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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 29 November 2017
To: Delegations
Subject: EU-Eastern Partnership expert meeting on drugs

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting adopted the agenda as outlined in doc. CM 5124/17.

2. Update on drug policy and drug situation developments in EU and Eastern Partnership countries

The Presidency gave an overview of the implementation of the Presidency priorities, including as regards alternatives to coercive sanctions. The representative of the Commission presented the latest developments in the EU drugs policy, elaborating on the new EU Action Plan on Drugs for 2017-2020, and the representative of the EMCDDA outlined the main trends in the EU drugs situation, as demonstrated by the European Drug Report 2017.

Georgia informed the meeting that the first national drugs strategy was adopted in 2013 and now the second action plan on drugs for the period 2016-2018 was in place. The delegation gave an overview of a number of legislative changes introduced aiming for a more balanced drugs policy. The speaker also noted that they were increasingly applying alternatives to coercive sanctions and that work was done to establish a national drugs monitoring center.

The Moldovan delegation informed the meeting that the new drugs action plan was approved on 15 November 2017 and explained the recent changes as regards the membership and separation of the strategic and operational format of the national drug commission. The delegation recalled that the national drugs observatory functioned under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. The speaker also gave an overview of the situation as regards drug use and trafficking. The Ukrainian delegation gave an overview of drug trafficking situation and noted that they have been working to improve the legislative framework.

3. Overview of the cooperation between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries

The representative of the EEAS gave an overview of the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2016/2017 in relation to drugs. The representative of the Commission announced the forthcoming launch of a new programme aiming at improving the capacities of European Neighbourhood Policy countries to monitor drug supply and therefore to take policy decisions better informed by evidence. The speaker explained that the programme was to be launched in mid-2018 for 3 years with a budget of EUR 3 million. The representative of the EMCDDA informed the meeting about the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding with Moldova and gave an overview of the EMCDDA cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries.

The Georgian delegation informed the meeting that they have very good regional and biregional cooperation and would soon send a liaison officer to Europol. The delegation gave an overview of the results achieved through the police cooperation in curbing drug trafficking. The Moldovan delegation noted that they had cooperation agreements with Europol and Eurojust and already had a joint investigation team with CZ, under the auspices of Eurojust. The speaker gave an overview of the cooperation with the EU, noting that, among other things, thanks to this cooperation and funding allocated their laboratory capacities to identify psychoactive substances have been improved.

4. Update on the situation regarding new psychoactive substances

The representative of the EMCDDA gave an overview of the situation with new psychoactive substances in the EU, noting that they were monitoring more than 600 substances. Even if the pace with which these substances were appearing on the market has gone down this year, the dangerous trend was that substances which were appearing were more potent and more toxic therefore posing an increased public health challenge. According to the expert, the increased number of fentanyl derivatives was a worrying trend. Also in some places synthetic cannabis has replaced natural cannabis, which was yet another challenge for the public health as the synthetic cannabis was more toxic than the natural one.

The Presidency elaborated on the fentanyls problem explaining that while in the last decade the problem with fentanyls existed only in Estonia, now it was emerging in other EU countries. The speaker noted that tackling fentanyl and their derivatives required a whole new range of activities, including addressing the accidental exposure to potent new fentanyl derivatives by law enforcement or post officers, which could result lethal. Also, the challenge was that many users were not aware of taking fentanyl, as it was often mixed with heroin and other substances.

The representative of the Commission presented the recently adopted EU legislation to tackle the challenge of new psychoactive substances, which has foreseen a more rapid procedure for banning these substances at the EU level. The speaker also noted that the EMCDDA Early Warning System was the only such system working 7/24.

The Georgian delegation informed the meeting that they have a special law to tackle new psychoactive substances since 2014, in which these substances are defined by classes of chemical compounds. According to the speaker, all newly detected substances so far were part of one of the nine chemical compounds foreseen by this law and therefore were already regulated. The delegation also informed the meeting that the illicit sales of regulated new psychoactive substances were sanctioned with prison penalties for 6 years and more.

The Moldovan delegation explained that usually new psychoactive substances were used by young people in their country. Also, these substances have recently constituted the major part of drug-related seizures (36 percent), while marihuana seizures accounted for 27 percent of the whole seizures. The Ukrainian delegation noted that China and India remained the main producers of new psychoactive substances reaching Ukraine and that the main way of delivery to Ukraine was through mail. The speaker informed the meeting that a new law to improve and fasten the way to tackle these substances was under preparation.

5. Exchange of views on post-UNGASS and 2019 global drug policy review

The Presidency and the representative of the Commission emphasised that the UNGASS outcome document was a pivotal document for all future drug-related discussions and stressed the importance of the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the outcome document. The speakers also called for more cooperation between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries towards 2019 global drug policy review.

6. AOB

No issues were discussed under this agenda item.
