



News release

EU DRUG MARKETS ANALYSIS FROM THE EMCDDA AND EUROPOL

EMCDDA and Europol spotlight drug-related violence in latest market overview

EU Drug Markets: Key insights for policy and practice is the final module of a series of in-depth analyses on the drug market from the two agencies.

(07.03.2024) **EMBARGO 14.00 WET (Lisbon) 15.00 CET (The Hague)** Extreme drug-related violence is putting a strain on local communities and society, and corruption is facilitating drug trafficking and undermining the rule of law. These are among the insights shared in **EU Drug Markets: Key insights for policy and practice**, released today by the **EU drugs agency (EMCDDA)** and **Europol**.

The new report offers a strategic and top-level summary of the EU drug market, based on a robust understanding of the current drug landscape and emerging threats. It also provides an overview of key developments by drug and outlines actions to address current threats and to increase preparedness. The report is the final module of the broader [EU Drug Markets: In-depth analysis](#) from the two agencies, their fourth comprehensive overview of illicit drug markets in the EU since 2013 ⁽¹⁾.

A multifaceted drug market in a globalised world

The EU retail drug market is estimated to be worth more than **EUR 30 billion** annually, making it a major source of income for organised crime. Europe occupies a central position in drug supply and trafficking, as evidenced by the large-scale production of cannabis and synthetic drugs within the EU and the huge volumes of cocaine arriving from Latin America.

The EU drug market also intersects with other crime areas, such as the trafficking in firearms and money laundering. Some EU Member States are currently experiencing **unprecedented levels of drug market-related violence**, including killings, torture, kidnappings and intimidation. This often takes place between criminal networks, although innocent people are also victims, increasing the perception of public insecurity.

Corruption is also a key threat in the EU, as criminal networks rely on it across all levels of the drug market to facilitate their activities and mitigate risks. Corruption has a corrosive effect on the fabric of society, undermining governance, security and the rule of law.

An additional concern is the fact that criminal networks operating in the EU drug market are **highly adaptable, innovative and resilient** to global crises, instability and significant political and economic changes. Recent examples of such shocks include the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war on Ukraine and the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan. In response, criminal networks have adapted, changing trafficking routes and diversifying their methods.

Tackling current threats and boosting resilience

The new report highlights key areas for action at EU and Member State level to address the current threats of the illicit drug market. These include: improving monitoring and analysis of drug market-related violence; further prioritising operational activities that dismantle criminal networks; and boosting international cooperation. Also emphasised are: increasing human and financial resources for operational and strategic interventions and strengthening policy, public health and safety responses.

EMCDDA Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson says: 'Drugs damage our health and our society. Drugs cause addiction, overdose and death. And the organised criminal networks trafficking the drugs undermine society with corruption and violence. To counter this dual threat, the EMCDDA and Europol have joined forces in this new report to offer key insights on the EU drug market to inform policy and practice. One critical drug market threat today lies in the exploitation of key logistical infrastructure, particularly seaports. In response, the EU has launched the [European Ports Alliance](#) to protect ports from drug trafficking and criminal infiltration and strengthen their resilience. This is just one example of actions under the EU Roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime'.

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel adds: 'Violence and corruption, long witnessed in more traditional drug-producing countries, are now increasingly seen within the EU. Violence can occur at all levels of the market. It is both a by-product and facilitator of the drugs trade – a trade that is often secured through fear and force. Drug-related violence may be driven by organised crime, the personal struggles of users and wider socio-economic issues. We are now at a critical juncture. We need a holistic European approach to tackle this problem through strengthening our communities, building resilience and preventing the recruitment of young people into crime, providing them with long-lasting alternatives.'

Europol's Executive Director Catherine De Bolle states: 'Criminal networks infect the very core of our communities, weaving through the fabric of our democracy and economy. They erode trust, fuel violence, and create cycles of addiction and poverty. A vigilant, unified response is needed to safeguard our citizens and society from the omnipresent influence of this invisible enemy. Using Europol, EU Member States can pool resources, exchange criminal intelligence, and coordinate actions to tackle the illegal distribution of drugs.'

Notes

(¹) This latest element of the [EU Drug Markets: In-depth analysis](#) from the two agencies is available in English at https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/analysis-key-insights-policy-and-practice_en and <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/publications/eu-drug-markets-report>. The module is being launched at an online press conference: https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/event/press-conference-eu-drug-markets-insights_en | https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2024/2/eu-drug-markets-key-insights-policy-and-practice-online-press-conference-7-march_en. A recording will be made available after the event. Modules per drug are available here: https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets_en

The EU Drug Market analysis was produced by the EMCDDA and Europol with the support of the EU Member States and features in the operational action plans of [EMPACT](#).

