



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 23.11.2009  
SEC(2009) 1631 final

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Strengthening EU Research Capacity on Illicit Drugs**

## COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

### Strengthening EU Research Capacity on Illicit Drugs

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction .....	3
2.	Research in the field of Illicit Drugs: State of Play.....	4
2.1.	National Approaches Differ .....	4
2.2.	A Broad Spectrum of Research Areas.....	4
2.3.	Cross-Border Cooperation: Room for Growth.....	5
2.4.	Insufficient Access to Research Findings.....	6
3.	Possible Future Research Areas .....	6
3.1.	Understanding drug use behaviour.....	6
3.2.	Drug Demand Reduction.....	7
3.3.	Drugs Supply Reduction.....	8
3.4.	Policy Evaluation.....	8
4.	Proposals for Action.....	9
4.1.	Improving Coordination .....	9
4.1.1.	At National Level .....	9
4.1.2.	At EU Level.....	10
4.2.	Stimulating Cross Border Research Cooperation.....	10
4.2.1.	Maximising the Use of EU Funding Opportunities.....	11
4.2.2.	More Information and Support for Researchers.....	12
4.2.3.	Encouraging Cooperation between National Research Funding Programmes.....	12
4.2.4.	Towards a Sustainable Framework for Drugs-Related Research.....	13
4.3.	Enhancing Research Capacity and Infrastructure.....	13
4.4.	Improving Access to Research Findings .....	14
	ANNEX .....	15

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012 identifies information, research and evaluation as key elements of EU drug policy to achieve a better understanding of the drugs problem.<sup>1</sup>

Research plays an important role to underpin evidence-based drug policies and develop the necessary policy responses to reduce the adverse health and social impacts of drug use in our societies.

The Strategy's "research" objective has been translated into specific actions under the EU Drugs Action Plan 2005-2008<sup>2</sup> and the EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012<sup>3</sup>. Objective 21 aims "to expand the knowledge base in the field of drugs by promoting research". To meet this objective, the Council and the Commission are requested, in Action 63, to:

- identify future EU research priorities in the field of illicit drugs and the mechanisms needed in order to generate new knowledge,
- develop new approaches and technologies,
- strengthen research capability by developing and focusing its strategic direction and in taking steps to improve cooperation in the EU.

Research in the field of illicit drugs and, more broadly, security is also highlighted as a priority in the Commission's contribution to the future Stockholm Programme which sets out the Commission's vision for the area of justice, freedom and security in the next five years<sup>4</sup>.

This Commission Staff Working Paper takes stock of the state of play for drugs-related research in the EU and proposes a number of actions to strengthen drugs-related research capacity, cooperation and coordination at both national and EU level.

These proposals draw on the results of a two day conference "Bridging the Research Gap in the Field of Illicit Drugs in the EU"<sup>5</sup> which brought together policy-makers, research programme managers and researchers to discuss ways to improve drugs-related research capacity in the EU.

Important input was also provided by the Commission study "A Comparative Analysis of Research in the field of Illicit Drugs in the EU"<sup>6</sup> which reviews the state of play of drug-related research in the 27 EU Member States and compares the European situation to Australia, Canada and the USA. The study drew – among others - on the work of the EMCDDA and the REITOX network of National Focal Points.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012, CORDROGUE 77, 22.11.2004

<sup>2</sup> EU Drugs Action Plan 2005-2008 OJ C 168, 08.07.2005

<sup>3</sup> EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012 OJ 326

<sup>4</sup> Communication from the Commission "An Area of Freedom, Security and Justice Serving the Citizens", COM (2009) 262, 03.09.2009

<sup>5</sup> Bridging the Research Gap in the Field of Illicit Drugs in the EU, 24-25 September 2009, Brussels ([www.illicitdrugsresearch.eu](http://www.illicitdrugsresearch.eu))

<sup>6</sup> *A Comparative Analysis of Research into Illicit Drugs in the European Union*, Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security, European Commission, September 2009

<sup>7</sup> Selected Issue on Drug-Related Research, EMCDDA 2008

## 2. RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF ILLICIT DRUGS: STATE OF PLAY

Our proposals for action take account of the current state of play in the field of drug research, which can be summarised as follows:

### 2.1. National Approaches Differ

EU countries set their own priorities in research according to their own national research needs, drug problems and knowledge gaps. The ways in which drug-related research is commissioned in the Member States strongly depends on national research traditions, the organisation of the research community and public funding systems. As a result, research priorities, funding structures and practices vary across the EU.

There are considerable differences in the size and quality of drugs-related research capacities at the national level with some Member States having drugs specific research programmes and a strong research base, on the one hand, and on other Member States, particularly the new Member States, where research capacity is under development.

Most research is carried out at the national level by universities, national research institutes and specialised drugs specific research centres. In many Member States, these bodies place the research focus on the behavioural, health and social aspects of the drug phenomenon whereas some Member States have invested substantially in basic research.

In some Member States, for example the Netherlands, UK and Finland, Ireland, Germany drugs specific research programmes have been established in recent years, usually with a focus on substance use and addiction research, coupled with varying degrees of coordination between policy-makers, the scientific community and practitioners.

However, overall coordination between policy, research and practice in the field of illicit drugs is piecemeal and lacks a coherent longer term approach for the identification and funding of new areas of research.

In many Member States drug research activities are often not part of a coherent drug research strategy as such, despite the priority given to the need for more research in most national drug policy documents. In comparison, countries such as Australia, Canada and the US have invested in a longer term research strategy in the field of illicit drugs, which is paying dividends in terms of research output and policy relevance.

### 2.2. A Broad Spectrum of Research Areas

There is a broad spectrum of research questions to address today's multifaceted drugs problems, covering different research fields:

- **Health and socio-economic related research** covers areas such as aetiology (including neurosciences and biomedicine), epidemiology, psychosocial and medical interventions for prevention, treatment and harm reduction, pharmacology, toxicology and sociological research on addictive behaviours. Researchers across the EU have been particularly productive in the fields of epidemiology and drug treatment. Biomedical research, focusing on the mechanisms that cause addiction has gained in scientific importance in recent years.
- **Research relating to law enforcement/drug supply reduction** covers areas such as criminology, research into criminal behaviours, drug markets, organised crime, corruption,

money laundering, forensic science, detection and surveillance technology. In these areas, research is often policy driven at the request of governments. Investigator driven research in this field is often not drug-specific, but part of broader themes such as criminology. Private companies carry out research in the field of detection technologies and surveillance equipment.

Overall, research in these fields is conducted on a relatively limited scale and deserves more attention, particularly given the emphasis placed on law enforcement to reduce drug supply in all Member States.

### **2.3. Cross-Border Cooperation: Room for Growth**

There is considerable informal networking among researchers, within specific research areas, at national, EU and international level, meeting at specialised conferences or participating in the work of the one of the European drugs-related research societies. Yet research in the field of illicit drugs has a predominantly national focus with few drugs-specific cross-border projects.

The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) and the Health Behaviour in School Children (HBSC) projects are cited as two of the biggest collaborative efforts, both in the field of youth epidemiology. INCANT<sup>8</sup> is a multi-site, trans-national randomized controlled trial in the field of cannabis treatment. There are several large-scale EU projects still underway, funded by the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, such as GENADDICT, IMAGEN, PHECOMP in the health field, NANOSECURE in the field of detection technologies and DRUID with regard to driving under the influence of drugs (illicit drugs, alcohol and medicines).<sup>9</sup> With regard to law enforcement and crime, there have been a number of collaborative projects such as the CHAMP project regarding the harmonisation of methods for profiling of amphetamine type stimulants, a project to assess Deviance, Crime and Prevention in Europe (CRIMPREV) and to analyse crime repression costs covering also alternative treatments for drug users. Here again drugs-related research is embedded in projects covering broader topics such as genomics or crime.

Specific drugs related projects can be found under the EU's Drug Prevention and Information Programme<sup>10</sup> which funds a number of smaller projects to exchange best practice in the fields of drug prevention as well as the Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health which can support certain activities aimed at drug demand reduction as part of its work aimed at addressing health determinants<sup>11</sup>. There are also a number of drugs specific projects funded under the Prevention of and Fight Against Crime Programme<sup>12</sup> which support law enforcement networks and funds studies on the global drugs markets.

The lack of cross-border cooperation may be due a lack of research capacity in some Member States (relatively small research communities in the field of illicit drugs), a lack of awareness of the funding opportunities available at national and EU level coupled with the relative complexity of EU funding mechanisms. Of course, many research projects are geared to

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.incant.eu/index.php?index>

<sup>9</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/index_en.cfm); <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/genaddict/>; <http://www.imagen-europe.com/>; <http://www.phecomp.com/>; <http://www.nanosecure.eu/>;

<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/funding/drugs/funding\\_drugs\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/drugs/funding_drugs_en.htm)

<sup>11</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_programme/pgm2008\\_2013\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_programme/pgm2008_2013_en.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Prevention of and Fight Against Crime Programme OJ L 58, 24.2.2007, p.7

specific national (and even local) research needs and therefore not relevant for cross-border cooperation.

## 2.4. Insufficient Access to Research Findings

There is a considerable amount of published research in field of illicit drugs in the EU, but much of it is not accessible to an international audience. The extent to which the EU as a whole is doing relatively better or worse compared to other countries is difficult to answer as the Commission study did not cover much of the research published in Community languages other than English. However, it is clear that a limited number of Member States account for the bulk of European research publications that are available in the most relevant international scientific databases and journals.

Researchers in the field of illicit drugs have access to key research findings through large, specialised international scientific databases and peer-reviewed journals. Although there is some level of consensus that key research publications in the field of drugs are generally covered by these information carriers - even if originally published in another language - not all research communities in the EU promote translation and submission of research publications. As a result, a considerable amount of national level research in languages other than English remains excluded from international access.

The problem of accessibility to research findings by policy makers and practitioners is another issue. In order to inform policy, research findings need to be tailored to answer relevant policy questions. For professionals and practitioners, research findings need to be translated in protocols and guidelines that take into account daily practice.

## 3. POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH AREAS

Broadly speaking, research needs to address three important aspects to support the drugs knowledge base and the evidence base for drugs policy making:

- the cause and nature of drug problems and how these develop in society, as well as the responses to them;
- the translation of knowledge into practice, so that interventions and services in prevention and treatment, but also law enforcement actually become more effective;
- the role of evaluation research, in which theory and practice are monitored and examined, which may provide new insights and challenges for both policy and science.

The study and conference findings showed that the broad, multidisciplinary character of the drug phenomenon complicates the selection of priorities for drugs-related research. A number of research topics were identified for further development and discussion.

### 3.1. Understanding drug use behaviour

This research area covers *drug mechanisms* and *aetiology* of drug use and *epidemiology*.

Basic research, especially in the field of *aetiology*, has gained scientific relevance in recent years and has developed into one of the strengths of European research. However, a substantial weakness in aetiological research is that there is limited study of the relative

contribution of (neuro-) biological (genetic, physiological), psychological (psychological/mental health factors), and environmental factors such as culture, socio-economic status and legislation.

Most neurobiological research in addiction is still laboratory-based. The translation of neurobiological research onto the clinical level is still in its infancy and requires serious reflection and thinking on important ethical questions. *Epidemiology* is a topic of high priority in the majority of Member States and a strong research field with well established population prevalence studies in all Member States.

In general, research in this field is extensive and the outcome is accessible in all MS and at European level via the EMCDDA reports. Nonetheless, there is a need for new epidemiological research on specific risk-groups such as children of drug users, drug users in prisons and addressing polydrug use – and with European added value - longitudinal studies charting the influence of social, cultural and economic factors on the natural lifetime course of drug users.

### **3.2. Drug Demand Reduction**

Drug demand reduction includes prevention, treatment, harm reduction and reintegration/rehabilitation. All these areas are perceived as priority topics as reflected in a number of national drug policy documents and the objectives of the 2009-2012 EU Drugs Action Plan.

Studies in the area of prevention, treatment and harm reduction account for almost a third of drug-related research activities in the Member States and probably rank first in the number of drug-related research projects funded by the various programmes of the European Commission.

Setting priorities in this field is challenging, as many research needs exist for all the aspects of demand reduction. In the field of universal prevention (incl. campaigns), an important contribution of research may have been the identification of evidence into what does **not** work rather than what works. There is general consensus that more research is needed to underpin the effectiveness of selective and indicated preventive interventions.

On a European level, comparative multisite studies to analyse possible national differences in outcome of prevention programmes and intervening factors (moderators) could significantly add to the knowledge base on interventions.

Other research needs concern the continued improvement of already proven effective interventions in – for example – substitution treatment, so that treatment retention, lasting health and social gains and quality of life can be improved. Furthermore, pharmaceutically assisted treatment may be expanded to cover dependence to other substances.

Comparative studies on the costs and effects of different MS treatment service systems should offer considerable added value.

In the field of harm reduction, certain unaddressed harms (e.g. related to other substances than opiates) and the responses to them could be better researched. Furthermore, research into the best methods to improve self-management of risks and self-treatment of dependent drug users (interventions that help avoid overdose) can help further reduce drug-related infectious diseases and drug-related deaths.

Research into effective empowerment and involvement of families of drug users, helping them to deal with overdose situations as well as motivating and supporting dependent users to help reintegration and prevent relapse is still in its infancy.

### **3.3. Drugs Supply Reduction**

The EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012 seeks to understand the factors related to the supply of drugs in Europe and to put in place effective supply reduction strategies.

Research on the supply side of the drug problem and the evidence base for effective supply reduction interventions is underdeveloped in the EU. The knowledge base in this field is limited in stark contrast to the focus on law enforcement in the drug policy of all Member States.

Research on drug markets, drug trafficking and other drug-related crime is often part of broader studies into horizontal themes such as international organised crime, corruption, money-laundering or economic crimes. Research specifically targeting the illicit drugs market is seriously handicapped by a lack of available standardised, reliable and comparable data and information on e.g. seizures, offences and sentences, prices & purity, etc. Research on the impact of supply reduction interventions is extremely scarce.

Research in this area is often policy-driven and funded and not always published in international journals and databases. A variety of research priorities could be identified, ranging from e.g. arrestee surveys to better understand drug-crime behaviour and crime structures, to market research that helps to understand the interaction between enforcement and supply, as well as to criminological studies, examining the long-term effects of criminal sanctions on risks taken by drug traffickers.

### **3.4. Policy Evaluation**

Policy evaluation can focus on policy outcomes ("outcome" or "impact" evaluation), or in the processes by which a policy or program is formulated and implemented ("process" evaluation). The Commission study emphasized the lack of research in this area in the period covered, but in this area too, research is often 'hidden' in broader studies.

In the field of drugs, most published studies look at the historical development of the drug problem and policies related to it in the past. There is a need for more research into the understanding and definition of today's drug problem and the implications of current drug policies addressing it (e.g. unintended consequences). Research in this field is also complicated by continuously changing perceptions in society, e.g. the conception that addiction (to drugs, alcohol, etc) is a disease or a matter of choice and/or lifestyle. This has implications for the policy options. Interventions, based on evidence-based practice, may contrast with specific policy beliefs.

Another area that requires further research concerns the identification of conditions and prerequisites for today's drug policy: at which level does it operate most effectively, what legal systems required and how can it sustain its legitimacy.



## 4. PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

We can conclude from the above analysis that more could be done to harness and exploit the research potential in the field of illicit drugs to better address research needs.

Moreover, while there are already well developed structures and mechanisms for linking illicit drug policy and research in a number of Member States, existing mechanisms at national and European level, could be much better coordinated to improve communication and cooperation between relevant stakeholders (research, policy, practice and civil society).

Today's economic climate calls for a pragmatic approach to strengthen the EU's research capacity in the field of illicit drugs. The Commission services therefore propose a number of practical steps to:

- improve coordination at national and EU level
- stimulate cross border research cooperation
- enhance research capacity and infrastructure
- improve access to research findings

### 4.1. Improving Coordination

#### 4.1.1. *At National Level*

An effective coordination mechanism to ensure communication between policy-makers, researchers and practitioners is the cornerstone for an effective illicit drugs research strategy to underpin an evidence-based drugs policy.

Policy makers are in constant need of new scientific insights that can support the development of effective responses. In turn, researchers depend on policy makers to provide the funding framework for high quality research. Practitioners need to be able translate new research findings into daily practice.

As most drugs-related research in the EU is carried out in the Member States any improvements in coordination mechanisms need to be introduced at the national level.

National administrations in the Member States are therefore strongly encouraged to consider how to improve the arrangements for cross-departmental and vertical communication to better connect research, policy and practice, in a way suited to their national administrative structures. Such a coordination mechanism could help encourage a forward looking interdisciplinary strategy for research in the field of illicit drugs and justify longer term research funding.

The Commission conference concluded that to be effective such a coordination mechanism needs to take the following elements into account:

- to bring together all relevant stakeholders, that have a role to play in drug policy and drug-related research, including government ministries (e.g. health, social, education, justice, interior and home affairs, research), the research and research funding community, the professionals as well as civil society and the media.

- to serve as a knowledge broker and as an instrument of communication to help mutual understanding and prioritisation among all actors concerned
- to contribute to the dissemination of findings and results, which have been funded.

#### 4.1.2. *At EU Level*

At present there is no systematic coordination at EU level to link drug policy and drug-related research, to identify research needs, to better exploit the EU's potential for research through joint cooperation and provide a more strategic direction as required by the EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012.

Conclusions from the Commission study and stakeholders participating in the Commission conference would suggest to make better use of existing mechanisms to achieve the aim of the EU Drugs Action Plan to strengthen the EU's drugs research capability. Moreover, as most drugs-related research addresses local and national needs in the first instance the establishment of new central European body would not respect the principle of subsidiarity.

It is the view of the Commission services that the best option is to enhance coordination at the EU level is to provide a "light" framework through an annual exchange of information at the policy level on research in the field of illicit drugs.

At EU policy level, the Horizontal Drugs Group (HDG) is the only coordinating body with specific responsibility for leading and steering drugs related matters in the Council.

As a first step, the HDG could organise an **annual information exchange** on drugs-related research. The Commission services are ready to support the preparation and organisation of this information exchange. This information exchange:

- would reflect a political commitment to work together to strengthen policy-research links and collaboration at the EU level and reflect on progress made;
- would facilitate a common discussion on and create an understanding of the research priorities necessary to support the implementation of the EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012 and beyond;
- could facilitate the interaction between the priority-setting of national funding programmes and the annual planning cycles of the EU's funding programmes.

#### 4.2. **Stimulating Cross Border Research Cooperation**

The Commission study and conference findings highlighted the lack of cross-border research projects in the illicit drugs field.

Most EU Member States develop programmes and interventions in drug demand reduction, that, at first sight, show great similarity in objectives, projects aimed at drug prevention. But this similarity does not change the fact that some of these programmes are best developed in a specific national context, taking into account national socio-cultural aspects and health care systems. The same is relevant for specific law enforcement interventions.

The role of European cooperation in drug-related research is to complement national research by helping to bring together the best scientific experts in Europe to work on projects and

studies that require large scale multidisciplinary comparative research and would benefit from larger samples for cohort and longitudinal studies, sharing the costs and avoiding duplication.

The European knowledge base in the field of illicit drugs would particularly benefit from research which:

- focuses on interlinked, cross border aspects of the drug problem;
- involves large-scale, multi-site and – if necessary – longitudinal studies into e.g. causes of onset of drug use or dependence, that require considerable sample sizes and/ or that aim to study the influence of different social, cultural and economic factors on drug use;
- takes a multidisciplinary approach and covers a diversity of disciplines that may not all be available in one country;
- supports the pooling of resources, in particular for countries that lack either capacity or funding opportunities to meet specific research needs;
- supports developments in new detection and surveillance technologies which require economies of scale to harness expertise and ensure cost effectiveness.

#### *4.2.1. Maximising the Use of EU Funding Opportunities*

With a total budget of around 50 billion Euros, the **7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013)**, known as FP7, aims to ensure "European added value" so as to complement and boost the effectiveness of national research programmes.

While there is no specific research topic "illicit drugs" under FP7, there are a number of potential entry points for drugs-related research cooperation under the research themes of the Cooperation Programme: "health", "social economic sciences and humanities", "security" and "nano materials" (cf. Annex). In addition, the "People" programme funds the work of highly qualified researchers (Marie Curie Fellowships), the "Ideas" programme funds fundamental research (individual investigator driven research) in all scientific fields and the "Capacities" programme funds the development and optimization of the use of research infrastructure.

FP7 usually initiates defining annual funding priorities 9 months to a year ahead of the funding calls. Consultation with the programme committees (made up of Member States representatives and the Commission) on the 2011 work programmes is well underway with their adoption by the Commission planned during the course of 2010.

National drug policy-makers are strongly encouraged to maximise opportunities for research in the illicit drugs field under the FP7 by engaging in the annual consultation process through their national representatives responsible for coordinating input to FP7 to ensure that any drug specific topics are backed as research priorities. This communication seems to be lacking in most Member States.

Secondly, national administrations need to look at ways **to proactively disseminate information** about EU funding opportunities as the research community requires support from knowledge and information brokers in the illicit drugs field. The Commission provides a

wealth of FP7 information via its CORDIS website<sup>13</sup> which includes practical guidance to support project applications. At national level, each Member State has specialised "national contact points" to provide FP7 information and support researchers in application procedures. Some Member States have FP7 websites and organise information days as does the Commission.

However, this information does not seem to be reaching the drugs-related research community. National administrations working on illicit drugs policy should consider setting up web links to EU funding programmes on their home pages to raise their visibility.

Thirdly, the EMCDDA plays a key role in collecting, analysing and disseminating research information, including information on research funding calls.<sup>14</sup> This could be reviewed to better fit the EU developments in this field. National "knowledge brokers" such as the REITOX National Focal Points and specialist drug-related research centres should be encouraged to link up to the available information sources where this is not yet the case. The various drugs specific scientific journals could also act as highly useful information brokers to disseminate information to the research community.

#### *4.2.2. More Information and Support for Researchers*

There are numerous informal networks of researchers and practitioners, who meet at conferences and expert groups to foster cooperation, exchange knowledge and disseminate scientific findings on specific research issues. Researchers are therefore well connected at national, European and international level. There appears to be no need for the creation of new fora for exchanging information, but rather to use the existing ones to promote interdisciplinary cooperation and knowledge transfer across the research themes.

However, to encourage a shift from information exchange towards more research cooperation between researchers across countries depends on the scientific added value of such European cooperation, timely awareness of available funding for the specific topic and an understanding of the FP7 work programme, calls for proposals and the application process.

For FP7 calls and projects applications, the drugs-related research community should make full use of the information providers like the Commission, the National Contact Points, the EMCDDA with its Scientific Committee and the REITOX National Focal Points.

#### *4.2.3. Encouraging Cooperation between National Research Funding Programmes*

FP7 provides funding for networking and launching joint programmes on the European level via the ERA-NET (European Research Area) scheme.<sup>15</sup>

The ERA-NET scheme is open to collaborative initiatives in any research field or disciplines. An ERA-NET consists of thematic research programmes of several EU countries which network to increase cooperation and coordination of national and regional research programmes. Generally there are four consecutive types of activities: 1) an information exchange; 2) definition and preparation of joint activities; 3) implementation of joint activities; 4) funding of joint trans-national research actions.

---

<sup>13</sup> [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/research>

<sup>15</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/index\\_en.cfm?p=9\\_eranet](http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/index_en.cfm?p=9_eranet)

An ERA-NET in the field of illicit drugs could therefore offer a possible framework for stimulating European research cooperation by bringing drugs policy makers and research programme managers together to identify common ground for cooperation and ultimately to launch joint projects. It may also help build capacity and create research opportunities between Member States with relatively small drug research communities and pool funding so that larger research projects can be supported.

The ERA-NET scheme is a highly flexible instrument to bring together diverse and heterogeneous national policy and funding organisations across a research topic of mutual interest, which means it could address the multidisciplinary research needs of the illicit drugs field. The establishment of an ERA-NET in the field of illicit drugs may help kick start cross border collaboration between Member States.

However, any possible funding under the future work programmes depends on a high level of interest from the Member States as there are numerous research areas competing for ERA-NET funding each year.

#### *4.2.4. Towards a Sustainable Framework for Drugs-Related Research*

Comparisons with the USA and Australia highlight the benefits of an earmarked funding programme for research in the field of illicit drugs to ensure a sustainable long-term framework.

At EU level, the FP7 runs until 2013 and the legal framework and scope of the programme cannot be changed to include a drugs specific research programme. However, the Commission's consultations on FP7's successor, FP8, have already begun. National policy-makers and the research community are strongly encouraged to begin reflections on the benefits of a longer term strategic research programming approach to strengthen drugs-related research cooperation. The focus is expected to shift from ad hoc project funding to joint programme funding.

### **4.3. Enhancing Research Capacity and Infrastructure**

Experience in the USA, Canada and Australia shows that a strategy that provides structural support for dedicated research clusters and training and development pays dividends in increasing research capacity and output.

Dedicated research clusters bring together all relevant, high quality expertise in one or several research disciplines in the field of illicit drugs to meet public health, law enforcement and policy needs.<sup>16</sup> Research clusters should aim to foster interdisciplinary links and be flexible enough to develop to new research needs over.

Training schemes that seek to develop junior researchers and enhance the expertise of senior researchers are an important part of building up overall EU research capacity. The Commission's Marie Curie Fellowships<sup>17</sup> are one of the options for giving support to such training, but Member States bear the main responsibility for investing in the skills and helping to develop the expertise of drug researchers.

---

<sup>16</sup> cf. UK Medical Research Council "Addiction and Substance Misuse Research Strategy" and Australian Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre

<sup>17</sup> <http://cordis.europa.eu/improving/fellowships/home.htm>

#### 4.4. Improving Access to Research Findings

According to the analysis of the EMCDDA<sup>18</sup> and confirmed by the Commission study, the success for the transfer of knowledge between scientific disciplines, between science and policy and between research and practice is a major priority to maximise the use of research findings to strengthen the knowledge base EU-wide and avoid duplication of effort.

At the European level, the EMCDDA plays an important role in providing access to the outcomes of such research<sup>19</sup> – once peer reviewed, scrutinised and quality checked – by providing information resources such as best-practice portals and an expansion of its drug research web area, and by using best-evidence in its publications. The EMCDDA's Monograph series brings together comprehensive scientific information on specific topics.

The EMCDDA could also help to disclose 'grey literature' (e.g. studies and reports funded by governments, not published in scientific journals).

There are numerous national journals, registers and databases in 23 languages making EU wide access difficult. At first sight, a common European database would seem to provide the solution to improve the visibility of European research publications and project outcomes in the field of illicit drugs. However, the Commission services take the view that the organisation and maintenance of such a database would be at relatively high cost and ultimately not the best way to address EU wide access to research findings.

As researchers use international scientific databases to search for peer-reviewed journals, clearly any innovative national research findings of international scientific interest needs to have a title and abstract also in the English language.

A database to capture all drugs-related publications covering all research disciplines is greatly hampered by the fact the "illegal drugs" are often part of broader research areas such as addiction, crime and mental health and therefore not easily identifiable.

---

<sup>18</sup> EMCDDA Selected Issue 2008 on National Drug-Related Research in Europe

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/research>

## **ANNEX : EU FUNDING PROGRAMMES IN RELATION TO ILLICIT DRUGS**

### **1. 7<sup>TH</sup> FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME ON RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Research, Technological and Development Framework Programme (2007-2013), known as FP7, provides funding for European research projects. With a total budget of EUR 50 billion, the FP7 is structured around four specific programmes, each corresponding to a major objective of European research policy: "Cooperation", "Ideas", "People" and "Capacities".

While there is no specific research priority "illicit drugs", there are a number of potential entry points for "illicit drugs", for example, under the specific programme "**Cooperation**". The "**Cooperation**" programme supports collaborative research on the basis of ten themes, a number of which could be relevant for future topics in the field of illicit drugs research:

- **Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities (623 million euro)**

In accordance with this programme's objectives, possible areas for drugs-related research include research in relation to social problems such as poverty, housing, crime, delinquency and drugs as well into major societal trends and lifestyles: research into the social exclusion of youth and adolescents, considering questions such as delinquency, criminalisation and drug use.

For 2010, the programme foresees a large scale integrated research project – a "challenge" - on "Addictions and Lifestyles in Contemporary European societies" of minimum of € 6.5 million.

From 2011 onwards, the SSH strategic research roadmap plans a number of research topics in the criminal and justice field<sup>20</sup>.

- **Health (6100 million euro)**

The programme objectives cover such areas as the development and validation of new therapies, methods for health promotion and disease prevention, diagnostic tools and technologies as well as sustainable and efficient health care systems.

The research area relating to "optimising healthcare delivery to European citizens" could address drug use prevention and the organisation of care and rehabilitation for drug users as future research topics. Moreover, the research area "brain and brain-related diseases" offers scope for research into the mechanisms of drug addiction.

- **Security (1400 million euro)**

Among the objectives of the *Security* programme are research areas aimed at developing Knowledge & Technologies for building capabilities ensuring security of citizens against threats such as illicit drugs trafficking, fight against organised crime and terrorism:

---

<sup>20</sup> [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ssh/home\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ssh/home_en.html)

In particular, this includes research areas like illicit drugs smuggling and drug supply reduction, illegal movement of equipment, technology & knowledge, detection, surveillance technologies;

There is a high potential for future research in the security field with regard to illicit drugs;

In 2009 new projects will start to develop sensor systems for the detection of drug precursor substances that are diverted from their legal trade, by traffickers, for the production of illicit drugs as well as the development of technologies for "real time" analysis and screening of trace materials, including drugs, at large crime scenes. In the future, the research activity "security and society" offers scope for deepening our understanding of security policy within different cultural and societal frameworks.

- **Nano, Materials and Production (NMP) Research (3475 euro million)**

The NANOSECURE project runs 2011 at harnessing breakthrough nanotechnologies in sensing and detoxification of a variety of key airborne substances, including explosives and drugs. Further support on drug detection and related issues may take place in future calls for proposals, in particular the possibility of launching an ERA-NET in the illicit drugs field covering, *inter alia*, the technological aspects of supply reduction.

- **"Ideas" (€ 7.5 bn) and "People" (4.7 billion euro): Promoting Scientific Excellence**

The "Ideas" programme funds "frontier research" and fosters scientific excellence. The "People" programme helps strengthen careers prospects and mobility of researchers via the Marie Curie Fellowships.

- **"Capacities" Programme (4097 million euro)**

The Capacities programme<sup>21</sup> aim to enhance research and innovation capacities throughout Europe and ensure their optimal use. The overall objective of the 'Research infrastructures' part of the FP7 Capacities programme is to optimise the use and development of the best research infrastructures existing in Europe.

## 2. OTHER EC PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT THE "ILLICIT DRUGS" KNOWLEDGE BASE

There are three EC funding programmes, which do not fund basic research, but do have a role to play to support the development of the "illicit drugs" knowledge base in the EU:

- The **Drug Prevention and Information Programme** with a seven year budget of 21 million euro, supports projects which aim to prevent and reduce drug use, dependence and drug-related harm, which contribute to the improvement of information on drug use and support the implementation of the EU Drugs Strategy. Financial support is available for small-scale applied research, the transfer of knowledge and best practices in the field of drug prevention.

---

<sup>21</sup> [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/capacities/home\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/capacities/home_en.html)



- **The Prevention of and Fight Against Crime Programme<sup>22</sup>**, with a seven year budget of approx. 600 million euro, aims to promote and develop coordination, cooperation and mutual understanding among law enforcement agencies, other national authorities and related EU bodies. The programme also covers support for projects in the field of illicit drug trafficking and which contribute to the implementation of the supply reduction policy of the EU Drugs Action Plan 2009 – 2012, including drugs markets, production, trafficking and drugs-related crime.
  - **The Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health 2008-2013<sup>23</sup>**, 321.5 million euro, foresees actions on addiction-related determinants such as tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs and pharmaceuticals used improperly as part of its activities aimed at addressing health determinants to promote and improve physical and mental health, creating supportive environments for healthy lifestyles and preventing disease.

---

<sup>22</sup> Prevention of and Fight Against Crime Programme OJ L 58, 24.2.2007, p.7,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/funding/isec/funding\\_isec\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/isec/funding_isec_en.htm)

<sup>23</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_programme/pgm2008\\_2013\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_programme/pgm2008_2013_en.htm)