



Brussels, 29 May 2018
(OR. en)

8930/18

CORDROGUE 48
COWEB 73

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	EU-Western Balkans dialogue on drugs (18 April 2018) - Outcome of the meeting

1. Adoption of the agenda

The meeting adopted the agenda outlined in [CM 1872/18](#).

2. Update on drug policy and drug situation developments in the EU and the Western Balkans

The Presidency and the representative of the Commission gave an overview of the latest developments in the EU drugs policy, including the adoption of new legislation to tackle new psychoactive substances in a more efficient manner, Council conclusions on alternatives to coercive sanctions and the new EU policy cycle on organised and serious international crime. The representative from the EMCDDA gave an update on the EU drugs situation.

Western Balkans delegations gave an overview of the respective drug-related developments. Serbia informed the meeting that the first national action plan on drugs, for 2014-2017, had been evaluated in cooperation with the EMCDDA and that the evaluation report would feed into the process of drafting the new action plan for the years 2018-2021.

Montenegro noted that after the implementation of the action plan on drugs for the 2013-2016 period and the mid-term external evaluation of the drugs strategy, in February 2017 a new action plan for 2017-2018 had been approved.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia informed the meeting that the possession of cannabis for personal use had been decriminalised. Bosnia and Herzegovina observed that the national parliament was soon expected to adopt the state drugs strategy for 2018-2023 and that the establishment of the early warning system on new psychoactive substances was underway.

Kovoso* informed the meeting about the preparation of a new drugs strategy for the 2018-2022 period. Albania noted that the main drug-related issue in the country was Albanian marijuana and that they did not have problems with synthetic drugs and fentanyl. The speaker also stressed the importance of information exchange with a view to ensuring that drug problems are addressed efficiently.

3. Overview of the cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans

The representative of the Commission observed that there had been many developments as regards the strategic framework of cooperation with the Western Balkans and that in most cases the legislation was in line with EU legislation or actions were being taken in this direction. At the same time, the speaker stressed the need for this legislation to be implemented. She recalled that the TAIEX instrument could be mobilised to support different initiatives, including study visits and expert consultations.

The representative of Europol noted that information exchange was increasing and called for a more proactive approach to sharing data. The representative of the EMCDDA stressed the importance of establishing drug observatories for providing reliable data, which was a key instrument for policy-making. The speaker noted that the situation varied across the Western Balkans in this regard – some national observatories had already been established, elsewhere the legal background had been adopted and in some cases practical problems had been encountered.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Similarly, the situation as regards the establishment of the early warning system for new psychoactive substances varied across the Western Balkans.

The Western Balkans elaborated on their cooperation with the EMCDDA and Europol. Montenegro observed that their national early warning system had been established in 2014 and that no production of new psychoactive substances had been observed in the country.

4. Update on the situation regarding new psychoactive substances

The Presidency noted that addressing new psychoactive substances remained an important priority. The representative of the Commission gave an overview of the recently adopted legislative package on new psychoactive substances, which would come into force in November 2018 and make it possible to significantly shorten the time needed to bring the most dangerous substances under control.

5. The use and promotion of alternatives to coercive sanctions

The representative of the Commission gave an overview of the use of alternatives to coercive sanctions in the EU Member States, noting that all EU Member States had at least one such alternative available (and that most had more than one), however, common barriers to the use of alternatives to coercive sanctions existed in practice. The representative of the EMCDDA observed that the possibility of using such alternatives had been foreseen as long ago as the UN 1961 Single Convention on Drugs and that the Agency had been monitoring the use of these alternatives for the last 20 years.

The Presidency informed the Western Balkans about the discussions held at EU level as regards promoting the use of alternatives to coercive sanctions and that as a result of these discussions, Council conclusions had been adopted which foresaw a number of actions to promote and better measure the use of alternatives to coercive sanctions.

6. Exchange of views on UNGASS follow-up and preparation for the 2019 global drug policy review

The Presidency noted that the UNGASS outcome document was a pivotal document for all future drug-related discussions and therefore that no new political agreement was necessary as an outcome of the 2019 global drug policy review. The speaker also stressed that the EU's priorities were to achieve broad international implementation of the recommendations outlined in the UNGASS outcome document and also to seek progress beyond UNGASS commitments. The representatives of the EU welcomed the Western Balkans' support for the EU statements on UNGASS on drugs and on the 2019 global drug policy review delivered in Vienna, and encouraged delegations to continue this good practice.

7. A.O.B.

No issues were discussed under this agenda item.