART IIB

External evaluations

As a follow-up to the external evaluation of the EMCDDA carried out during 2018, the European Commission made, on the basis of the report presented by an independent consultant (ICF International), a series of recommendations for follow-up. At its meeting of 12-13 December 2019, the Management Board adopted an EMCDDA action plan to follow up on these recommendations. The actions envisaged considered the current EMCDDA mandate, as the full improvement of some areas may entail carrying out activities not necessarily covered by the existing regulation. Within this framework, the EMCDDA carried out a series of activities to address the recommendations made. The Management Board was informed annually about the implementation of the EMCDDA action plan.

At the Management Board meeting of 15-16 December 2022, the Director announced that the EMCDDA had implemented most of the recommendations stemming from the last external evaluation, which are also largely covered by the Commission's proposal of 12 January 2022 on the new Regulation on the EU Drugs Agency. This agenda item has since been replaced by a recurrent point on the monitoring of the EMCDDA implementation plan for the new EUDA regulation (to enter into application on 2 July 2024). In that regard, during the two meetings of the Management Board held in 2023, the Director gave updates on the state of the preparation for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2023/1322 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2023 on the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1920/2006.

The Director stressed that the ultimate strategic goal of the new agency is to strengthen the EU's preparedness to tackle the drugs problem. This goal is based on four pillars or types of services defined through the following action terms: 'anticipate', 'alert', 'respond' and 'learn'. The agency starts from the present, analyses the long-term trends from the past and develops foresight regarding the future. It will play a stronger role in threat and risk assessments and issue health and security risk communications, in close cooperation with the Member States and the Reitox NFPs. Concerning responses, the agency will continue providing scientific evidence for control measures on NPS, help to assess available responses, and support the implementation of needed responses. Finally, it is necessary to assess and learn how a crisis has been managed, and to disseminate best practice, in addition to pursuing competence development.

The Director also informed the Board about the developments and plans for preparing the team, the infrastructure and the new organisation. A contract with the firm Deloitte was signed, aimed at providing methodological support for the upcoming recruitment procedures, including mapping competences and defining the profiles for the 13 additional posts in 2024, so that these recruitments can be finalised by 2 July 2024. The Director set up a Gender Innovation, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (GEDI) Forum, and held bi-monthly Staff Assemblies to inform all staff about the developments in progress during this transition period.

Another priority was to define the identity of the EUDA. The agency made good progress on the EUDA branding project, together with an external consultant (the results of which were shared with staff), and on creating the new corporate identity, with the help of a designer.

At a time of transition towards the birth of the European Union Drugs Agency, the agency looks forward to being fully ready to implement its new mandate and to future external evaluation.

PART III

Assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control systems

3.1. Effectiveness of the internal control systems

The EMCDDA Management Board formally adopted the Internal Control Standards (ICS) in July 2010 and the new Internal Control Framework (ICF) in December 2017. Both documents were transposed by analogy and are fully consistent with the equivalent standards, principles and guidelines laid down by the European Commission. The ICF is the basis for assessing the effectiveness of the internal control system at the EMCDDA, as provided for in Article 30 of its financial regulation.

The ICF consists of five interrelated components and 17 principles aimed at providing reasonable assurance in relation to: 1. the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the operations; 2. the reliability of reporting; 3. the safeguarding of assets and information; 4. the prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5. the adequate management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

The overall assessment of the internal control system depends on the assessment at the level of the principles and components. Besides the ongoing monitoring of internal control, embedded in the business processes of the centre, the EMCDDA performs a yearly assessment of the state of play of the ICF, which covers all control principles and components: control environment; risk assessment, including the risk of fraud; control activities; information and communication; and monitoring activities.

The EMCDDA relies on a number of sources and tools to assess the effectiveness of the internal controls, including:

- *ex ante* controls (financial verification);
- exceptions and non-compliant events;
- risk management process and central risk register;
- IAS audits and ECA audits;
- implementation of audit recommendations;
- validation of the ABAC rights;
- anti-fraud strategy;
- management meetings;
- budget execution.

A comprehensive document that reviews and sets out the progress made in implementing the EMCDDA's ICS was drawn up in early 2013. This document was updated regularly after that point, until 2017. Following the adoption of the ICF, a document with a full repository of the state of play of implementation of the 17 ICF principles was prepared in 2018. This document is updated regularly on the basis of needs and opportunity. The result of the 2023 assessment is that all components are present and functioning. Notwithstanding, the assessment identified five ICF principles where some improvements may be needed, as follows:

Control environment

ICF 2. Exercises oversight responsibility

The underlying standard is that the Management Board demonstrates independence from management and exercises oversight of the development and performance of internal control. The

shortcomings under this principle relate to the lack of estimates of quantifiable workload drivers and the lack of traceability of the Commission's comments in the context of the preparation of the SPD, as well as inaccurate reporting on the implementation of the IAS recommendations and the scope of the work of the Budget Committee, in preparation for the Management Board meetings. Eventually these issues could affect the effectiveness of the Management Board meetings and the Board's decision-making process. However, in 2023, the EMCDDA made some significant progress in mitigating these risks.

ICF 4. Demonstrates commitment to competence

The underlying standard is that the EMCDDA demonstrates a commitment to attract, develop and retain competent individuals in alignment with its objectives. This implies defining the competences to support the achievement of objectives. The EMCDDA is yet to establish a competency framework for each job profile, building upon the existing one and considering the needs entailed by the agency's new mandate. This issue, together with the lack of objective workload indicators, could hamper the effectiveness of the EMCDDA's business drivers.

Risk assessment

ICF 6. Specifies suitable objectives

The underlying standard is that the EMCDDA specifies objectives with sufficient clarity to enable the identification and assessment of any risks relating to these objectives. The EMCDDA still needs to develop objectives for its international activities using SMART criteria, as well as formulating Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to support the measurement of success in achieving these objectives; this is to enable better monitoring and demonstrate the agency's performance with regard to its international activities.

Control activities

ICF 10. Selects and develops control activities

The underlying standard is that the EMCDDA selects and develops control activities that contribute to the reduction of risks, posed to the achievement of objectives, to acceptable levels. The EMCDDA does not yet have a formal process to assess the units' workload and, if necessary, move towards a more balanced allocation of human resources, nor does it have a system to monitor the working time spent on relevant projects. For example, the EMCDDA does not have criteria or a methodology to estimate the share of resources involved in international activities. This could have a detrimental impact on the allocation of resources and affect the achievement of objectives.

Other areas for improvement refer to the standardisation of country reports for technical cooperation projects (EU4MD), without which it could be more difficult to identify issues or risks or have transparent and consistent information on the drug situation in the relevant countries. Also, the EMCDDA is still to further develop criteria to accept, reject and prioritise requests from external partners in the field of international cooperation activities and to document the rationale behind the respective decisions. Doing so would enhance transparency and consistency with the agency's goals in that field.

Information and communication

ICF 15. Communicates externally

The underlying principle is that the EMCDDA communicates with external parties about matters affecting the functioning of internal control. First and foremost, the EMCDDA is set to update its communication strategy (dated 2012), which is due to happen in the context of the new mandate and the new business model. This process is underway and included in the SPD 2023-2025. Other agreements with external entities may also need updating, considering the changes that have occurred in the subject at stake. Overall, this could affect the exchange of information between parties and the effectiveness and efficiency of communication with stakeholders.

These issues were highlighted by the IAS and although none of the audit findings were considered critical, the EMCDDA considers that the principles are *'present and functioning but some improvements are needed'*. This does not compromise the overall effectiveness of the system of internal control in the EMCDDA. There are two 'very important' findings from the HR management audit and from the international cooperation audit; and four 'important' findings from the international cooperation audit and from the coordination between DG HOME and the EMCDDA audit. The EMCDDA has acknowledged that some areas can be improved and has adopted action plans for which the last date of implementation is December 2025. This process is to happen in tandem with the transition from EMCDDA to EUDA, and the implementation of the recommendations will be shaped according to the evolving circumstances and the constraints of this transitional phase.

The financial verification and the register of exceptions did not record any event that, due to its nature or amount, is material and indicative of a critical weaknesses in the internal controls. The register documents the events that constitute a deviation from any written rules and provisions formally adopted and in force, for both financial and non-financial operations. As required, the exceptions have been approved by the relevant authorising officer.

The risk management process is also a central element in the system of internal control, and, as in previous years, a comprehensive risk identification and assessment exercise aimed at improving risk management at the EMCDDA was carried out in 2023. The central risk register was kept up to date and linked significant risks with action areas of the annual work programme. This register identifies, for each area, the estimated risk level, impact and response, with mitigating measures to further reduce the residual risk. Risk assessment was carried out continuously at the EMCDDA throughout the year, while a comprehensive analysis was performed by managers in the context of preparing the SPDs. Not surprisingly, the 2023 exercise highlighted risks related to the new mandate of the agency.

The EMCDDA Management Board approved the anti-fraud strategy in June 2016, reflecting OLAF's methodology and guidance, including the rules on internal investigations, the initiatives for awareness-raising on staff ethics, the rules on gifts and hospitality offered by third parties, and the guidelines on serious wrongdoing and whistleblowing. The strategy considered the priorities set by the European Commission within the framework of the Common Approach on EU decentralised agencies, especially the proper handling of conflicts of interest and the development of anti-fraud activities through prevention, detection, awareness-raising and closer cooperation with OLAF. The Management Board adopted a revised anti-fraud strategy in 2021, with three strategic objectives ⁽¹⁰⁾ and an action plan that, by the end of 2023, had been widely implemented, with only one out of 13 actions still open. Since its creation, there have been no cases of fraud in the centre and the degree of exposure of the EMCDDA to the risk of fraud can generally be considered as relatively reduced.

In terms of the prevention and management of conflicts of interest, the EMCDDA Management Board adopted a revised policy in December 2014 that reflects the common approach endorsed by the Parliament, the Council and the Commission in July 2012, calling for the development and application in all EU decentralised agencies of a coherent policy on preventing and managing conflicts of interest concerning the members of the Management Board, the members of the Scientific Committee and the agencies' directors.

The policy took into account the main recommendations addressed to agencies in this area by the European Parliament (namely within the framework of the discharge process), the ECA (in its Special Report No 15/2012 — Management of conflict of interest in selected EU agencies), the European Ombudsman (on the occasion of the Ombudsman's visits to several agencies, as part of a programme launched in May 2011) and the Commission's IAS, in its capacity as the internal auditor for the agencies.

The Commission worked closely with the agencies to prepare a model for guidelines on the prevention and management of conflicts of interest in EU decentralised agencies. In particular, the network of the Heads of EU Agencies contributed to this preparation by gathering information about agencies' experiences and best practices in this field.

⁽¹⁰⁾ The strategic objectives are: (1) Promote further and maintain the EMCDDA's commitment to ethics and integrity; (2) Raise awareness and promote prevention of fraud; and (3) Strengthen the EMCDDA's internal controls for fraud prevention, detection and reaction.

The agency also has in place conflict-of-interest policies applicable to its statutory staff, who are bound by the Staff Regulations (e.g., at the moment of taking up their duties, conflict of interest of spouses, during recruitment processes).

In 2023 the following developments and consolidation also contributed to the overall effectiveness of the internal control systems.

- Measures aimed at improving project management in the EMCDDA, particularly in the ICT sector, were implemented.
- The performance model, based on a limited number (10) of composite KPIs built on and measured by sets of underlying lower-level performance indicators, continued to be implemented.
- Matrix continued to function as the corporate management information system for operational planning, monitoring and reporting of activities.
- Internal EMCDDA coordination mechanisms (e.g., the heads of unit meetings, quarterly performance review meetings, editorial board meetings, ICT Steering Committee meetings and scientific coordination meetings) further contributed to strengthening risk management processes by enhancing the capacity of managers and other key staff to closely monitor all major issues relating to the timely and effective implementation of planned activities, the delivery of outputs and the achievement of results.
- The strategy for the organisational management and internal control systems was included as an annex to the SPD 2023-2025, in line with the applicable guidelines issued by the Commission, and implemented.
- A number of communication activities relating to the management of publications enabled a better alignment of EMCDDA products with stakeholders' needs.

The EMCDDA internal controls have shown to be effective and resilient through the challenging years of the budget cuts, the pandemic and the implementation of full teleworking mode, the return to 'normality' and preparation for the agency's new mandate. With the last factor presenting an even bigger challenge now and in the coming years, ensuring the consistency and robustness of internal controls is expected to continue.

Cost and benefits of controls

Overall, the EMCDDA considers that there is a satisfactory ratio between the cost and benefits of the controls in place in the centre. It has put in place an effective system of internal controls that has enabled the agency to achieve its main outputs and strategic objectives while complying with the applicable regulatory framework and sustaining a sound control environment. The EMCDDA performs exhaustive *ex ante* controls on the operational and financial aspects of all transactions, as well as *ex post* on-the-spot checks on a limited selection of NFPs. Referring to its objectives, risk profile and available resources, the EMCDDA has developed a balanced approach that ensures that the actions and tools used are appropriate and proportionate to the quantity and quality of the centre's deliverables, as set out in the programming documents. This is without prejudice to further adjustments that the future perspectives of the agency may render convenient or necessary.

3.2. Conclusions of the assessment of internal control systems

Based on the information provided under Section 3.1 above, the overall result of the management assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system as a whole is that it is fully effective and functioning well.

3.3. Statement of the manager in charge of risk management and internal control

Statement of the Manager in charge of risk management and internal control

I, the undersigned,

In my capacity as Manager in charge of risk management and internal control within the EMCDDA, declare that in accordance with the EMCDDA's Internal Control Framework, I have reported my advice and recommendations on the overall state of internal control in the agency to the Executive Director.

I hereby certify that the information provided in the present *General Report of Activities* and in its annexes is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate, reliable and complete.

Done in Lisbon on 19 April 2024



Helder Vasco Travado

Risk Assessment Management Officer

Part IV

Management assurance

4.1. Review of the elements supporting assurance

The declaration of assurance of the authorising officer is based on the following combination of external and internal oversight and control procedures over the EMCDDA's organisation and activities:

- the assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system;
- the risk management exercise;
- the statement of the manager in charge of risk management and internal control;
- the accounting officer's certification of the 2023 provisional accounts;
- assurance provided by the ECA audit: no preliminary observations likely to affect the audit opinion ⁽¹¹⁾;
- assurance provided by the IAS audit: no 'critical' recommendations outstanding from the IAS audits at year-end, and action plans are ongoing to address 'very important' and 'important' recommendations stemming from the IAS audits on human resources management, on the coordination between DG HOME and the EU decentralised agencies, and on the international cooperation in EMCDDA;
- progress in implementing the recommendations of the external evaluation;
- *ex ante* controls;
- the register of exceptions;
- the EMCDDA's anti-fraud strategy and the policy for the prevention and management of conflicts of interest.

The aforementioned building blocks do not identify any significant weaknesses that could impact the declaration of assurance of the authorising officer.

⁽¹¹⁾ As at February 2024.

4.2. Reservations

A reservation in the declaration of assurance is prompted by the occurrence of significant internal weaknesses or external events that lead to the materialisation of critical risks.

At the EMCDDA, critical risks are events that have the potential to:

- jeopardise the realisation of major policy objectives;
- cause serious damage to the centre's stakeholders;
- require critical intervention from the Parliament, the Council or the Commission regarding the centre's performance;
- result in critical observations/recommendations from the ECA, the IAS and OLAF;
- result in the breaching of laws and the pervasive infringement of regulations;
- result in material financial loss;
- put the safety of the centre's staff at risk;
- seriously damage the centre's reputation and image;
- cause any other event that, due to its likelihood and impact, is assessed by the management as critical to the achievement of the organisational objectives.

None of these risks materialised at the EMCDDA in 2023.

The assessment of materiality involves a qualitative and a quantitative judgement, and the occurrence of any critical risk is material per se. Qualitative elements taken into account include the nature of the event, its recurrence, its duration and its effect on the activities and programmes of the EMCDDA. Quantitative elements are assessed based on budgetary considerations. The EMCDDA is continuously looking to adjust and refine the concrete criteria to assess materiality.

In 2023 the EMCDDA identified medium to high risks that include: insufficient capacity of data delivery from the NFPs and other networks; disruptive events; insufficient capacity for data collection, analysis and response from the EMCDDA/EUDA; IT threats and underperforming information IT tools/systems; shortcomings in human resources; inadequate allocation of financial resources; and insufficient planning and operational capacity to support the transition to the agency's new mandate. The EMCDDA has taken the necessary mitigating actions to tackle these risks. A clear demonstration of the efficiency and effectiveness of the measures taken is evidenced by the performance achieved by the EMCDDA in 2023, as described in Section 2.3, 'Budgetary and financial management', above.

Part V

Declaration of assurance

Declaration of assurance by the authorising officer

I, the undersigned, Director of the EMCDDA,

In my capacity as authorising officer,

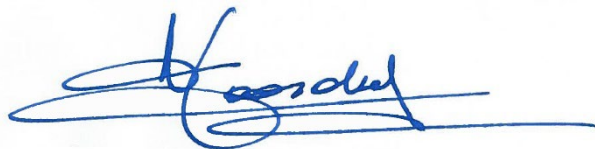
Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, *ex post* controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learned from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the agency.

Done in Lisbon on 29 April



Alexis Goosdeel
Director

Annexes

Annex I. Core business statistics

Annex Ia. Implementation of the 2023 work programme by objectives and expected outputs/results

This annex is available [online](#).

Annex Ib. Key performance indicators

This annex is available [online](#).

Annex II. Statistics on financial management

Calculation of budget outturn

TABLE 7. Budget outturn and cancellation of appropriations

Budget outturn	2021	2022	2023
Reserve from the previous years' surplus (+)	108 036	113 656	58 239
Revenue actually received (+)	18 979 543	18 859 198	21 848 327
Payments made (–)	–17 937 215	–19 385 462	–20 228 212
Carry-over of appropriations (–)	–2 624 764	–1 567 846	–2 604 710
Cancellation of appropriations carried over (+)	9 701	58 482	11 655
Adjustment for carry-over of assigned revenue appropriation from previous year (+)	1 687 750	2 094 183	986 150
Exchange rate differences (+/–)	–1 360	–317	–1066
Adjustment for negative balance from previous year (–)	–108 036	–113 656	–58 239
TOTAL	113 656	58 239	12 144

Descriptive information and justification

1. Use of commitment appropriations

The rate of execution of 2023 commitment appropriations amounted to 99.99 % (95 % is the KPI mentioned in the EMCDDA SPD and the rate considered by EC as the threshold below which a 2 % budget penalisation can be applied). In this context, EUR 19 289 910 was committed out of EUR 19 292 470 available.

(EUR 2 551 was not committed in 2023).

2. Cancellation of payment appropriations

The rate of cancellation of 2023 payment appropriations amounted to 0.06 %, corresponding to the cancellation of EUR 12 760 (5 % is the KPI mentioned in the EMCDDA SPD and the rate considered by the EC as the threshold above which a 2 % budget penalisation can be applied).

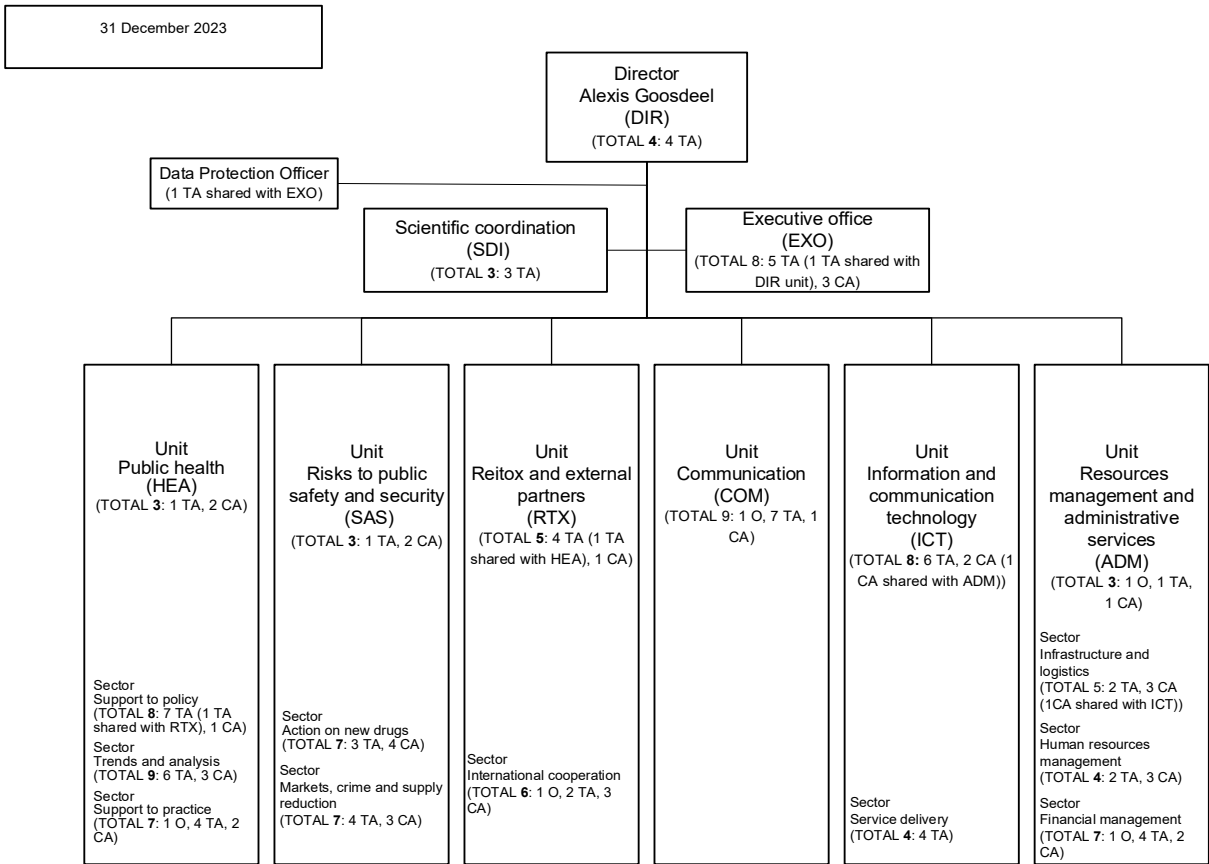
The following data outline the EMCDDA performance in the execution/use of its 2023 payment appropriations (these data do not concern the aforementioned KPIs):

- For 'C1' payment appropriations, the 2023 rate of execution amounted to 96.97 %, corresponding to EUR 18 708 770 paid out of EUR 19 292 460 available.
- For 'C8' payment appropriations, the 2023 rate of execution amounted to 97.70 %, corresponding to EUR 457 772 paid out of EUR 468 526 available.

As a consequence of the above, the EMCDDA 2023 budget outturn amounted to EUR 12 144.

Annex III. Organisational chart

FIGURE 6. Organisational chart



Annex IV. Establishment plan and additional information on human resources management

TABLE 8. Information on recruitment grade and function group for each type of post

Key functions	Type of contract (official (O), temporary agent (TA) or contract agent (CA))	Function group (FG), recruitment grade	Indication of whether the function is dedicated to administrative support or operations (subject to definitions used in screening methodology)
1 – Director	TA	AD 15 (external)	Operational
2 – Head of unit	O, TA	AD 9 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational
3 – Head of sector	O, TA	AD 7 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational Administrative Neutral
4 – Principal administrator	O, TA	AD 8 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational Administrative Neutral
5 – Administrator	O, TA	AD 5 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational Administrative Neutral
6 – Senior assistant	O, TA	AST 10 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational
7 – Team leader	O, TA	AST 7 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational
8 – Assistant	O, TA	AST 1 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational Administrative Neutral
Head of Administration unit	O, TA	AD 9 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Administrative
Head of Human Resources sector	O, TA	AD 8 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Administrative
Head of Finance sector	O, TA	AD 8 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Neutral
Head of ICT	O, TA	AD 9 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational
Secretary	O, TA, CA	AST 1, FG II (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational Administrative
Mail clerk	CA	FG II	Administrative
Editor	O, TA	AD 5 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational
Data protection officer	O, TA	AD 5 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Administrative
Accounting officer	O, TA	AST 7 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Neutral
Internal auditor	O, TA	AD 6 (internal, inter-agency, external)	Neutral
Secretary to the Director	O, TA, CA	AST 1, FG II (internal, inter-agency, external)	Operational

TABLE 9. Job screening/benchmarking against previous year's results (as per methodology for agencies job screening (2014))

Job type (sub)category	2022 (%)	2023 (%)
Administrative support and coordination	18.20	18.35
Administrative support	17.57	17.71
Coordination	0.63	0.64
Operational	72.44	72.22
Top-level operational coordination	4.12	4.15
Programme management and implementation	57.54	57.20
Evaluation and impact assessment	0	0
General operational	10.78	10.87
Neutral	9.35	9.43
Finance/control	9.35	9.43
Linguistics	0	0

Annex V. Human and financial resources by activity

TABLE 10. Human and financial resources per activity

Work programme action areas	Main actors for implementation /cost objects	Assigned human resources (full-time equivalent)					Initial allocation of budget resources — non-assigned appropriation	Final allocation of budget resources — non-assigned appropriation	Executed budget — non-assigned appropriation
		Official	TA	CA	SNE	Total HR	Total budget (EUR)	Total budget (EUR)	Total budget execution
Main area: Health	HEA, SAS, SDI, RTX&EP, COM, ICT, DIR/EXO	2.15	30.10	13.75	0	46	8 413 357	807 819	6 609 193
Main area: Security	SAS, SDI, HEA, RTX&EP, COM, ICT, DIR/EXO	1.00	14.46	5.40	1	21.86	3 998 173	4 166 811	3 034 756
Main area: Business drivers	DIR/EXO, SDI, COM, RTX&EP, ADM, ICT, HEA, SAS	2.85	21.44	8.85	0	33.14	6 601 275	6 317 830	9 645 960
Total		6	66	28	1	101	18 472 805	19 292 460	19 289 910

Annex VI. Contribution, grant and service-level agreements. Financial framework partnership agreements

TABLE 11. Contribution, grant and service-level agreements in 2023

	General information				Financial and HR impacts				
	Actual or expected date of signature	Total amount (EUR)	Duration	Counterpart		2022		2023	
Grant agreements									
						CA	PA	CA	PA
Grant RTX – Austria	13/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	GESUNDHEIT OSTERREICH GMBH	Amount CA/PA (*) (EUR)	79 590	81 937	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Belgium	03/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	SCIENSANO	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Bulgaria	20/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	NATIONAL CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND ANALYSIS NCPHA	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 589	60 000	59 999.87
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Cyprus	13/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	CYPRUS NATIONAL ADDICTIONS AUTHORITY	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	95 508	60 000	48 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Czechia	24/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	CESKA REPUBLIKA	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Denmark	03/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	DANISH HEALTH AUTHORITY	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Estonia	20/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	74 533	77 956	60 000	59 430.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Finland	13/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	FINNISH INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – France	20/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	OBSERVATOIRE FRANÇAIS DES DROGUES ET DES TOXICOMANIES GIP	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Germany	22/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	IFT INSTITUTE FOR THERAPY RESEARCH	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Greece	03/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	UNIVERSITY MENTAL HEALTH, NEUROSCIENCES AND PRECISION MEDICINE RESEARCH	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				

				INSTITUTE COSTAS STEFANIS					
Grant RTX – Hungary	13/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	MAGYARORSZ AG	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	59 331.50
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Ireland	04/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	THE HEALTH RESEARCH BOARD	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Italy	13/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	REPUBBLICA ITALIANA	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	78 606	60 000	56 343.18
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Latvia	03/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	SPKC DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL CENTRE OF LATVIA	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	72 760	72 760	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Lithuania	20/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	DRUG TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL CONTROL DEPARTMENT NTAKD	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Luxembo urg	20/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	GROUSSHERZ OGTUM VU LETZEBURG GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Malta	03/05/2023	47 891	31/12/2023	REPUBBLIKA TA MALTA	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	53 770	42 282	47 891	44 374.46
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Netherlan ds	26/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	STICHTING TRIMBOS- INSTITUUT, NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Poland	02/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	KRAJOWEGO BIURA DO SPRAW PRZECIWDZIA ANIA NARKOMANII	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Portugal	13/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	SICAD GENERAL DIRECTORATE INTERVENTION ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOURS DEPENDENCIE S	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Romania	03/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	THE NATIONAL ANTI-DRUG AGENCY	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	76 239	60 000	59 969.09
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Slovakia	20/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	SLOVENSKA REPUBLIKA	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	85 281	60 000	48 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Slovenia	02/05/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	69 942	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Spain	13/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	REINO DE ESPANA	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				

					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Sweden	13/06/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF SWEDEN	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	79 590	79 590	60 000	60 000.00
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Grant RTX – Croatia	13/04/2023	60 000	31/12/2023	CROATIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	32 300	36 883	60 000	56 182.43
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
Total RTX grant agreements					Amount CA/PA (EUR)	2 063 933	2 070 423	1 607 891	1 571 631
					Number of CA				
					Number of SNEs				
NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2022/438-917	21/12/2022	4 000 000	31/12/27	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	-	-	658 028	509 120
					Number of CA	-	-	4	4
					Number of SNEs				
2022/436-162	20/12/2022	1 500 000	31/12/26		Amount CA/PA (EUR)	-	-	482 148	333 564
					Number of CA	-	-	3	3
					Number of SNEs				
ENI/2021/423-588 EMCDDA 4GE	03/05/2021	800 000	31/12/22	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	501 764	413 181	246 808	246 808
					Number of CA	2	2	2	2
					Number of SNEs				
COPOLAD	15/07/2022	800 000	30/11/24	ORGANIZZAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE ITALO-LATINO AMERICANA	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	267 914	43 078	364 603	228 226
					Number of CA	2	2	2	2
					Number of SNEs				

(*) CA: Commitment appropriations; PA: Payment appropriations

Service-level agreements							
	Total amount (EUR)	Counterpart		2022		2023	
SLA-PMO	82 405.80	EUROPEAN COMMISSIO N	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	64 600	64 600	82 406	82 406
			Number of CA				
			Number of SNEs				
SLA-DIGIT (HOSTING, PROCUREMENT, E-PRIOR, RACHEL, ETC.)	36 059.00	EUROPEAN COMMISSIO N	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	40 377	40 377	36 059	36 059
			Number of CA				
			Number of SNEs				
SLA-DG BUDG (ABAC)	55 000.00	EUROPEAN COMMISSIO N	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	50 000	67 000	55 000	55 000
			Number of CA				
			Number of SNEs				
SLA-Training	6 994.00	EUROPEAN COMMISSIO N	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	3 000	2 740	6 994	6 994
			Number of CA				
			Number of SNEs				
RENT JOINT CENTRE - SLA EMCDDA/EMSA AGREEMENT	90 000.00	EUROPEAN MARITIME SAFETY AGENCY	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	90 000	90 000	90 000	90 000
			Number of CA				
			Number of SNEs				
SLA ID CARDS	3 624.00	EUROPEAN COMMISSIO N	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	1 281	1 136	3 624	1 313
			Number of CA				
			Number of SNEs				
EMCDDA-EMSA COOPERATION AGREEMENT ON ICT	26 008.80	EUROPEAN MARITIME SAFETY AGENCY	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	3 350	3 234	26 009	26 009
			Number of CA				
			Number of SNEs				
SLA CERT-EU/EMCDDA 2020	25 978.37	EUROPEAN COMMISSIO N	Amount CA/PA (EUR)	25 469	25 469	25 978	25 978
			Number of CA				
			Number of SNEs				
Total service-level agreements			Amount CA/PA (EUR)	278 077	294 556	326 070	323 759
			Number of CA				
			Number of SNEs				

Annex VII. Environmental management

Context of the agency and its environmental management strategy

The EMCDDA is part of the group of JHA agencies under DG Migration and Home Affairs. As such, the EMCDDA has no direct mandate related to the environment. The EMCDDA recognises that the agency, as a public institution, needs to actively monitor its environmental performance and implement appropriate measures to reduce its impact on the environment. Following the adoption of the [environmental policy of the EMCDDA](#) in 2014 and its revision in 2023, a yearly policy compliance report (Management Review) and a report on the progress on environmental measures (Environmental Statement) will be conducted as part of the annual work plan review process. In addition, a Working Group on Environment has been appointed by the Director.

Environmental policy of the EMCDDA

The EMCDDA developed its first environmental policy (as adopted on 04.06.2014, Decision DEC/DIR/2014/08) to apply an environmental management system in 2014. After nine years of being in place, the environmental policy was updated to reflect the EMAS registration of the EMCDDA (as adopted on 16.03.2023, Decision DEC/DIR/2023/007).

The Environmental Policy states as follows:

‘In view of the EU’s commitment to the environment, notably through the European Green Deal, the EMCDDA has a special responsibility to avoid pollution and continually reduce the environmental impact of its own activities.

The EMCDDA will therefore apply an environmental management system to all its activities, in line with the EU’s EMAS Regulation and ISO 14001, under which the EMCDDA is committed to:

- prevent and minimise pollution and the environmental impact of everyday work,
- continuously improve the individual and collective environmental performance,
- establish environmental objectives and tasks, defining clear responsibilities and openly providing information,
- comply with all environmentally relevant legislation and obligations, as well as with voluntarily assumed obligations, namely under the EMAS and ISO14001 frameworks.

More specifically, the EMCDDA is committed to:

- minimise carbon dioxide emissions;
- promote the efficient use of energy and minimise electricity consumption;
- apply environmental criteria in its public procurement procedures;
- minimise use of paper;
- minimise the production of waste and optimally manage its waste;
- encourage, train and involve staff to achieve these goals.

The EMCDDA undertakes to implement and pursue this Environmental Policy, in line with its environmental principles. The Centre will regularly and transparently communicate this Policy and measures to staff, contractors and any other interested parties.

Environmental commitments must translate into specific measures backed by the requisites of human, material and financial resources. The Environmental Management System should be designed to be cost-effective.

This policy and the environmental management system shall apply to all of the EMCDDA's activities, premises and equipment in Lisbon.'

Overview of the agency's environmental management system

The EMCDDA's environmental management system is based on the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).

The environmental policy frames the intention of the agency and creates the legal framework defining the scope of the environmental management system since 2014 and was revised to fit the requirements of the Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) in 2023. The Director appointed a Working Group on Environment with a mandate to review, communicate and propose measures related to the environmental performance of the agency in 2015. The main service providers — the Infrastructure and Logistics sector and the ICT unit — plan, implement and improve the measures approved by the Director. There are two reporting lines within the envisaged environmental management system that include all mapped stakeholders. The environmental performance of the EMCDDA is reported within the annual work plan review process in the form of KPIs, and through the annual publication of the agency's environmental statement. The findings and targets of the environmental statement are reviewed by the Working Group on Environment, which then issues recommendations. Environmental matters are promoted and published through the Working Group on Environment. The use of green public procurement is required.

Environmental aspects, indicators and targets

The annual environmental statement of the EMCDDA is produced by the Infrastructure and Logistics sector. It covers the following indicators, which are usually key points for public administrations working mostly in an office environment and are based on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change standard for the calculation of an organisation's CO₂ footprint:

- energy consumption;
- water consumption;
- paper consumption;
- waste production and sorting;
- official vehicles;
- staff transport to and from work;
- missions;
- CO₂ emissions.

The EMCDDA has been actively monitoring its environmental performance and CO₂ footprint since 2014. Based on the reporting requirements of EMAS, 2019 is considered the baseline to better compare pre-COVID-19 data with the following years during and after the pandemic (see Figure 7). The following results were published in 2024 and relate to data from 2023. The exceptionally good result for 2021 was achieved partly due to the COVID-19-related reduction in missions and transport as well as the switch to CO₂-neutral electricity generated from renewable energy sources. The result for 2023 reflects the full rebound of operations after the COVID-19-related slow-down. The main contributor to the CO₂ footprint was the increase in mission-related travel, representing 92 % of the 2023 figures before carbon offset (see Figure 8).

FIGURE 7. Tonnes CO₂ per person from 2019 to 2023 before carbon offset

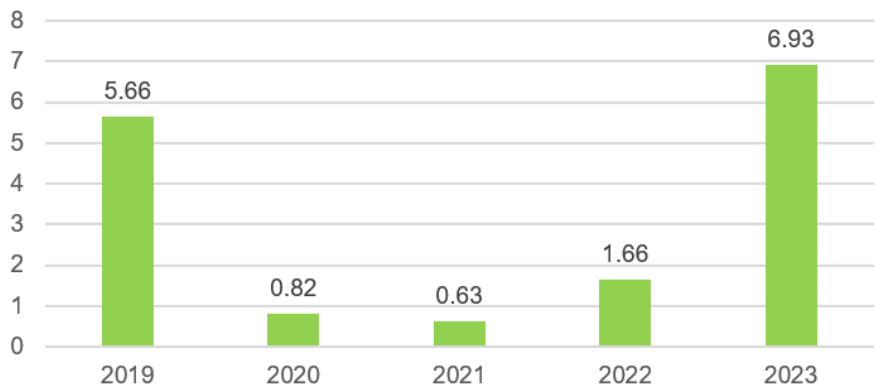
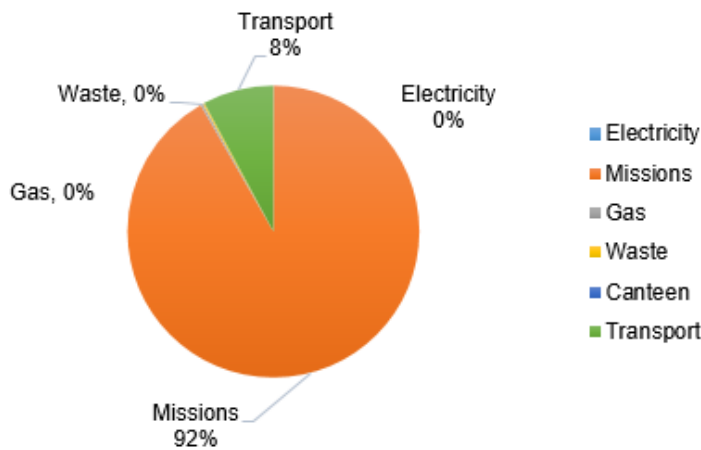


FIGURE 8. CO₂ distribution by category for the year 2023 before carbon offset (*)



(*) It should be noted that the percentages of Waste and Gas were not zero; however, they were so small compared to Missions, that they were rounded down to zero.

Due to the implementation of a voluntary carbon offsetting for missions in 2023 and the carbon offsetting of the photovoltaic solar panels, which produced electricity that counted towards official transport, the following results were achieved (see FIGURES 9 and 10).

FIGURE 9. Tonnes CO₂ per person from 2019 to 2023 after carbon offset

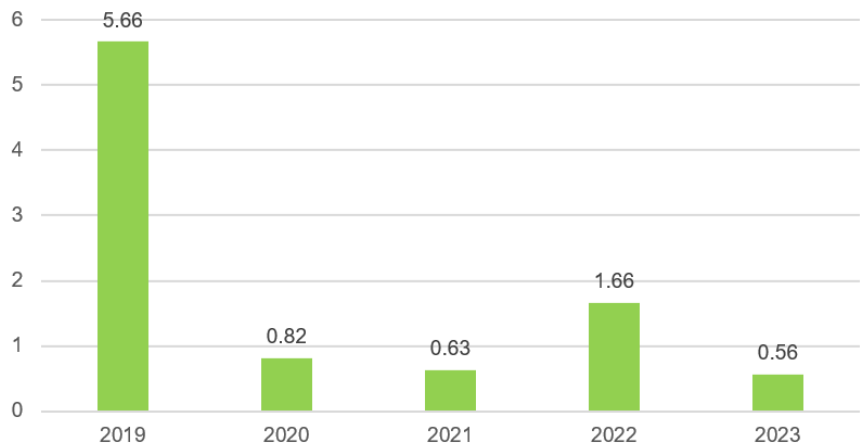
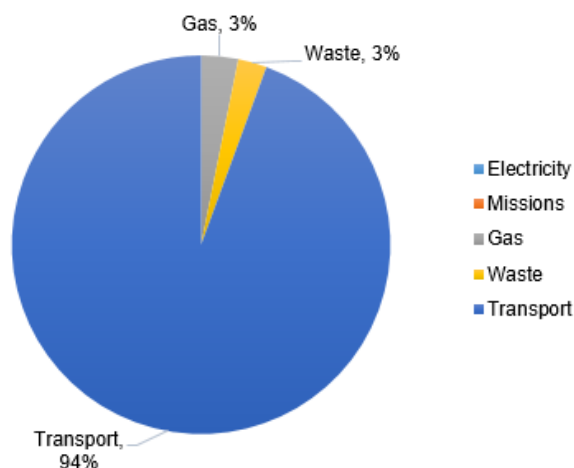


FIGURE 10. CO₂ distribution by category for the year 2023 after carbon offset

Overall, the EMCDDA achieved a reduction of its CO₂ footprint, taking into consideration the carbon offsetting of the solar panel electricity production and the certified voluntary carbon offset. The agency's footprint dropped to 0.56 tonnes of CO₂ per person in 2023 compared to 5.66 tonnes in 2019.

The weighting of the factors clearly shows that most of the agency's carbon footprint before offsetting came from missions (92 %), and transport (8 %), while the proportions of waste and gas remained very low, both well below 1 %. Transport shows the potential for further reducing the agency's CO₂ footprint after the mission-related carbon has been offset. Nevertheless, the 'green' electricity and the solar power generated on the roof of the main building will continue to noticeably reduce the agency's footprint compared to 2019 levels. The solar power cell production was 3.79 MWh, equivalent to an offset of 2.373 tonnes of CO₂, in 2023.

Strategy 2021-2025

In 2020 the EMCDDA developed a five-year Strategic Plan to become a carbon-neutral administration in the light of the European Green Deal and the Commission's stated goal to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Environmental Strategy 2021-2025 is based on the following steps to achieve its goal:

- A. Install solar electric power cells on the roof of the EMCDDA no later than 2021.
- B. Promote the use of private electric cars and bicycles by installing charging points in the garage in 2021.
- C. Take the necessary measures to change the current fuel-based official cars of the EMCDDA to hybrid or electric cars in 2022.
- D. Take the necessary measures to engage a travel agency for missions and events that provides a carbon offsetting programme in 2022.
- E. Implement the EMAS framework and obtain certification by the end of 2023.
- F. Offset mission-related carbon emissions by 2023.
- G. Take the necessary measures to reduce and finally offset official- and private-transport-related carbon emissions in 2024.
- H. Take the necessary measures to reduce and finally offset transport-related carbon emissions in 2025.

Actions to improve and communicate environmental performance

The Working Group on Environment has its own Intranet page with information on its mandate and measures to be implemented. It also posts the yearly environmental report on this page. Frequent awareness-raising communications promote environmentally friendly behaviour to staff.

The Working Group on Environment recommended for 2021 that electricity consumption be improved, that solar power cells be installed on the roof of the building and that the vehicle fleet be replaced with electric or hybrid vehicles. In addition, the installation of electric car-charging stations was recommended to promote the purchase of private electric cars. All three projects were approved by the Director and implemented.

The environmental policy from 2014 states that the EMCDDA is striving to obtain environmental certification in the long run, with due regard to the available resources. In the past, the lack of a direct mandate and the size of the EMCDDA had prevented any such implementation due to lack of financial and staff resources. In 2022 the Director approved the process to obtain EMAS certification as part of the agency's five-year environmental strategy. The certification process was initiated in 2023 and is expected to be concluded in 2024.

The travel agency tender, which was launched in 2022, resulted in the selection of a travel agency with a carbon offsetting scheme for generated emissions. The contract started in January 2023.

The delivery of one hybrid car and one electric car was planned for 2022. Due to delays in the electric car market, the hybrid car was delivered in 2022 and the electric car became available in 2023.

Annex VIII. EMCDDA accounts — Financial year 2023

This annex is available [online](#). ⁽¹²⁾

⁽¹²⁾ Final accounts available once adopted in accordance with the relevant financial rules.

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Lisbon: EMCDDA, 2024

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About this report

The *General Report of Activities* is an annual publication providing a detailed progress report of the EMCDDA's activities over a 12-month period. It catalogues the Centre's achievements in each area of its annual work programme. The report is a useful information source for all those seeking comprehensive information on the Centre and its work.

About the EMCDDA

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction is the hub of drug-related information in Europe. Its mission is to provide the European Union and its Member States with 'factual, objective, reliable and comparable information' on drugs and drug addiction and their consequences. Established in 1993, it opened its doors in Lisbon in 1995, and is one of the European Union's decentralised agencies. The Centre offers policymakers the evidence base they need for drawing up drug laws and strategies. It also helps professionals and researchers pinpoint best practice and new areas for analysis.