



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

The New European Union Drug Agency (EUDA)

Responding to innovation in drug production and use through innovative practice and science based approaches

Paul Griffiths EMCDDA

CERIS FCT - Workshop on illicit drugs: Challenges and opportunities for introducing innovative and science based approaches

February, 21, Brussels.

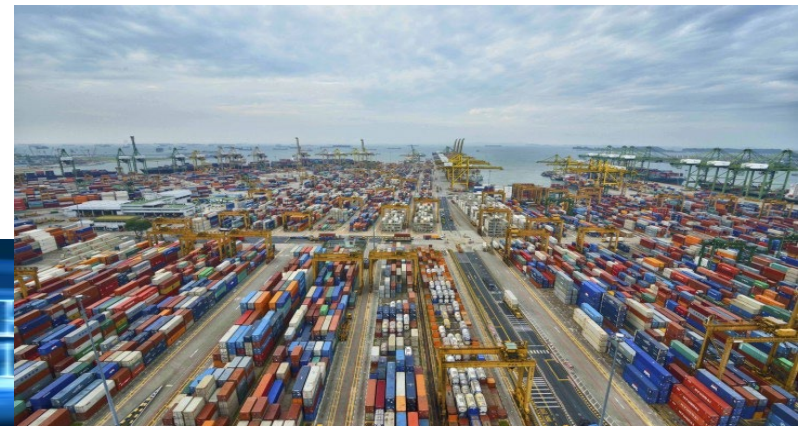


Outline of this presentation...

- **Set the scene:** Reflect on some of the new **challenges** that contemporary patterns of **drug production, trafficking and use** pose for drug surveillance in Europe
- Argue that we need more **proactive, innovative, and science based approaches**
- Explain how this is will be reflected in the work of the **new EUDA**

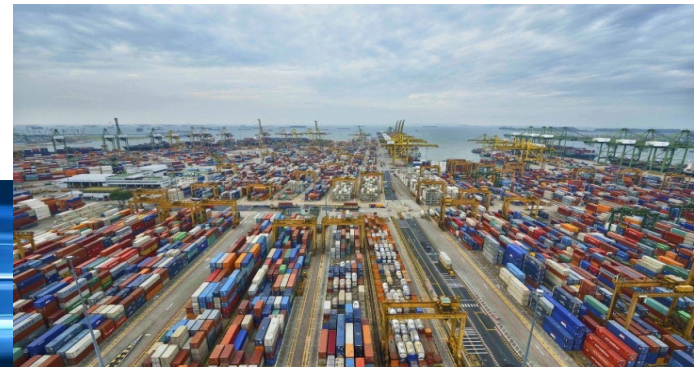
Why do we need to innovate to better understand and respond to drug related threats?

- **World is changing rapidly** in ways that has important implications for monitoring and surveillance in the security area
- **Globalisation** and **digitalisation** have transformed all areas of modern life – so it is not surprising they also impact on drug production and use



The threats we are facing today are now ...

- **Highly dynamic** with criminal groups quick to innovate and exploit new technologies to reduce risks and create new opportunities
- The drug market has become **more digitally enabled**
- **Globally connected** – exploiting weakness in governance, differences in judications, and the opportunities created by developments in commercial legitimate markets



And this is all happening very quickly ...

- Rapid **diffusion of innovation** in drug production and use
- Creating a corresponding need for **more rapid information** to inform policies and actions
- Technological developments **also create new possibilities for data collection and intervention**
- **Post Covid:** greater recognition of the need to **anticipate** and **pivot rapidly** to address **new policy and operational challenges**
- Globally and at EU level recognition of the need for a **new science for policy ecosystem**

How to make policy in a technological revolution

 James Plunkett · Follow
13 min read · May 15, 2022



Global Commission on Evidence
to Address Societal Challenges

Access update & report | Learn from events | Strengthen domestic evidence-support systems | Enhance the global evidence architecture | Put evidence at the centre of everyday life | About us

Networks / Evidence Commission

Global Commission on Evidence to Address Societal Challenges

Read the report and update 2023

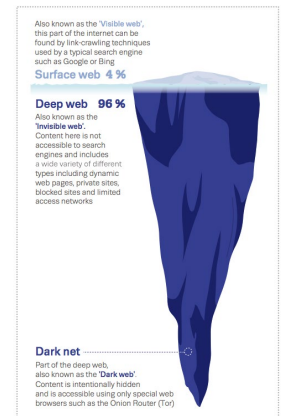
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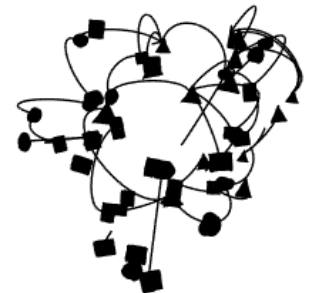
The Evidence Commission report, released in January 2022, provides recommendations about ways to improve the use of research evidence, both in routine times and in future global crises (see also the executive summary). In January 2023, we released our first annual update (update 2023), focussed on three implementation priorities:

- Formalize and strengthen domestic evidence-support systems
- Enhance and diversify the global evidence architecture
- Strengthen domestic evidence-support systems



The implications for a knowledge based monitoring organisation

- We need to **react more rapidly to a more complex problem**
- To do this we often need **new methods & scientific approaches**
- We need to be more **proactive and future orientated**
- We need to **communicate more** rapidly, in different ways, and with a wider set of audiences
- **Coproduction is key:** our main information providers are are main information consumers



An Example of the complexity of modern drug problems: Synthetic Drugs

- They have become **more important** and are likely to **become more important** still in the future
- They can **increase profits and reduce risk** for OCG
- They can be **produced near to consumer markets** – or in areas where **regulatory controls are weak**
- They are often found **in mixtures** with other substances
- They can be **highly potent** with small volumes representing potentially many 1000's of street doses ...

These features all create new challenges for **law enforcement and public health**



They also have implications for surveillance systems

- We are faced with monitoring **an ever changing and growing list of substances, mixtures, and chemicals...**
- We see **very rapid changes** in the market
- **Self report data** has become less useful
- But we often lack **the forensic and toxicological capacity** to monitor trends in availability and use
- Many of our current approaches perform poorly in monitoring **poly drug use patterns**



As way of a current example...

- Growing concern linked to Nitazene opioids
- Appear in **different forms and in mixtures**
- Problems appear to have **increased in 2023**
- Outbreaks of **multiple overdoses**
- Appear to be **driving an increase in mortality**
- Our capacity to identify these is **limited**

Trafic Morts par overdose : alerte aux opiacés de synthèse à La Réunion

Fake oxycodone tablets containing nitazenes – Europe, 2021-2022

Street drugs stronger than heroin
linked to 54 deaths in UK



HSE Drug Warning
January 12th 2024

Extreme Risk
A red alert remains in place for people using heroin in Dublin and Cork. A nitazene drug is being sold falsely described as 'new' heroin or 'strong' heroin.

Ongoing concern
Nitazenes are strong synthetic opioids that can cause serious overdoses, hospitalisation and drug-related death.

Recommendation
Mind yourself, care for others and make a safety plan.
Access, carry and use naloxone. This could save your own or someone else's life.
It's safer not to use drugs at all. If you use heroin, follow harm reduction advice. Access drug treatment to protect against overdose.

Appearance
Irish overdoses have been linked to brown/tan powder containing N-pyrrolidino protoporphyrin IX. Nitazene drugs have also been found in illicit tablets in the UK.

Do not buy:

- new types of drug
- new batches
- from new sources

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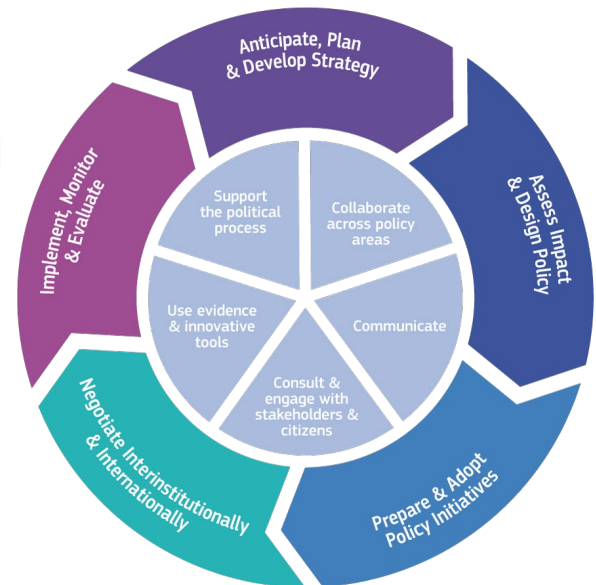
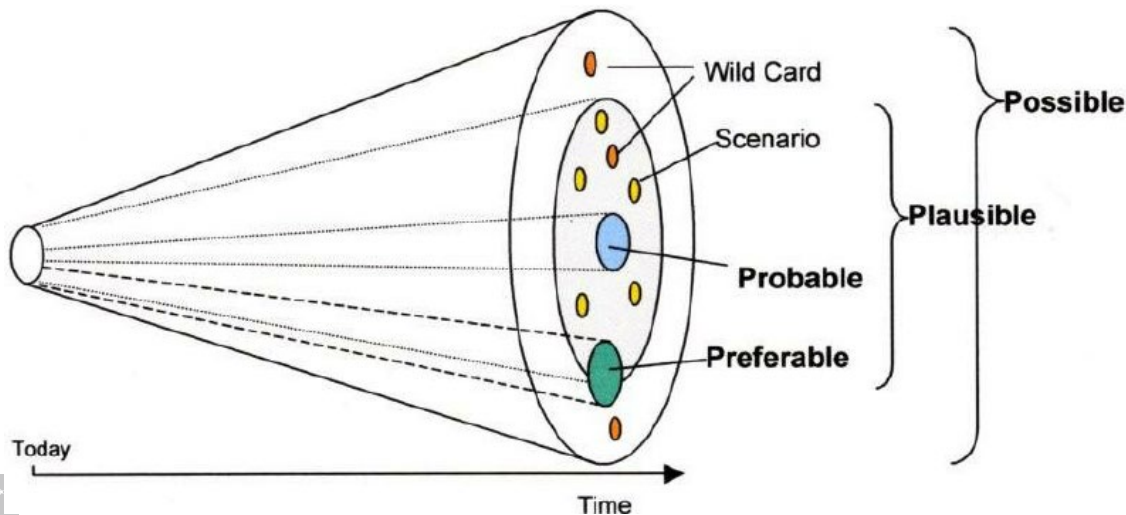
HSE #ReduceTheHarms DRUGS.ie



Photo source: Forensic Science Ireland

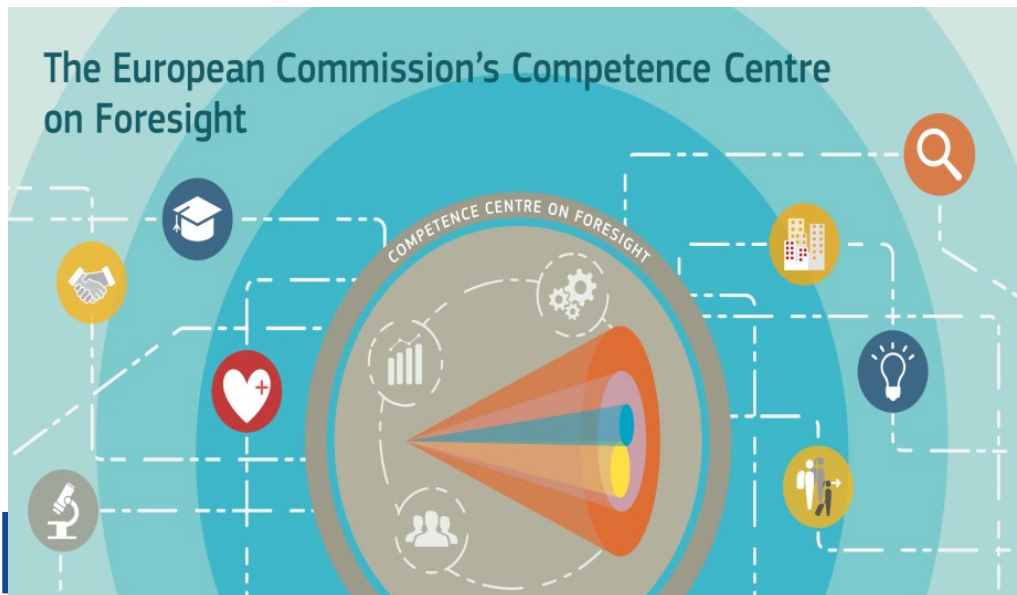
From a policy perspective - two important overarching questions...

- How do we get better at responding to **emerging and future threats**?
- How do we get better at **using science & evidence** for informing **policy and practice**?



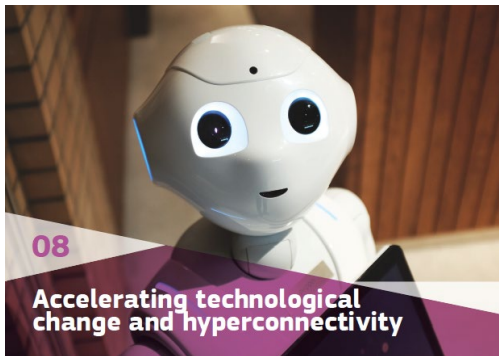
Need to Increase preparedness

- We need **more timely data and analysis** – so that the evidence we provide **keeps pace** with rapid change
- Across the EU – increased investment in **early warning and threat assessment systems**
- Increased recognition of the utility of **Foresight and anticipatory methods** as part of the policy formation process



Many of the important global drivers of change lie outside the drugs policy area but may impact profoundly on it

5 MEGA TRENDS – identified from a recent EMCDDA foresights study as likely to be MOST SIGNIFICANT FOR the DRUGS AREA in the next 10 years

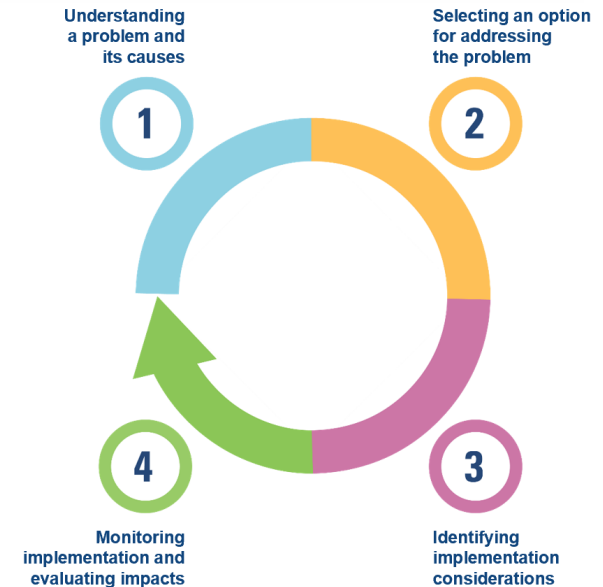


We need to work more collaboratively and to recognise that different forms of evidence is needed across the knowledge cycle

4.2 Definitions of forms in which evidence is typically encountered

Forms of evidence	Definitions	Steps where it add the greatest value
 Data analytics	Systematic analysis of raw data to make conclusions about that information	1 4
 Modeling	Use of mathematical equations to simulate real-world scenarios (i.e., what is likely to happen if we don't intervene) and options (i.e., what happens if we intervene) in a virtual environment	1 2
 Evaluation	Systematic assessment of the implementation (monitoring) and impacts (evaluation) of an initiative for the purposes of learning or decision-making	4
 Behavioural / implementation research	Study of methods to promote the systematic uptake of effective approaches into routine practices at the personal, professional, organization and government levels (implementation research) Systematic examination of what people (citizens and professionals) do, what drives them to do it, and what can sustain or change what they do (behavioural research)	3
 Qualitative insights	Study of (typically non-numerical) data – obtained from interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires, first-hand observation, participant-observation, recordings made in natural settings, documents, and artifacts – to understand how individuals and groups view and experience problems, options, implementation considerations (barriers, facilitators and strategies), and metrics	1 2 3 4
 Evidence synthesis	Systematic process of identifying, selecting, appraising and synthesizing the findings from all studies that have addressed the same question in order to arrive at an overall understanding of what is known, including how this may vary by groups (e.g., racialized communities) and contexts (e.g., low socio-economic neighbourhoods)	1 2* 3 4
 Technology assessment/ cost-effectiveness analysis	Assessment of all relevant aspects of a 'technology' (e.g., a product or service), including safety, effectiveness, and economic, social and ethical implications (technology assessment), with an evidence synthesis often contributing to the assessment of effectiveness Comparison of the relative outcomes (effectiveness) and costs of two or more options, again with an evidence synthesis often contributing to the assessment of effectiveness	2* 3 4
 Guidelines	Systematically developed statements that recommend a particular course of action, often for citizens and professional and sometimes for organizations and governments, with one or more evidence syntheses contributing to the assessment of effectiveness, values and preferences, and other factors	2

*Adds the greatest value in this step but can add value in other steps



Need for a new science for policy ecosystem

- To create the **conditions for collaboration**, across **scientific disciplines** with, **policy makers, practice, effected communities and people with lived experience**.
- To work more **iteratively rather than linearly** - with an outcome(s) focus
- We need to better **communicate uncertainty** & the acknowledge **the limits** of our evidence
- We need a more **multidisciplinary, agile and dynamic** approach to combining different methods and types of knowledge
- Recognising that **different types of evidence** will be required at different points in the knowledge cycle.

How is this reflected in the competencies of the new EUDA?



Historical context ... (very simplified overview)

- **EMCDDA (1993)**

Monitoring: Key Indicators: focus on data standardisation and creating a common language for an EU wide policy debate. Mostly aggregated data, tended to be health focused at first.

- **EWS on NPS (1997)**

Case data and open data sources: rapid reporting & response model: risk assessment and risk communication: Fast Track control of new substances

- **As policy concerns have evolved over time...**

Security area grown in importance: new, **more timely and sensitive information sources developed**: greater focus on cannabis, stimulants and synthetics, NPS and polydrug use: **Futures and foresight approaches** introduced

- **EUDA – operational from July 2024**



A lot has changed but the fundamentals have not...

- **Multi source and multi method**
- **Close partnership with MS** - ongoing dialogue possible through Network of national focal points and expert networks
- **Customer centric boundary organisation** – impartial information for policy and action: we want to be scientifically robust but we have also to be useful



Overview - EUDA



New regulation

- a) provide the Union and its Member States with factual, objective, reliable and comparable information, **early warning and risk assessment** at Union level concerning drugs, drug use, drug use disorders and addictions, prevention, treatment, care, risk and harm reduction, rehabilitation, social reintegration, recovery, drug markets and supply, including illicit production and trafficking, and **other relevant drug related issues and their consequences**; and
- (b) **recommend appropriate and concrete evidence-based actions** on how to address the challenges set out in point (a) **in an efficient and timely manner**.

- **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: 63 million Euros for 4 years & 40 new posts**



Overview: three pillars

- **More ambitious** – deepening rather than broadening the mandate – scope and competencies extended and made more explicit
- **More proactive and timely**
 - EWS extended to all drugs
 - New threat assessment system
 - Development of more rapid methods
 - Follow up activities possible
- **More holistic & comprehensive**
 - Security and health threats – including the use of new technologies
 - Other policy targets impacted by drug problems
 - Explicit link to EU policy needs
 - New competencies in the area of precursors

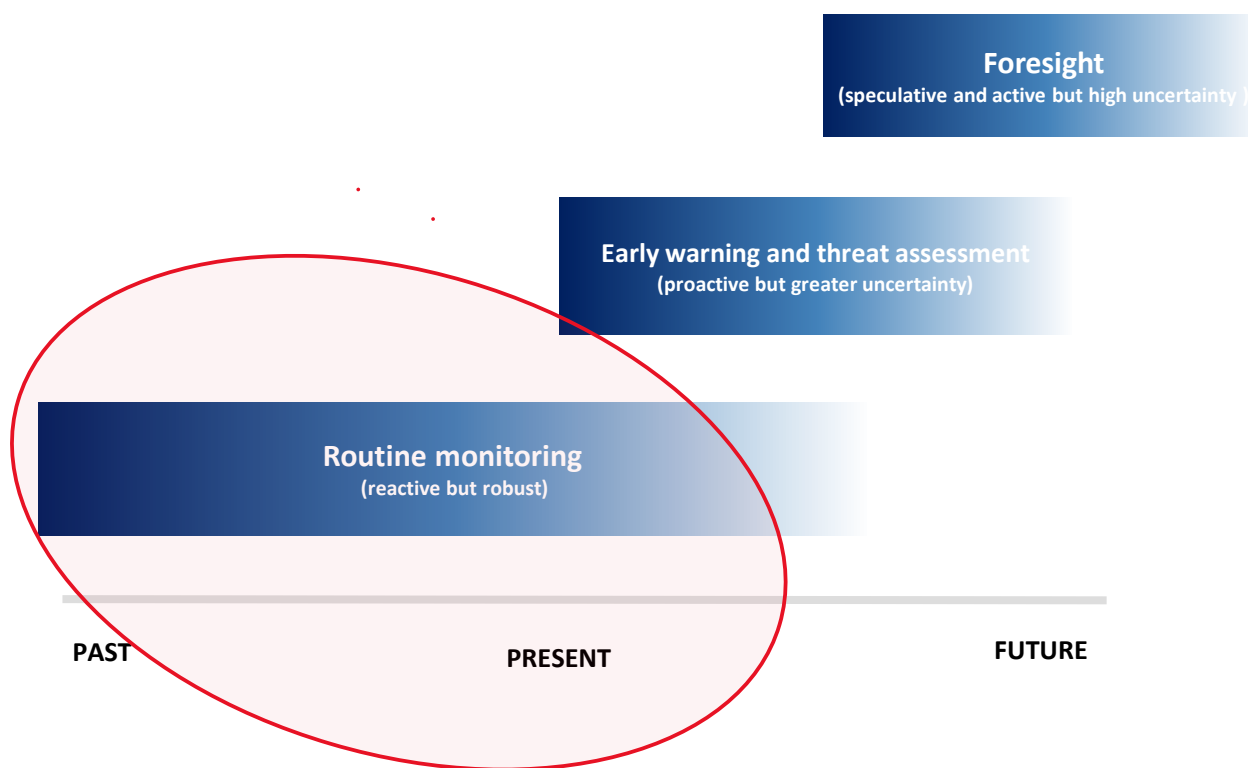


Overview:

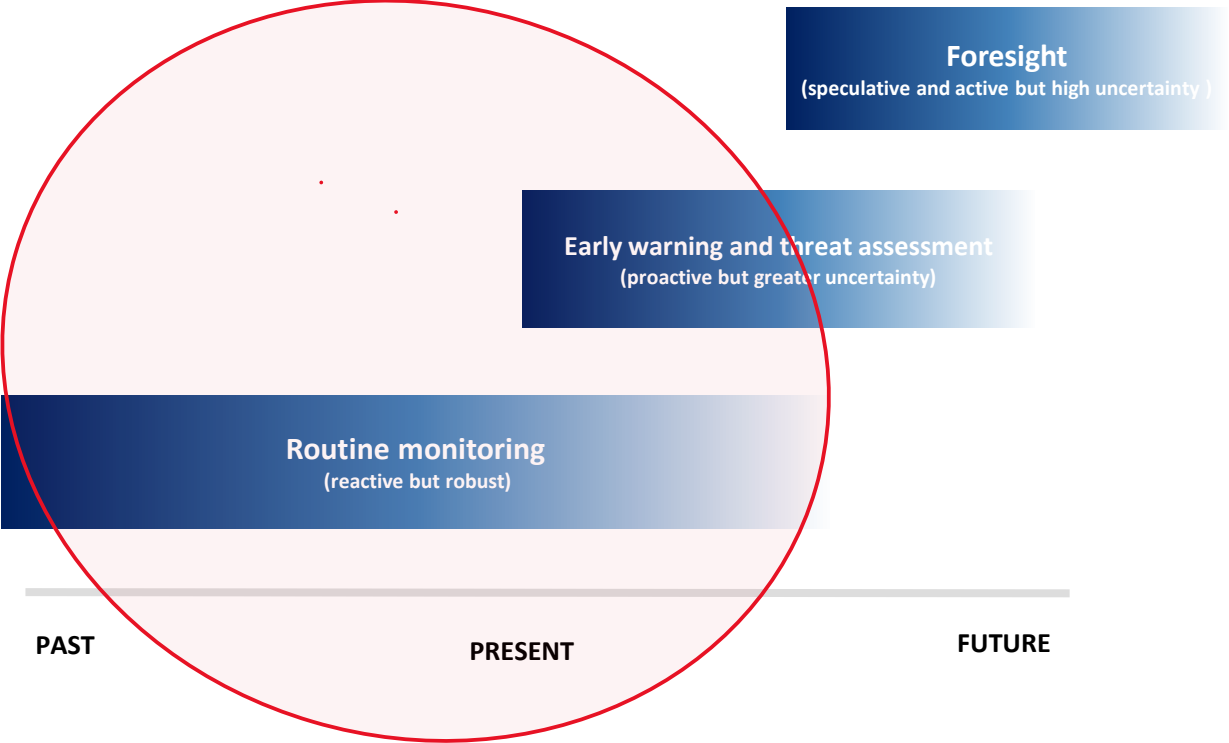
- **Better response to synthetic drugs & polydrug use**
 - New forensic and toxicological laboratory network
 - Poly drug definition extended
- More **solution focused** - with a greater emphasis on **best practice, & knowledge co production, training and capacity building**
- **International perspective:** Recognition of the **more global** and joined up nature of the problems we face
- Greater **emphasis on research and innovation**
 - Identify research gaps
 - Conduct regular foresights exercise
 - Investigative studies possible
 - Innovation lab and stronger link to the EU security innovation hub



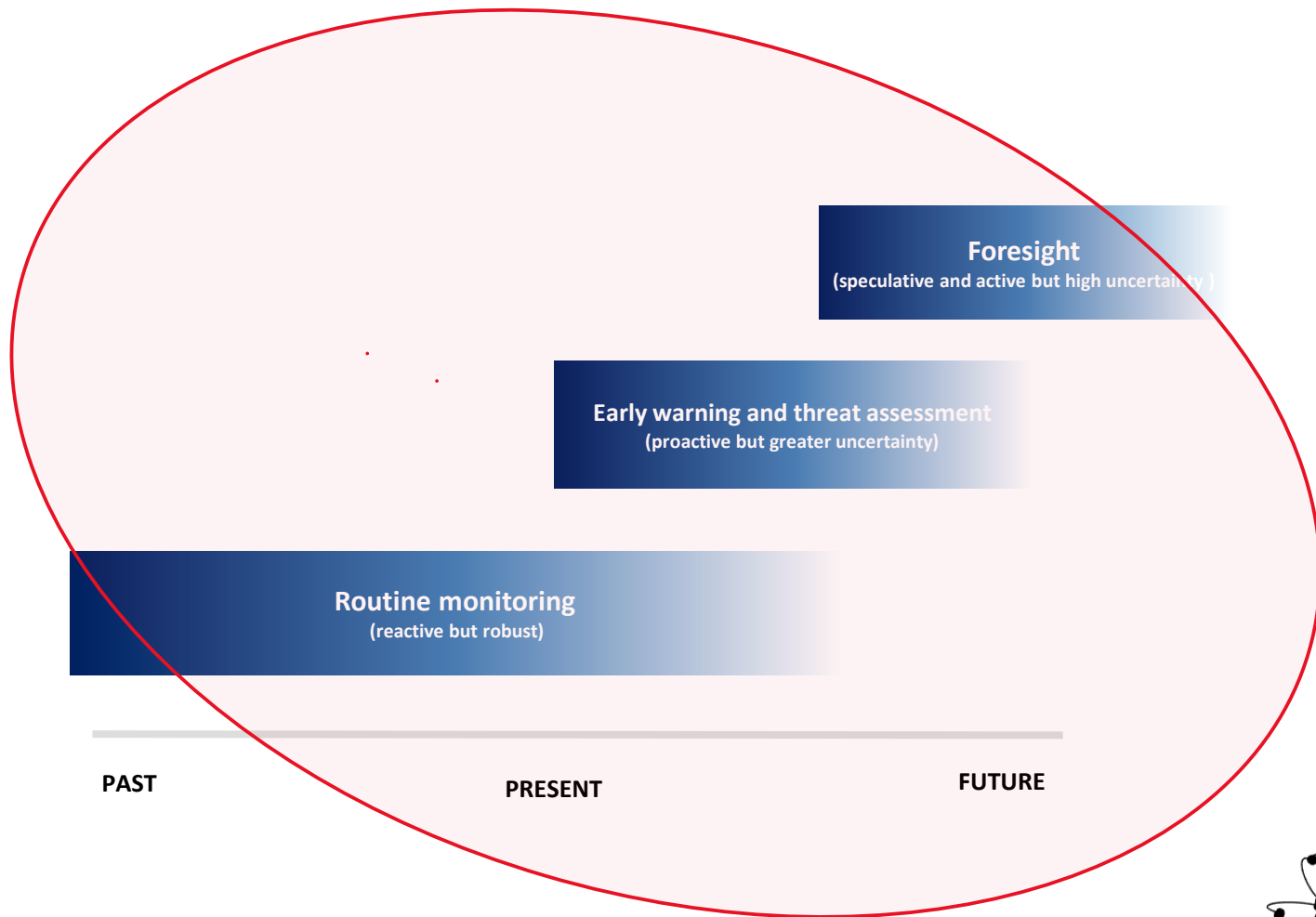
EUDA integrated knowledge systems model for supporting evidence-based responses in the drugs area



EUDA integrated knowledge systems model for supporting evidence-based responses in the drugs area



EUDA integrated knowledge systems preparedness model for supporting evidence-based responses in the drugs area



Network of forensic & toxicological labs

- New network – generating data and information exchange: both forensic and toxicology laboratories included
- Member States can appoint up to 3 labs. EUDA can invite others.
- JRC is a member
- Work closely with existing networks in this area
- EUDA can finance specific projects
- Closely linked to threat assessment and EWS work

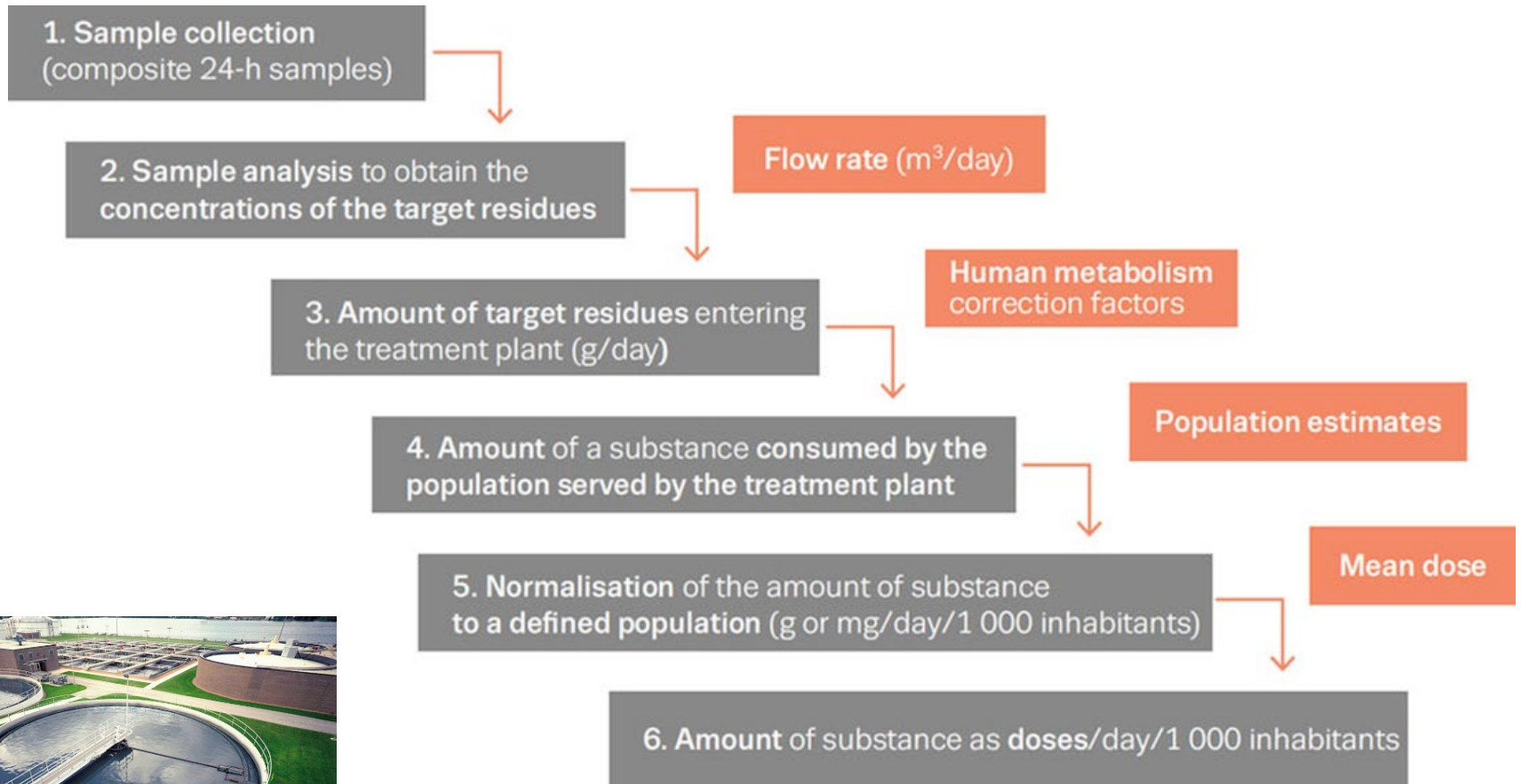


More timely complimentary methods

- All have **methodological weaknesses** and limitations and rarely provide population level estimates
- But are **extremely useful** as complementary data sets that are often **the first to signal important developments**
- Complimentary to the **EWS**
- **Often Network based**



Wastewater– routine surveillance of a population



Board: [TEST] Potential Serious and Urgent Events (PSUE) Modified

Categories: Potential Serious and Urgent Events Mentioned countries/territories in Continent(s): Europe Filter definition

344 TOTAL ARTICLES

1 of 7

Any article

Import Date

Location markers and heatmap

Select contextual information

4 articles out of 50 mentioning Netherlands

The Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources Platform
EIOS EPIDEMIC INTELLIGENCE FROM OPEN SOURCES

EOS media monitoring report created: 2024-02-02 14:04

Item Details (3 items total)

Title:
Original Title: 'Super-strength' pills could be linked to deaths of teenagers
Link: <https://gphin.canada.ca/cepr/showarticle.jsp?docId=1015658246>
Summary: Cops believe a batch of 'super-strength' ecstasy pills with Donald Trump's face could link the deaths of three teenagers in Glasgow. Marcus Dick and Scott Allison, both 18, died after attending a rave at SWG3 on August 12, 2023. We also reported that an 18-year-old woman then died following an event at the same venue on January 1 this year and that one line of enquiry being followed by police was that the deaths were drug-related.

Title:
Original Title: NI drug deaths: West Belfast woman 'needed help but there wasn't any'
Link: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-68143449?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=KARANGA
Summary: Chloe's mother said her daughter self-harmed and was in hospital many times. Lorraine Lennon has called for a rehabilitation centre to be established in Belfast. She said: "I am calling on our politicians to get back to work and get a centre build for our kids"

Title:
Original Title: U.S. and China hold high-level talks on the fentanyl crisis
Link: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/us-china-fentanyl-crisis-talks-rcna136345>
Summary: U.S. and Chinese officials had "frank and honest discussions" about stemming the flow of fentanyl into the U.S., official says. The head of the White House delegation at the high-level talks told NBC News on Tuesday. They were the first formal talks the two global powers had held on the issue in years. China permanently classified all variants of fentanyl as controlled substances.



New Challenges of monitoring digitally enabled drug markets

DARKNET SEARCH ENGINE

The secure browser based User Interface offers a full featured Darknet search engine, including advanced query features, categorization, filtering and drill downs, dashboards and visual navigation.



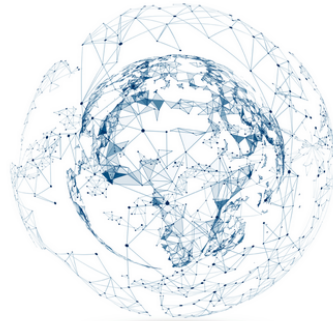
API ACCESS

Use our secure API to integrate Darknet and Darknet Markets search in your own services.



DATA SNAPSHOTS

Snapshots of the raw data and derived dataset can be delivered on request.



NOTIFICATIONS

Instantly get notified if a specific person (nickname, phone number or bitcoin address), city, organization or event is mentioned on the Darknet and be alerted when new activity is detected.



INSIGHTS

Get custom insights and discover trends via smart dashboards. Find hotspots where vendors and buyers meet and dissect their online network.



SEARCH

Use full text search to explore millions of Darknet documents and extracted entities like bitcoin addresses, user names and risk factors.

Also known as the 'Visible web', this part of the internet can be found by link-crawling techniques used by a typical search engine such as Google or Bing

Surface web 4 %

Deep web 96 %

Also known as the 'Invisible web'. Content here is not accessible to search engines and includes a wide variety of different types including dynamic web pages, private sites, blocked sites and limited access networks

Dark net

Part of the deep web, also known as the 'Dark web'. Content is intentionally hidden and is accessible using only special web browsers such as the Onion Router (Tor)



SEARCH

DARKNET SEARCH

MARKET SEARCH

IM SEARCH

MARKET MONITOR

DASHBOARD

MARKETS

VENDORS

COUNTRIES REPORT



Monitored markets

ALL Top Markets

Total number of markets:

102



See all →

An iceberg floating in a blue sea. The tip of the iceberg is above the water line, while the much larger, jagged base is submerged below. The background is a solid light blue color.

- **Drug-related homicide**

Drug-related violence

threat

intimidation

injury

robbery

kidnapping

Drug-related homicide: sources & data mapping



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

EMCDDA PAPERS

Drug-related homicide in Europe: a first review of the data and literature

ARTICLE IN PRESS

International Journal of Drug Policy xxx (xxxx) xxx-xxx

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International Journal of Drug Policy

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/drugpo



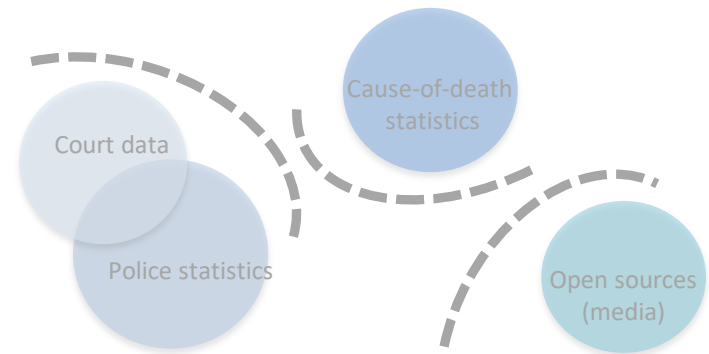
Research Paper

Drug-related homicide in Europe—First review of data and sources

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Psychopharmacological violence



Economic-compulsive violence

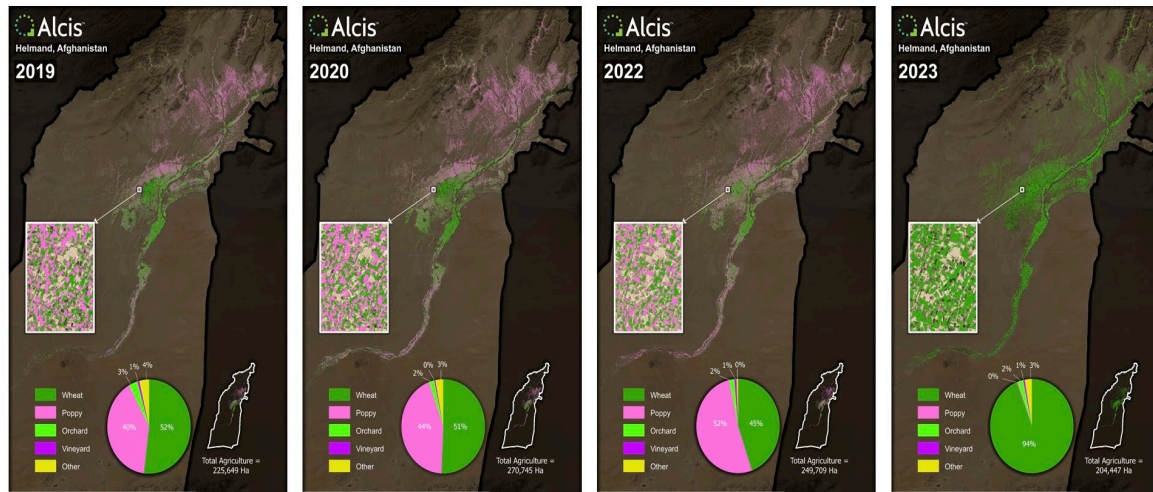


Systemic violence



Satellite/drone technology

Europe needs to be prepared for possible implications of the opium poppy cultivation ban in Afghanistan



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- Preliminary information for 2023 suggests that the area under cultivation has been substantially reduced.
- Longer-term impact of the ban on opium poppy cultivation is difficult to predict (sustaining this restriction over time might be politically difficult, existence of stocks etc.)
- If the ban on opium cultivation is enforced and sustained, it could have a significant impact on heroin availability.
- A concern is that any shortage in the availability of heroin may drive an increase in demand for synthetic opioids.
- **Need for vigilance**

Concluding remarks

- In the drugs area we are increasingly faced **with a more dynamic, interconnected and complex set of problems**
- But we also have **new opportunities** to use innovative practice and science based approaches to respond more effectively
- The **coproduction of evidence for action** is likely to be key
- This is the model underpinning the new EUDA but also why **we need meeting like this one!**





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