

EUDA International Cooperation Framework

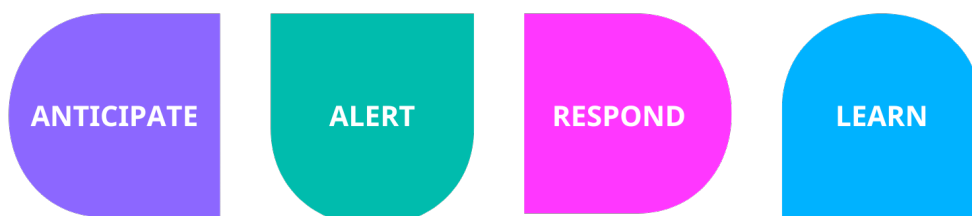
Acting today, anticipating tomorrow



1. Introduction

A new and broader mandate for the European Union Drugs Agency

Today, drugs can take on many shapes and forms. They permeate society and are accessible to anyone, anywhere.¹ With its stronger mandate, the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) contributes to EU preparedness on drugs through actions that anticipate and alert on new developments, whilst responding to emerging issues and learning from best practices in the field.² The agency is the leading entity for drug-related matters in the EU, and stands at the forefront of international efforts to address drug-related challenges. It ensures a cohesive and comprehensive response across borders through four main action areas: anticipate, alert, respond and learn.



The EUDA, formally established on 2 July 2024, replaced the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), which had been operating since 1995. Over the years, the EMCDDA had gradually expanded its international partnerships through bilateral cooperation with third countries, continuous exchanges with international organisations and engagement in bilateral, regional and multilateral technical cooperation projects. The EU institutions and EU agencies were also key partners in, and stakeholders of, the agency's international cooperation activities.

The EUDA will now build on this rich 30-year history of international cooperation. Some of the EMCDDA's key achievements in this area are highlighted in Figure 1.

¹ EUDA (2024). *Our manifesto*. Available at: https://www.euda.europa.eu/about/manifesto_en

² Art. 5 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. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32023R1322>

Figure 1. Highlights of EMCDDA international cooperation 1994–2024.

- **Close engagement with partner countries through bilateral agreements or arrangements —** The EMCDDA signed bilateral agreements or arrangements with almost all of the EU enlargement partners, as well as with several Latin American countries, among others. These agreements or arrangements helped foster the exchange of expertise and information across multiple topics in the drugs field. They were also the basis for establishing and strengthening the partners' national drug observatories and related national drug information systems. This close engagement with partner countries allowed for an exchange of best practices in health and social responses to drug issues, including prevention, treatment, harm reduction and social integration.
- **A longstanding collaboration with international organisations —** The agency signed agreements or arrangements with key international organisations with a role in the drugs field (e.g. UNODC, the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe, CICAD, WHO Europe, Interpol and the WCO). It is currently updating some of these. This collaboration allowed for the exchange of crucial information for in-depth analysis of EU drug developments, contributing to a better understanding of the global drug situation. The agency also provided evidence to support international drug policy developments.
- **Strengthening competences through technical cooperation projects —** The agency implemented EU-funded regional technical cooperation projects in the Western Balkans, the European Neighbouring Policy region and Latin America and the Caribbean. These projects contributed to the implementation of some of the activities planned under the bilateral agreements or arrangements and to the strengthening of the technical capacity of national drug monitoring systems. Such efforts focused in particular on national drug observatories and national early-warning systems. In addition, these projects equipped partners with the skills and competences needed to identify and respond to drug-related health and security threats. The agency has been contributing to the EU-funded Central Asian Drug Action Programme for over a decade.

More details: [Timeline: 25 years of monitoring — selected events from the EMCDDA's international cooperation history](#)

International cooperation as a core task of the EUDA

Drugs are a transnational phenomenon with an impact on communities worldwide, posing challenges to public health and security. Illegal drug flows are increasingly complex, with drugs and key chemical precursors being manufactured and transported across regions, often by transnational criminal organisations. New psychoactive substances, particularly synthetic drugs and their chemical precursors, which are frequently diverted from the legal market, call for continued attention. Public policies focusing on drugs (such as cannabis), alongside policies focusing on prevention or supply reduction, continue to evolve, creating increasingly complex regulatory frameworks.

Drugs continue to have significant direct and indirect implications for community health care and safety, both within the EU and beyond. Therefore, along with understanding drug use and its root causes, it is also important to consider the direct and indirect impacts of drug use on public health systems, on public expenditure on health care and security, on mental health services and on communicable diseases (such as HIV and Hepatitis C). In parallel, ongoing wars and conflicts have also had repercussions on drug use and trafficking, including in EU neighbouring countries. In order to address such increasingly global drug challenges, the new EUDA mandate strengthened international cooperation as a core task and requested the agency to adopt a new International Cooperation

Framework (ICF).^{3,4} In this context, the agency is committed to: developing partnerships to facilitate and foster the monitoring of international developments; exchanging data, best practices, evidence-based and human-rights based responses to global challenges; and providing technical assistance in the drugs field. These partnerships are implemented in line with the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021–2025 and future strategic documents, EU foreign policy objectives, and in alignment with EU health policies. As the key agency for drug-related matters in the EU, the EUDA, in cooperation with the European Commission, and as laid down in Article 20 of the EUDA Regulation, will engage with a range of international partners and stakeholders, adopting different modalities of cooperation that are fit for purpose and deliver added value to EU and international partners alike. All such activities are subject to the availability of human and financial resources at the agency.

Ensuring a reciprocal relationship between the EUDA and its international partners and stakeholders is central to the agency's mission. Exchanging evidence and disseminating best practices at international level can help foster innovation to mitigate risks, improve responses and anticipate and respond to cross-border drug-related health and security threats. The EUDA will therefore strengthen its knowledge base on assessment and monitoring capacities regarding the drug situation in third countries, the evolution of the EU market, as well as its understanding of the implications of international drug-related developments for public health and security in the EU. The Agency will produce geostrategic analyses, continue to support the development of evidence-based and human rights-based drug policy in third countries and support the EU and its Member States in international dialogues, contributing to healthier and more secure communities worldwide.

A new International Cooperation Framework: setting the vision and priorities for international cooperation

The ICF reflects the agency's commitment to address drug-related issues in an evidence-based, human-rights based, integrated, balanced and multidisciplinary way, aligned with the applicable EU drug-related strategic documents and human rights norms. It replaces the previous EMCDDA International Cooperation Framework (2018).⁵

The agency will focus on cooperation with the following key partners and stakeholders, with a tailored approach to each group as outlined below:



³ 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. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32023R1322>

⁴ Art. 20 of the 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. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32023R1322>

⁵ EMCDDA International Cooperation Framework (2018). Available at: https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/work-programmes-and-strategies/international-cooperation-framework_en

By actively engaging with its international partners and stakeholders, the EUDA aims to improve mutual learning and to support the dissemination of best practices and research findings, amplifying the impact of EU policies on a global scale.

2. Strategic objectives

To address the complex and rapidly changing drug phenomenon effectively, while promoting the EU balanced and multidisciplinary approach to drugs, the EUDA is strengthening its commitment to cooperating with international partners and stakeholders. This will allow the agency to further boost its capacity to monitor, assess, analyse and anticipate the external dimension of the drug phenomenon. To this end, the EUDA will articulate its international cooperation activities through the following four strategic objectives (SOs):

Figure 2. EUDA international cooperation strategic objectives.

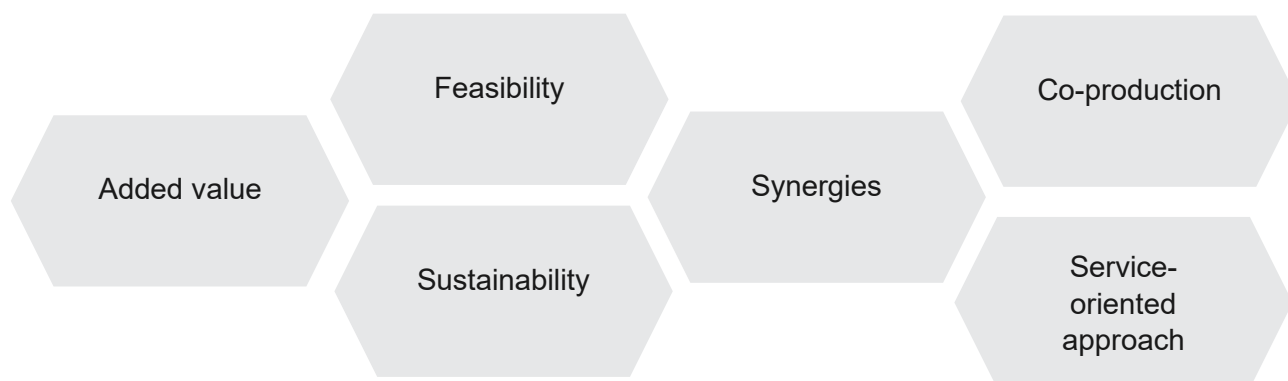


These SOs will be aligned with the performance model of the EUDA and key performance indicators will be developed in that model to support the regular monitoring of their implementation.

3. Principles

The above-mentioned strategic objectives will be implemented according to the following principles and aligned with the priorities set in the next section.

Figure 3. EUDA international cooperation principles.



- **Added value:** any activity must contribute directly or indirectly to the implementation of the EUDA Regulation, with the view to ensure there is a benefit for the EUDA, its stakeholders and partners.
- **Feasibility:** the implementation of activities is subject to the availability of resources. Regional and bilateral technical cooperation projects are subject to the availability of additional resources made available through external financial instruments or alternative funding sources for that specific purpose.
- **Sustainability:** in addition to the availability of resources, the long-term prospects of the activities developed in the framework of international cooperation will be taken into account.
- **Synergies:** activities are to be conducted in close coordination with other EU institutions, EU agencies and bodies, international organisations, development agencies, Reitox national focal points and civil society, as well as inter-institutional partnerships.
- **Co-production:** where appropriate, activities are to be co-produced with relevant stakeholders, such as partner countries, civil society organisations and other stakeholders.
- **Service-oriented approach:** activities are to be developed and implemented according to the needs expressed by the partners and other stakeholders, as well as the EUDA's own initiatives.

4. Priorities

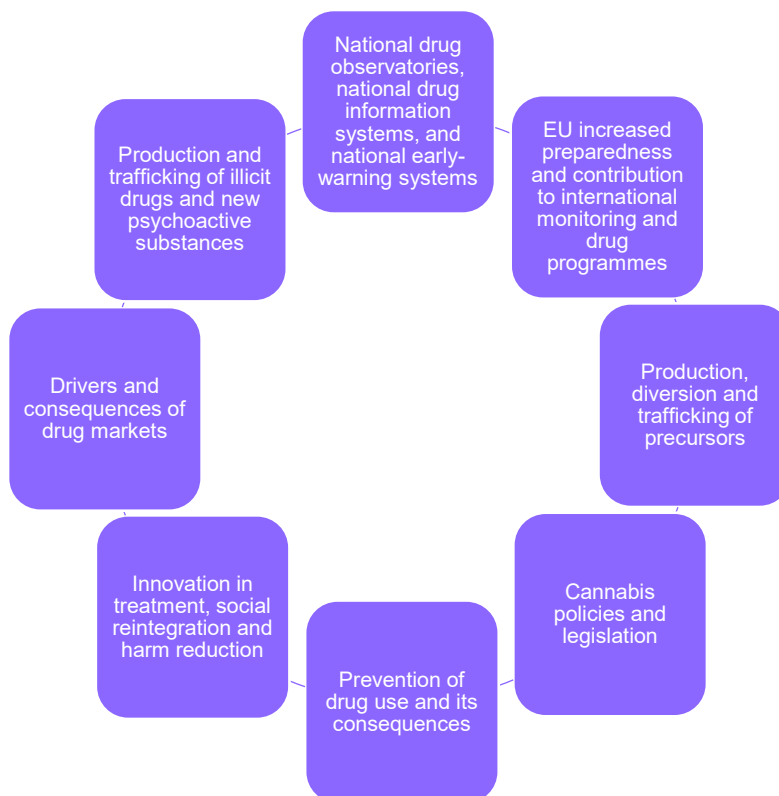
The priorities for EUDA international cooperation are set according to their relevance to the EUDA Regulation.⁶ They are established in line with the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021–2025,⁷ in accordance with the EU foreign policy objectives, relevant EU strategies and actions plans on security and organised crime and in the area of health (particularly mental health), as well as cooperation frameworks, such as EMPACT.⁸

⁶ 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. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32023R1322>

⁷ Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-drugs-policy/>

⁸ EMPACT: European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-fight-against-crime/>

Figure 4. EUDA international cooperation priorities.



Further prioritisation will take into account:

- **Drug policy strategic frameworks and priorities**, as well as the specific EU foreign policy objectives and priorities;
- The **drug situation** and **possible cross-border threats** affecting our partners and their potential impact on the EU;
- **Available human and financial resources**;
- **Status of relations** between the EU and the current and potential international partners and stakeholders;⁹
- **Drug policy developments**, which might have an impact on or be relevant to the EU policy and situation.
- **Relevant information** coming from studies, threat assessments, horizon-scanning and foresight exercises.

⁹ Please see section 5 of this document for a full overview of partners the EUDA collaborates in the framework of international cooperation.

5. Partners

To achieve the strategic objectives described in this framework, the EUDA, in cooperation with the European Commission as laid down in Article 20 of the EUDA Regulation, and with the European External Action Service (when appropriate), cooperates with the following partners:

Partner countries

The agency will cooperate with a range of partner countries from different regions, in consultation with relevant EU Delegations when appropriate, in line with the priorities outlined in section 4 of this document.

- **Candidates and potential candidates to the EU** — The ultimate goal for cooperation with these partners is to support their accession process, assess their competences and contribute to strengthen their capacities in line with the accession requirements. It is expected that, in the long term, the partners will develop the capacity for their data to be fully integrated into EUDA outputs.
- **European Neighbourhood Policy partners** — The objective is to support cooperation on drugs between these partners and the EU. Cooperation may envisage, in the long term, the option of participating in the work of the agency in line with the existing agreements concluded between the EU and the European Neighbourhood Policy partners. The EUDA's aim is therefore to establish and maintain mutually beneficial exchange with these partners in line with its mandate and strengthen their national capacities through the exchange of knowledge and good practice. It is expected that this cooperation will result in outcomes that may be integrated, to a limited extent, into EUDA outputs
- **Other third country partners** — Given the international dimension of the drug phenomenon and to be able to better anticipate, alert, respond and learn, the agency will partner, as required, with other third countries, for instance in Latin America and the Caribbean, Central Asia and North America (specifically with the United States of America in the context of the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats). These partnerships will be informed by the EU Drugs Strategy, Action Plan, EU Roadmap and other relevant strategic EU documents.

EU institutions, bodies and agencies

The EUDA will continue to support the EU in its policy, technical dialogues and expert meetings with third countries and international bodies (including at UN level by providing technical support at events of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs). Such support may involve the preparation of briefing notes, the provision of expertise at relevant meetings, as well as follow-up support. The agency will further work with the European External Action Service and the EU delegations in partner regions/countries, to support the implementation of the EU external policy objectives. The EUDA will also seek to ensure close coordination of its activities with those of other relevant EU institutions, bodies and agencies in the development and implementation of its international cooperation framework.

International organisations and development agencies

The Agency will further strengthen and expand cooperation with relevant international organisations and development agencies, including relevant technical bodies, from inside and outside the EU. This

cooperation will be developed in line with the EUDA regulation and take into account the need to avoid duplication of work.

Civil society organisations and scientific communities outside the EU

The Agency will develop and maintain cooperation with relevant civil society organisations, active at national or international level for the purposes of consultation, the exchange of information and the pooling of knowledge through the involvement of those actors. The agency will strengthen cooperation with academia and research groups to improve the EUDA's analytical insights on international scientific developments. Furthermore, the EUDA will encourage partner countries to support the participation and involvement of civil society in the development, implementation and evaluation of their drug policies.

6. Modalities of cooperation

The EUDA international cooperation activities will be carried out in the framework of several modalities (Figure 5) and will cover:

- support to EU institutions;
- participation in the work of the agency;¹⁰
- negotiation and implementation of Working Arrangements;¹¹
- technical cooperation projects;
- collaboration on international and EU-funded projects;
- collaboration with international research networks;
- synergies with other EU agencies and;
- ad hoc cooperation.

Cooperation with partners will be centred around the reciprocal transfer of knowledge, data and practices between the EUDA and its partners.

Figure 5. Modalities of EUDA international cooperation.



¹⁰ Art. 54 of the 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. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1322/oj>

¹¹ Art. 53 of the 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. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1322/oj>

7. Activities

The following is a list of activities that contribute to EU preparedness on drugs across the EUDA's main actions (anticipate, alert, respond and learn). These activities are directly linked to, and will operationalise the implementation of, the strategic objectives and priorities stated in Sections 2 and 4 of this document.

Furthermore, the EUDA will strive to ensure that gender equality and the perspectives of vulnerable populations are integrated into international cooperation activities and recognises that women face unique health challenges, including reproductive health issues and barriers to accessing addiction treatment services. Activities will also take into account the need to focus on people and communities to contribute to human well-being and strengthen citizen security.

Figure 6. EUDA international cooperation activities.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of geostrategic analyses (targeted policy analyses, threats assessments and briefings) on new and emerging threats related to drugs markets, drug use or cross-cutting policy issues on the drug situation in a specific region or country).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange of technical expertise and advice on international drug issues, including through presentations and participation in meetings, workshops and other forms of consultation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to enlargement partners in the preparation and development of their national drug information systems in line with the EU acquis.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of national drug observatories and early-warning systems in non-EU partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation on methodological innovation and development, including the monitoring of international drug-related signals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to knowledge exchange through to capacity-building and training, including by developing online learning materials, training platforms and information sharing (including virtual communities of practice and other digital platforms), as well as by co-organising joint meetings and trainings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad-hoc access to activities of the forensic and toxicological laboratory network, the European drug alert system, the threat assessment mechanism, and other analytical activities, including foresight exercises.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an EUDA international cooperation exchange platform.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Member States in reporting and submitting all relevant data to the United Nations system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of scientific societies and promote early career researchers' programmes.

8. Revision of the framework

The EUDA will conduct regular assessments of international developments, the evolution of the EU policy framework and the Union's priorities relating to drug-related matters, in consultation with the appropriate EU agencies, bodies, institutions and delegations. These assessments will assist with the detection of signals in drug-related patterns or trends that may have important implications for the EU

and will take into consideration the relevant threat assessment, horizon-scanning and foresight exercises.

Reports on relevant findings, and on the implementation of this ICF, will be regularly presented to the EU Management Board and the framework will be reviewed accordingly, when and as required.