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NOTE

From: Presidency

To: Horizontal Working Party on Drugs

Subject: Presidency note - Special regional plans to tackle drug trafficking in highly affected areas

Delegations will find attached the Presidency note summarising the discussions on the Special regional plans to tackle drug trafficking in highly affected areas.

**NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENCY ON THE PRIORITY OF
SPECIAL REGIONAL PLANS TO TACKLE DRUG TRAFFICKING IN HIGHLY AFFECTED
AREAS**

This is a priority under the Spanish Presidency, which has held several thematic debates on which this summary note is based.

In addition to affecting the health and safety of EU citizens, illicit drugs generate specific problems in particular geographical areas. Some areas suffer more from the impact of drug trafficking due to historical circumstances, their geographical location, the proximity of logistical centres used, a favourable social or economic environment, etc. This high impact often leads to the establishment of criminal organisations in the area.

These two factors – the high impact of drug trafficking and the establishment of criminal organisations – create a breeding ground with pernicious consequences for security, the economy and governance in the area. An added factor is the use of extreme violence by these criminal organisations, with the aim of controlling the market, avoiding police action and, in general, guaranteeing the continuity of their activities. All of this is characteristic of a European area severely affected by drug trafficking or a Highly Impacted European Narcotic Area (HIENA).

In line with the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025¹, strategic priorities 1 and 4, and the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025², the Presidency presented this priority in the form of a concept note³, with the aim of identifying HIENAs in the Member States, highlighting the problems they cause and presenting the different solutions adopted to combat this threat.

During this half-year, experts from different Member States and EU institutions and agencies have provided a detailed picture of the characteristics of areas heavily affected by drug trafficking, as well as the different solutions offered at EU, national and regional level.

In general, the extreme levels of violence and corruption that prevent states from exercising their authority in these areas have been highlighted. It has also become clear that HIENAs tend to include, or are located in the vicinity of, ports of great economic importance with a high volume of traffic.

¹ EU Drugs Strategy (2021-2025) (OJ C 102I of 24.3.2021, p. 1) - Strategic Priority 1 (priority areas 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3) and strategic priority 4 (priority areas 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3)

² EU Drugs Action Plan (2021-2025) (OJ C272 of 8.7.2021, p. 2) - Priority area 1.1 (actions 2, 3, 7 and 8), priority area 1.2 (actions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7), priority area 1.3 (action 9), priority area 2.1 (actions 10 and 11) and priority area 2.2 (action 14).

³ 11195/23.

With regard to solutions, national strategies and temporary action plans have been presented with the aim of exchanging best practices. These are based on intelligence-sharing, promoting the adaptation and improvement of legislation and international cooperation, interinstitutional solutions, coordinated work between national and local police, public-private cooperation, recovery and awareness-raising among young people, and promoting the exchange of data between law enforcement authorities and internet service providers.

The Spanish Presidency hopes that the debate will continue under the upcoming presidencies, taking into account its priorities, and is ready to provide support in any way necessary.
