



news release

from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

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Annual report on EU drugs problem: special focus on CEECs

DRUG PROBLEMS GROW IN CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

CEECs step up responses

*A rise in the percentage of the **central and east European** population (especially schoolchildren) who have tried illegal drugs at least once...and the region's key role in the trafficking and transit of drugs to the **EU**...*

These are just two of the trends highlighted in a special focus on **central and east European countries (CEECs)** in the *2001 Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in the European Union*, out today from the **Lisbon-based EU drugs agency, the EMCDDA**.

The report says the **CEECs** have taken great strides in developing appropriate laws and administrative and co-ordination structures to tackle drug problems. It is now essential they continue to reinforce such steps and allocate the necessary resources, it adds. The **European Commission** boosted funds in 2000 by a further € 1 million per country specifically for introducing a drug component into national Phare programmes. Most of these projects are being developed through 'twinning' with **EU** Member States.

Threat to young people

Today's report says lifetime experience of illicit drug use among 15 to 16-year-olds doubled between 1995 and 1999 in all **CEECs** – except the **Czech Republic** (up 1½ times), where it was already high (↑). Figures are highest in the **Czech Republic** (one in three 15 to 16-year-olds) and **Slovenia** (one in four).

The rises come mostly from cannabis. As in the **EU**, this is the drug overwhelmingly favoured by all drug users. However, a significant but smaller rise is noted in use of drugs like ecstasy, amphetamines and LSD, with prevalence probably much greater than official data suggest.

CEECs both transit routes and 'targets'

The report says major seizures on the **Balkan** route and in **central Europe** in 1999 and 2000 'confirm the role of the region in the transit and storage of heroin'. Heroin seized by the **Bulgarian** authorities in 2000 weighed 2,079 kilograms. This was more than the total in the previous six years. As heroin consumption rises, it seems the **CEECs** are becoming a target as well as a trafficking route.

The **CEECs** also continue as a transit region for cannabis destined for the **EU**, the report continues. As in the **EU**, there is much evidence of a rise in local cultivation of this most popular of drugs, as well as in its trafficking.

The **CEECs'** role in the transit of cocaine also seems to have developed further in 1999–2000. Major cocaine seizures involved the **Czech Republic, Hungary** and **Romania** – yet consumption seems limited to particular sectors of the population.

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The popularity of synthetic drug use is growing among young people, with worrying signs that increasing numbers of them are involved in trafficking and selling. Production of synthetic drugs has risen and 'their consumption influences the lives of more and more young people'.

The agency adds that illegal laboratories producing amphetamines exist in most **CEECs**, with precursors for production smuggled from other **CEECs**, the **EU** or third countries. The **Baltic States, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland** appear to be major producers. For example, despite the dismantling of seven laboratories in **Poland** last year, it is estimated that at least the same number could still be operational.

But the traffic isn't all one-way. Worldwide prevalence of ecstasy use has led to its export from the **EU** to the **CEECs**. Law-enforcement agencies report that a significant proportion of ecstasy used in the **CEECs** originates in the **Netherlands**.

Other key trends in the CEECs:

- the **CEECs** are seeing a rise in the demand for drug treatment, mostly for opiate dependency;
- imported heroin is increasingly taking the place of home-grown opiates;
- there is a spread of drug use from major urban centres to all regions.

CEECs 'step up responses'

The **EMCDDA** says that, in general, the **CEECs** now have the legal and institutional framework to rise to the drug challenge. They have already taken substantial measures and are stepping them up ⁽²⁾. However, 'the overall capabilities to implement the adopted measures effectively, as well as the resources allocated, remain, on the whole, limited'.

It adds that countries concerned must 'continue to reinforce their policies, institutions and co-ordination mechanisms and allocate the necessary resources to achieve this'.

Notes to editors

⁽¹⁾ Figures from the European school survey project (ESPAD).

⁽²⁾ Co-operation between the **EMCDDA** and the **CEECs** was given the green light by the **European Commission** in December 2000. The € 2 million project under the Phare Programme began on 1 March this year. It specifically covers the 10 CEEC candidate countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia), while associating as far as possible Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Emphasis is placed on involving the countries as much as possible in the **EMCDDA's** activities through further development of National Focal Points (NFPs) and drug-information systems. All candidate countries are now establishing NFPs themselves.

This year, the EMCDDA offers you a special website: **Annual report 2001 online** at <http://annualreport.emcdda.org> or <http://emcdda.kpnqwest.pt> The site will contain downloadable PDF files of the report and this and other news releases in 12 languages (11 EU + Norwegian).

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