



NEWS RELEASE from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

EMCDDA–EUROPOL ANNUAL REPORT REVIEWS NEW DRUGS ENTERING MARKET

New drugs becoming available at ‘unprecedented pace’, says report

(11.5.2011, LISBON) New psychoactive substances are becoming widely available at an ‘unprecedented pace’. This is according to the **EMCDDA–Europol 2010 annual report** on new drugs entering the European market released today in Lisbon ⁽¹⁾. In 2010, a record number of new drugs were officially reported to the **EMCDDA** and **Europol** via the **EU early-warning system (EWS)** on new psychoactive substances ⁽²⁾.

A total of 41 new psychoactive substances were officially notified for the first time to the two agencies in 2010. This represents the largest number of substances ever reported in a single year, considerably up on 2009 (24 substances) and 2008 (13 substances). The full list of substances notified, annexed to the report, shows a ‘rather diverse’ group, including: synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones, synthetic derivatives of well-established drugs, as well as one plant-based substance.

Under the so-called ‘Spice’ phenomenon ⁽³⁾, 11 new synthetic cannabinoids were picked up in 2010, bringing the total number of these substances monitored by the EWS up to 27. Responding to health concerns, at least 16 European countries have now taken legal action to ban or otherwise control ‘Spice’ products and related compounds.

The report gives an account of the 2010 risk assessment of the synthetic cathinone derivative, mephedrone, which led to the decision for Europe-wide controls on the drug in December 2010 ⁽⁴⁾. A further 15 synthetic cathinone derivatives were detected during the year. Also documented is the first-time appearance of derivatives of two established drugs: ketamine and PCP (phencyclidine).

With a large number of new unregulated synthetic compounds marketed on the Internet as ‘legal highs’, the report describes the **EMCDDA’s** monitoring of online shops selling these substances.

Commenting on this year’s findings, **EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz** said: ‘Given the speed at which new developments occur in this area, it is important to anticipate future challenges. While our early-warning system has recently upped its operational capacity to react rapidly to new substances and products identified, it currently lacks the ability to anticipate emerging threats. This could be addressed by actively purchasing, synthesising and studying new compounds and by improving our capacity for investigative forensic analysis and research at European level’.

The **European Commission** is currently in the process of assessing the functioning of the mechanism through which Europe monitors and acts on new substances (Council Decision 2005/387/JHA). This is aimed at ensuring that Europe’s responses in this area are up-to-date and fit for purpose.

Europol Director Rob Wainwright adds: ‘The emergence of “legal highs” is a major feature of Europe’s drugs problem today. This issue was recently highlighted in Europol’s Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2011. We also notice that organised crime groups are increasingly active in producing and distributing drugs which can be associated with ecstasy. Together with our law-enforcement partners in the EU, Europol is determined to combat this phenomenon’ ⁽⁵⁾.

*The EMCDDA–Europol 2010 annual report on new drugs was released on 11 May at the **11th Annual meeting of the EMCDDA–Reitox early-warning system (EWS) network** and ahead of the **First international multidisciplinary forum on new drugs** (11–12 May, Lisbon). The forum is closed to the media, however a full programme and other information will be available at: www.emcdda.europa.eu/events/2011/new-drugs-forum*

Notes

(¹) 'EMCDDA–Europol 2010 annual report on the implementation of Council Decision 2005/387/JHA in accordance with **Article 10** of Council Decision 2005/387/JHA on the information exchange, risk-assessment and control of new psychoactive substances'.

The 2010 report is available in English at: www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/implementation-reports

See Annex 2 for list of substances.

For more on the Council Decision, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/drug-situation/new-drugs

Article 10 of the Council Decision stipulates that: 'The **EMCDDA** and **Europol** shall report annually to the **European Parliament**, the **Council** and the **Commission** on the implementation of this Decision. The report will take into account all aspects required for an assessment of the efficacy and achievements of the system created by this Decision. The Report shall, in particular, include experience relating to coordination between the system set out in this Decision and the pharmacovigilance system'.

(²) The EWS provides EU Member States with an information exchange mechanism for reporting on the emergence of new psychoactive substances. It is a key element in the European fast-track system for assessing and responding to new drugs. **Over 140 substances** have been reported by Member States to the EMCDDA and Europol since the EWS was created in 1997. For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/new-drugs/early-warning and brochure at www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index40105EN.html

The **European Medicines Agency (EMA)** is a key player in this early-warning mechanism.

(³) www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers/spice

(⁴) Available in English at: www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/risk-assessments

See also www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/drugnet/online/2011/73/article2

(⁵) Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2011 (launched 4.5.2011):

www.europol.europa.eu/publications/European_Organised_Crime_Threat_Assessment_%28OCTA%29/OCTA_2011.pdf