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From:	Presidency
To:	Horizontal Working Party on Drugs
No. prev. doc.:	12296/25
Subject:	The new EU drugs strategic framework: Thematic discussion on strategic priorities and actions relating to governance - Discussion paper

Delegations will find enclosed the discussion paper for the thematic discussion on strategic priorities and actions of the future EU Drugs Strategy relating to governance, coordination and implementation, elaborated by the Danish Presidency in coordination with its trio partners – the outgoing Polish Presidency and the incoming Cyprus Presidency, as well as the Commission.

**Thematic discussion on strategic priorities and actions
relating to governance:
Discussion paper**

Introduction

As noted in the latest European Drug Reports, the situation regarding drugs in Europe is best described with the words "everywhere, everything, everyone", with drug issues having an impact nationally and internationally, alongside an increasing number of substances and with everyone being in some way likely to be impacted by illicit drug use¹.

In the previous thematic discussions on the current and future strategic framework a number of delegations underlined that the current EU Drugs Strategy (2021-2025) and the strategic priorities set out therein remain largely relevant to address the current drugs situation, but the effective implementation of the EU strategic framework seems to be increasingly important. More than ever, in order to address the challenging drugs situation, a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach is essential, with close internal coordination and the involvement of the civil society, academia, international organisations and other relevant stakeholders, in order to ensure the full alignment of all those involved and the support of the society to the strategic priorities and actions to be taken, grounded in evidence of what works and what does not. Adequate financial and human resources at the EU and national level are also indispensable to address the drugs situation and drugs trafficking which affect the individual and public health, the society as a whole, the security, the economy, the environment and the rule of law.

State of play

One of the cross-cutting themes of the current EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025 in support of the policy areas is coordination, governance and implementation. There is currently one strategic priority related to this topic:

¹ https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/european-drug-report/2024/drug-situation-in-europe-up-to-2024_en

Strategic priority 11: Ensuring optimal implementation of the Strategy and of the Action Plan, coordination by default of all stakeholders and the provision of adequate resources at EU and national levels.

This part of the **Strategy sets out** a number of elements. They relate to the formulation of actions in the Action Plan on Drugs, which must be evidence-based, scientifically sound and aim for realistic and measurable results that can be evaluated, time-bound and identifying the parties responsible for their implementation, with a clear EU relevance and added value. It is also foreseen that the implementation of the Strategy and of the Action Plan should facilitate synergies and consistency between policies on drugs at EU and national level, describing the role of the HDG in this process. The Strategy also calls for the allocation of appropriate and targeted resources for the implementation of the objectives of the Strategy at both EU and national level, and foresees a role for the civil society. It also called for the revision of the mandate of the EMCDDA (now EUDA) and foresaw the external evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy and of the Action Plan. There are also a number of elements relating to the importance of coordination among agencies, bodies or organisations that have relevance for the drugs field, within their respective mandates. Coordination and synergies should be sought between the drug policy and the other policies, including in the security and health areas. It is foreseen that the HDG, as the main coordinating body on drug policy, should be kept informed of possible work linked to drugs issues, carried out by other preparatory bodies of the Council. Externally, the EU and its Member States should promote the approach and objectives of the Strategy with one voice.

The EU's and Member States' actions in the area of coordination, governance and implementation have been assessed in the **evaluation** of the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan². The findings of the evaluation showed that in relation to coordination, the Strategy and Action Plan supported Member States' national policies across supply, demand and harm reduction pillars and enhanced dialogue at EU level mainly in HDG. They also helped ensure a united EU voice on drug policies at international forums, such as the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), and in dialogues with countries and regions outside the EU. The reinforced mandate and expanded resources for EUDA in 2024 enhanced its role as the centre of drug expertise in the EU. Some challenges were identified in

² ST 11320/25 + ADD1 + ADD2

the evaluation, noting that the unclear ownership of actions coupled with the action's broad approach, undermines implementation and weakens efficiency of the framework. The evaluation also found important limitations due to data availability and weak indicators. Further, it was mentioned that funding remains insufficient for harm reduction services and civil society projects, and the involvement of civil society in the implementation and development of drug policies is limited.

It is important to bear these challenges in mind when reflecting on the future EU drugs strategy, its strategic priorities and targeted actions in the area of governance.

Questions for discussion:

In light of the above, delegations are kindly invited to address the following questions when it comes to governance:

- What are the **main challenges and issues** identified by Member States in relation to the governance part of the strategy? How can the governance, coordination, funding and the overall implementation of the future EU drugs strategy be **improved**? What role the HDG could play in this and how could the engagement with civil society be reflected?
- Which **strategic priorities** should be defined in this area? Should governance continue as a cross-cutting theme or be integrated into the other strategic priorities? What should be the timeframe of the Strategy?
- What are the main targeted, specific and measurable **actions** to be pursued in relation to governance and the implementation of the Strategy? Which **indicators** should be used to measure the success of such actions, and who should be **responsible** for implementing them?