



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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COEST 424**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	10 September 2013
To:	Horizontal Working Party on Drugs and the Russian Federation
Subject:	Summary of discussions

1. Adoption of the agenda

The meeting adopted the agenda as set out in doc. CM 4126/13.

2. Developments of drug situation

The representative of the EMCDDA presented the European Drug Report 2013 and the representative of Europol complimented it with the most recent information on drug seizures.

The Russian delegation explained the functioning of the national drug monitoring system and presented the main drug-related trends, informing the meeting that synthetic drugs were trafficked to Russia from China and the EU and that there was a tendency to replace cannabis with synthetic drugs. The speaker also provided the most recent data on drug seizures, noting that cannabis constituted the biggest part of the drug seizures. He informed the meeting that, according to the statistics provided by the medical services, there were around 650 000 registered drug users in Russia, and the majority of them were using opiates, while cannabis users constituted a less significant part of the whole number of drug users.

3. Developments of drug policy

The CY delegation presented the EU Drug Strategy 2013-2020 and the Presidency gave an overview of the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2013-2016. The PL delegation presented the Council Conclusions on cooperation between the EU and Eastern Europe in the field of drugs (doc. 17728/11 CORDROGUE 89 COEST 454 ENFOCUSTOM 155 UD 342 JAIEX 131) and the representative of the GSC gave an overview of the implementation of measures foreseen in these Council Conclusions (doc. 12250/13 CORDROGUE 72).

The Russian delegation informed the meeting that a number of legislative initiatives were taken to tackle drugs. The delegation emphasised the seriousness of the challenge of new psychoactive substances, noting that over the past few years a large number of these substances, which were sold also on internet as medical products, consumer goods and household products, had been identified in Russia. Also, according to the Russian authorities, there was a steady increase in the sales of these new substances and for the last three years the number of seizures of such substances increased by eight times. The delegations were also informed that the drug prevention system was under development and that there were initiatives to develop support measures for social and religious organisations involved into antidrug activities.

4. Thematic debates

– *Misuse of prescribed medicines*

The representative of the Commission noted that the problem of the misuse of prescribed medicines was not so acute in the EU as it was in other regions, however, the EU had to start developing knowledge about it and this was already included in the new EU Action Plan on Drugs 2013-2016.

The representatives of the EMCDDA and the Presidency made extensive presentations on the topic (please see doc. 12789/13 CORDROGUE 79 COEST 205, page 4).

The Russian delegation explained that in the last 5-10 years the medicine misuse without a prescription by drug users increased in Russia, as law enforcement efforts reduced the availability of "traditional drugs". The speaker informed the meeting that different groups of medicines were abused, including tranquilisers, benzodiazepines, opioids and analgesics. To tackle this misuse the government scheduled some of the most commonly abused medicines as psychotropic substances, and a specific prescription system was applied. The speaker also elaborated on the problem of the misuse of medicines containing codeine, which could be used to prepare desomorphine, noting that this was an acute problem in almost all Russian regions.

A discussion on the opioid substitution treatment followed. The Russian delegation asked to take into consideration their opposition towards the substitution treatment, while the EU delegations were providing the arguments supporting this kind of drug dependence treatment, also noting that it was an evidence-based treatment.

– *New psychoactive substances*

The representative of the Commission informed the meeting that the Commission would soon table a new legislation proposing an improved mechanism to tackle new psychoactive substances at the EU level. The main elements of the new mechanism were presented, including a possibility to enter a temporary ban and have more options for addressing the substances, depending on the level of danger they cause.

The representative of the EMCDDA explained the factors contributing to the popularity of new psychoactive substances, at the same time noting the existence of the knowledge gap as regards these substances and other limitations, including the lack of cooperation with the private sector. The speaker gave an overview of the functioning of the EU Early Warning System (EWS), through which a large number of substances was monitored, and explained that despite synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones forming the biggest group of new psychoactive substances, other substances (chemicals, plants, medicines) also composed a large group, and future issues could arise from this group. He also informed the meeting that addressing the new psychoactive substances would remain a priority under the next EU policy cycle for the fight against serious and organised crime 2014- 2017.

The Russian delegation called the spread of new psychoactive substances one of the biggest threats to the entire international community. The speaker informed the meeting that these substances in general were distributed to Russia from the East and South-East Asia, mainly from China, Myanmar, India and Thailand. He also defined the main characteristics of criminals involved in distribution of these substances, and the usual way of their functioning, noting that they were increasingly working in groups and widely using mobile communications as well as various electronic payment systems. The delegation presented the national control system for identifying and monitoring the circulation of these substances, under which the circulation of more than 500 new psychoactive substances was monitored. However, the speaker noted the difficulties to control these substances. He elaborated on the new psychoactive substances which were put under control in 2013 and the plans to introduce control measures on ten more new substances. The representative also shared ideas on how the control over new psychoactive substances could be improved.

5. Successful policies to reduce drugs demand problems

The Russian delegation informed the meeting about the development of the national rehabilitation and resocialisation programme aimed at creating by 2020 a national rehabilitation system and explained that the creation of this system was expected to substantially reduce drug use and improve the criminal situation in the country. The speaker elaborated on the different elements of the programme and the stages of its implementation, explaining that the new system would include different types of treatment – medical, social, psychological and educational, and also emphasising the important role to be carried out by social services, working with families living with drug addicts. The meeting was also informed that an internet site was created to support this programme, through which different proposals from all Russian regions were received, with more than 100 proposals coming from the NGOs.

The representative of the EMCDDA stressed that prevention was the first measure against drug use and explained that evidence demonstrated that prevention strategies such as social influence programmes, normative education, parenting programmes, parental monitoring proved to be efficient while measures such as organisation of seminars, conferences, parents' evenings, information days, expert visits, mass media campaigns or dissemination of leaflets and flyers brought zero and in some cases even negative results. The speaker gave an overview of drug treatment and harm reduction in the EU, noting that the provision of the opioid substitution treatment was increasing and covered around 50% of problem opioid users.

He also noted that fewer new clients were entering treatment and the trend to inject heroin was diminishing. The expert elaborated on opioid substitution treatment in prisons, which was available in most countries, even though restrictions existed, as well as on the prevention of drug-related overdoses and defined the rehabilitation situation in the EU.

6. Afghanistan and Central Asia

The Russian delegation gave an update as regards the drug production and trafficking situation from Afghanistan and presented the results of various operations undertaken to fight against drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan, including a number of dismantled illicit drug laboratories and the amount of illicit drugs seized and destroyed. The speaker also gave an overview of the means employed to combat money laundering, explaining that the illicit profit from the drug business was equal to the annual GDP of France or United Kingdom.

The EU side expressed concerns about the situation in Afghanistan, also as regards the results of the UNODC study on poppy seeds, and explained the measures taken by the EU to tackle this threat, including promoting balanced approach.

The representative of the EEAS presented the EU-Central Asia action plan on drugs for the period 2014-2020 which was under development and which would foresee actions in the fields of drug demand reduction, drug supply reduction and wider regional cooperation. The speaker also gave an overview of the various programmes, including the Heroin route programme and the CADAP programme, seeking to develop evidence-based and balanced drug policies in Central Asian countries, which would support the implementation of this action plan.

The representative of the EEAS gave an overview of the project "Information Networks and Platforms along the Heroin Route", initiated in the framework of the Heroin Route Programme, which would mainly focus on Central Asian states and aim at enhancing their capacity to deal with the drug threat and would ultimately enable the countries of the region to conduct their own joint operations. The Russian delegation expressed interest in the project and the delegations discussed possible cooperation, with the Russian delegation suggesting the EU experts to present the project in Moscow first.

7. Any other business

- ***EU-Russia drug precursors agreement***

The representative of the Commission gave an update on the above-mentioned agreement, informing the meeting that it was signed on 4 June 2013 during the EU-Russia summit.

- ***Operational cooperation agreement between Russia and Europol***

The representative of Europol informed the meeting about the state of play as regards the above-mentioned agreement and explained the further steps.
