European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

EMCDDA/55/23

FINAL MINUTES OF THE SIXTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD (7–8 DECEMBER 2023)

7 DECEMBER 2023

1. Introduction by the Chair

The **Chair**, Mr Franz Pietsch, welcomed the participants at the 68th EMCDDA Management Board meeting. The meeting was held in hybrid format, at the EMCDDA and by video conference through Microsoft Teams, with on site and remote simultaneous interpretation in English, French and German as active languages, and Greek, Spanish and Romanian as passive languages.

The Chair welcomed the new members present at the meeting. Mr György Surján, Director for Prevention and Epidemiology at the National Centre for Public Health and Pharmacy, was nominated as member for Hungary. Ms Vesna Marinko, Head of Division of Health promotion and prevention of addiction at the Ministry of Health, was nominated as member for Slovenia in 2022 and attended for the first time a Management Board meeting. Sweden nominated Ms Kajsa Mickelsson, Head of section in the Division for Health and Civil Society within the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, as member. The new members briefly introduced themselves.

The Chair greeted Mr Claude Gillard, who, since the first meeting of the EMCDDA's Management Board on 26 April 1994, participated in all subsequent Board meetings as Belgium's representative. Mr Gillard will soon go on retirement, and attended the Management Board meeting for the last time. He will still chair the Budget Committee meeting in April 2024. The Chair thanked him on behalf of the Management Board for his exceptional co-operation and, in particular, for his valuable experience in budgetary and financial matters.

Mr Lars Petersen, member for Denmark, was unable to attend the meeting and gave his proxy vote to Ms Elina Kotovirta (Finland). The German Federal Drug Commissioner was accompanied by Ms Marina Horn. Ms Kristiin Mikko, member for Estonia, was excused on 7 December as of 12.00, and gave her proxy vote to Ms Elina Kotovirta (Finland). Ms Mikko participated in the meeting on 8 December. Mr Victor Sannes, member for the Netherlands, was unable to attend the meeting on 8 December, and Mr Mathijs Geilenkirchen replaced him online. Mr Sannes gave his voting rights to Ms Elina Kotovirta (Finland). Ms Sabine Gsaxner accompanied the Chair for Austria. Ms Ana Sofia Santos, Head of the Department for International Relations of SICAD, accompanied the Portuguese delegation as observer.

Ms Duygu Karaaslan, expert at the Reitox national focal point (NFP), represented Türkiye online, in the absence of the member and alternate member.

Ms Monique Pariat, Director-General of the European Commission's (EC) Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), and Ms Floriana Sipala, Director for Internal Security at DG HOME, were excused. Mr Olivier Onidi, Deputy Director-General at DG HOME, represented the European Commission on the Management Board, together with Mr Philippe Roux, Acting Director at DG SANTE, as substitute members. Ms Alexandra Antoniadis, Acting Head of the Organised Crime and Drugs Unit at DG HOME, and Mr Francesco Cannone, policy assistant for drugs from the same Unit, participated online as observers.

Professor Meni Malliori represented the European Parliament. Mr Carlos Coelho stepped down as representative of the European Parliament on the EMCDDA Management Board on 6 July 2023, as he has since been reappointed as a Member of the European Parliament. On his personal behalf and on behalf of the entire Management Board, the Chair expressed his gratitude to Mr Coelho for his constructive cooperation and continued support for the Agency's work.

The Chair thanked Professor Catherine Comiskey, Chair of the Scientific Committee, for her participation during her sabbatical year.

Dr Pietsch congratulated Ms Ioanna Yiasemi on her re-election as Spokesperson of the Reitox NFPs.

Ms Florence Mabileau represented the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe. The UNODC was not represented at the meeting.

The Chair reminded the participants that the Budget and the Executive Committee met on 6 December in order to prepare the Management Board meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda

EMCDDA/30/23 rev 1
EMCDDA/31/23

The **Chair** suggested adding and agenda item 10.5. on the 'Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Montenegro', and an item 10.6. on 'Extended EUDA Management Board meetings'.

Decision: The Management Board adopted the revised agenda of the meeting.

PART I: *Exchange of views*

3. Exchange of views on the situation concerning heroin

3.1. Presentation by the EMCDDA of the module on heroin of the joint EMCDDA-Europol European Drug Markets Report 2023

Ms Teodora Groshkova, Principal scientific analyst, Markets, crime and supply reduction sector within the Risks to public safety and security unit, presented a preview of the module on heroin and other opioids of the upcoming joint EMCDDA-Europol European Drug Markets Report 2023.

Opioids account for a significant share of harms related to illicit drug use in EU. Opioids, mainly heroin, and often other substances, are present in around 74 % of fatal overdoses in 2021. The consumer market is overall stable, with about 1 million high-risk opioid users in EU in 2021. The opioid market is increasingly complex, including diverted medicines, internationally controlled and new synthetic opioids. The minimum estimated annual retail heroin market value in the EU was EUR 5.2 billion in 2021.

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan drastically reduced in 2023. A decrease in heroin availability in EU could lead to market gaps, that could be filled by potent synthetic opioids. Heroin trafficking to EU increasingly relies on maritime routes, allowing larger quantities of heroin to be smuggled in single shipments. The United Arab Emirates have emerged as a major transhipment point for heroin, as well as being a key hub for money laundering and criminal coordination.

Europe continues to be a source of acetic anhydride for heroin production in Afghanistan. Turkish criminal networks still dominate the wholesale trafficking of heroin to the European market, but also groups originating from or linked to Western Balkans are observed. The criminal exploitation of legal business structures is established, acquired or infiltrated. Cooperation among criminal networks is noted, but there is a potential for escalation of violence with the disruption of the heroin market or surge in synthetic opioids market. There is no sustained illicit production of synthetic opioids. Fentanyl and derivatives on EU drug markets come from illicit production outside the EU or diversion of medicines. The detection of cutting and packaging facilities for synthetic opioids is more common than laboratories producing these substances in the EU.

The report identifies the following actions to address current threats and increase preparedness, which include but are not limited to:

1) Improve the strategic and intelligence picture: monitoring and detection

- Strengthen EU preparedness by enhancing the capacity to rapidly identify and respond to emerging health and security threats from developments in the opioids market
- Enhance monitoring of all aspects of the opiate threat, including opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and trafficking routes into the EU, particularly points of entry
- Further enhance the exchange of operational and strategic information in order to improve the strategic and intelligence picture
- Enhance monitoring and understanding of precursor flows through strengthened European forensic capacity
- Monitor, investigate and enhance intelligence on facilitators (legal business structures, money-laundering)

2) Invest in capacity-building

- Increase the awareness of threats related to synthetic opioids; raise awareness and provide training for law enforcement
- Support the forensic analysis and chemical profiling of heroin and synthetic opioids seizures
- Further raise awareness to identify and prevent the diversion of acetic anhydride for heroin production

3) Strengthen policy, public health and safety responses

- Continue the investment in prevention, harm reduction and treatment
- Anticipate possible changes in opioid supply and demand patterns in the EU

3.2. Discussion

FR thanked the EMCDDA for the excellent presentation and warnings of a possible threat. The use of the potent synthetic opioids 'nitazenes', which presents a very high risk of overdose, has been detected in Metropolitan and Overseas France. Professionals and users' associations were alerted about the risks. Naloxone is efficient, but the doses have to be adapted and made increasingly available. It is also necessary to monitor closely the production of heroin in Afghanistan and of synthetic opioids in Europe. The role of chemical precursors is important, and FR welcomed the EU roadmap to fight trafficking and organised crime. FR reminded about a resolution of the UN Security Council recommending not to export acetic anhydride to Afghanistan. FR finally stressed the importance of the Global Coalition to Address the Synthetic Drug Threat, organised by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the US Department of State, in which the EU participates.

IE experienced a recent overdose outbreak associated with netazines. 57 non-fatal overdoses occurred over one weekend in November. Drug dealers seem to have tested the market, telling users that netazine was a new, stronger form of heroin, and that it would be better smoking than injecting it. Even smoking nitazines provoked overdoses, and the administration of naloxone was a very important response. However, from a naloxone is a prescription only medicine, and some initiatives taken in the US concerning its overall availability could be considered. It was very helpful that all stakeholders and services (addiction services, emergency departments, homeless services, laboratories, police) were involved in the response to this real-life situation within 36 hours. The City Council put up traffic signs alerting to the risks of overdose, which were also very helpful to raise awareness among drug users. The situation is a serious concern from the Irish perspective. The preparedness of EU Member States has to be increased significantly.

For the first time since 2018, a significant increase in heroin use is noted in **CY**, and is reflected in the number of people seeking treatment. Over the past three years, a majority of heroin clients having entered treatment were non-European nationals, originating from a specific region in South Asia. This group of problematic drug users is vulnerable to the spread of infectious diseases due to risk injecting and common sharing practices, and represents a challenge for Cyprus. In response to this issue, the National Addictions Authority has recently published a Harm Reduction Guide for safer drug use in Greek, English, Russian and Panjabi.

LT informed that usually heroin is transported from Central Asian countries through Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland to Lithuania and smuggled into Western European countries. Heroin is being replaced in Lithuania by synthetic opioids, mostly car fentanyl. In 2022 only 1.1 kg of heroin was confiscated from illegal circulation (in comparison to 1.7 kg confiscated in 2021, with a total of 93 seizures), and 44 cases of forensic investigations related to heroin were recorded. The general population survey in 2021 showed a lifetime use of heroin for only 0.4 % of the population (0.7 % of males and 0.2 % of females). A study of the ESCAPE project (European Syringe Collection and Analysis Project Enterprise) was conducted in Klaipėda (port city) and Vilnius. No heroin was detected in used syringes in the capital, but a high amount was found in Klaipėda (51 syringes out of 150 syringes). Heroin was not detected in Vilnius in 2022, the most common drug in syringes collected in both cities was car fentanyl. The situation concerning nitazines is challenging and dangerous, even if these substances have not been detected in used syringes so far.

ES expressed equally high concerns about the dangers of the shift in drug markets from heroin to synthetic opioids in Europe, and reminded about the developments in the USA concerning fentanyl, despite the continued supply of heroin from Mexico. In Spain only a few prescription opioids have been diverting to the illicit drug market, but future developments may be worrying. ES followed closely the outbreak in Ireland, and expressed the view that countries should be more prepared in terms of demand reduction and harm reduction responses. ES has a very high coverage of opioid substitution treatment but relies mainly on methadone, and it is very difficult to introduce further buprenorphine dure to the arrangements of the pharmacological market. Drug checking initiatives exist to detect new opioids, especially in music festivals and nightlife events, and ES tries to expand them to areas with supervised drug consumption facilities, where are largely located in parts of ES where

opioids are injected. Methods could be developed in different countries to promote surveillance of opioids in waste water treatment plants, like in Australia. A group of professionals working in emergency rooms in large university hospitals publishes scientific papers on opioids, but this does not provide timely information through the Early Warning System. Another challenge is trying to expand the availability of naloxone among drug users. Training programmes for overdose response and distribution of naloxone have been organised in the parts of the country where opioids are injected, but it is easier to distribute naloxone for injection than to provide nasal sprays for which prescriptions are more complicated.

Ms Ferreira Borges, representative of WHO, agreed about the need to increase the preparedness of countries for the shifts in the drug market and the rise of overdoses. Ms Borges was attending the European Public Health Conference in Ireland at the moment of the outbreak, and was impressed by the rapid coordination and response mechanisms which were put in place. In 2024 WHO will focus on updating its 'Guidelines on pharmacotherapy of opioid dependence and the management of opioid overdoses', to take into account the need for better responses to the increased use of synthetic opioids. The global civil society organisation 'Vital strategies' is very active on the ground to partner with governments on prevention of opioid overdoses, linking the situation in the US with the one in Europe.

Ms Malliori, representative of the European Parliament, also expressed concerns about the serious threat Europe is facing. It is urgent to spread the information on recent developments concerning heroin and opioids in a different way, and faster, in order to reach doctors, hospitals, practitioners and street workers. Ms Malliori also reported that access to Naloxone is problematic in Greece.

NL has not noted an increase in the use of synthetic opioids yet, but is following closely the situation in Ireland, Scotland and other countries. The medicinal heroin treatment programme has worked very well over the past 25 years, but the population of drug users in this programme is ageing, and the costs by person are rising. It is necessary to elaborate innovative harm reduction responses. Drug checking and alerts such as traffic signs, also used in a situation in Amsterdam in which cocaine was sold as heroin, really work as information reaches people in the street, and saves lives.

NO thanked the EMCDDA for highlighting this important issue. NO wondered how it was possible that Afghanistan reduced by 95% its opium production, as it takes away the main income from farmers, and if there were other actors involved than the ban of the Taliban. New opioids have been introduced in NO, and some overdoses have occurred, but in a limited number so far. Most of harm reduction interventions are targeted towards heroin use, and naloxone should be more widely accessible. The question is how quickly it will be possible to respond to the alarming developments.

The **Director** highlighted that the major challenge is that the information reaches the practitioners and professionals on the field, instead of publishing long reports. The evidence has been formatted in a different way. The new European Drug Alert System and the Network of forensic and toxicological laboratories will help respond to the situation. The Agency will build a system working with the national alert systems and laboratories, and examine what will be useful for the practitioners in the Member States. The new Regulation, together with the work of the Reitox national focal points (NFPs), will make a difference.

The **Chair** thanked the EMCDDA for the comprehensive overview, and the Management Board members for their additional information and comments. The Chair concluded that the new competences will enable the EUDA to provide its stakeholders in a timelier and more efficient way with evidence-based information on the developments and threats.

PART II: *Restricted session*

4. Preparation of the EMCDDA for the entry into application of the Regulation on the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA)

4.1. Oral update on the preparation of the EUDA by the Director

The **Director** stressed that the ultimate strategic goal of the new agency is to strengthen the EU preparedness to tackle the drugs problem.

This goal is based on four types of services defined through the action verbs: 'anticipate', 'alert', 'respond' and 'learn'. The agency will strengthen its situational, geo-political and prospective analysis, with a stronger mandate for international cooperation and the 'Futures' methodology ('anticipate').

The agency will support alert systems and make sure that the information reaches the practitioners and the field ('alert'). It is urgent to broaden the approach to harm reduction, setting up harm reduction systems of different services, and including issues such as drug-related violence as part of risks affecting all citizens. The Agency will continue to implement the Early Warning System (EWS) and set up a European Drug Alert System (EDAS). It will play a stronger role in threat and risk assessments and issue health and security risk communications, in close relationship with the Member States and the Reitox NFPs.

The EUDA will provide quick tools to support the Member States in risk assessments, not only in the context of the EWS, assessing available responses and implementing needed interventions ('respond').

Finally, it is necessary to assess and learn how a crisis has been managed, disseminate best practice as well as pursue competence development, and support Member States in designing and evaluating their drug strategies. The pillars for strengthening or developing these services will be the Reitox network and the EUDA network of forensic and toxicological laboratories.

Inventing the new Agency relies on a multi-dimensional and multi-tasking approach, guided by the new Business Model and informed by the EMCDDA Strategy for 2025. It includes 6 substantive tracks: 1) Customers and value proposition; 2) Production and resources – data; 3) Production and resources – organisation; 4) Partnerships and networks; 5) Customer relations and channels and 6) Cost structures and revenue streams. The agency has made progress in all these areas to prepare for the start of the new Agency on 2 July 2024.

The Director also informed about the developments and plans for preparing the team, the infrastructure and the new organisation. A Human Resources Development Strategy is being implemented. A contract with the firm Deloitte provided methodological support for recruitment procedures and mapping of competences. The profiles and vacancy notices for the 13 additional posts in 2024 linked to the new Regulation are being finalised. The Director set up a Forum on Gender Innovation, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and holds bi-monthly Staff Assemblies to inform all staff about the developments in this transition period. The EMCDDA reached an agreement with EMSA (European Maritime Safety Agency) to fully use the 'Palacete' building as of 2024, and plans the transformation of the office space.

Four joint working groups between the EMCDDA and Reitox NFPs were created in May 2023. Another joint working group was set up concerning the new 'Reitox Alliance', which will be elaborated between July 2024 and December 2025, when it will be submitted to the Management Board for adoption. It will aim at defining the joint commitment of Reitox and the EMCDDA/EUDA to become more customer-centric.

Another priority was to define the identity of the EUDA. The agency made good progress with the EUDA branding project together with an external consultant, of which the results were shared with staff, and with the new corporate identity with the help of a designer.

The Director alerted about two main risks. The biggest challenge lies in the area of HR, since almost 10% of the EMCDDA staff was on sick leave in 2023, and there is no possibility for temporary replacements. The EMCDDA is one of the oldest Agencies with an ageing population, the workload is very heavy in this transition period, and there are not enough resources. It is difficult to fill in the numerous Selection Committees, and it will not be possible to have all 13 new posts operational as of 2 July 2024. The second potential risk concerns the financial execution in 2024. The EMCDDA has disseminated to the Management Board members a procurements plan, which is part of the draft SPD for 2024–26 (Annex XIII). Some flexibility will be needed for its implementation. If necessary, the Director will present a proposal for amending the budget at the Management Board meeting in July 2024. The budget nearly doubles in 2024, but in principle payments will only be possible as of 2 July 2024. Delays may occur in products and procurement procedures due to the lack of HR and the unavailability of service providers during the summer holidays. The signature of most contracts will probably only be possible towards the end of 2024, which may create a bottleneck in 2025.

The Director paid tribute to all the EMCDDA staff and thanked them for their commitment. He also thanked the Scientific Committee, the NFPs and the members of the Management Board for their support.

Mr Onidi, representative of the EC, thanked the Director and his staff for having carried out many preparatory steps. It is very important to see the Agency reflecting fully on the different aspects of its functioning and production. This understanding should be conveyed at national level with the help of the Management Board members. The new mission of the Agency deserves to be better known, and staff members should be visiting the Member States and meet with different services in the national constituencies. The same effort should also be undertaken towards external partners, such as Latin American countries.

NL thanked the Director for his risk assessment, as it is important for the Management Board to be aware of these challenges, and congratulated the EMCDDA on the work accomplished so far.

The **Chair** underlined that the Agency in engaging in profound changes, which imply also important challenges and risks, and will lead to a new identity as of 2 July 2024. The Chair thanked the Director and his team for all the efforts undertaken for the stepwise implementation of the new mandate. It is indeed also the responsibility of the Member States to fully support this change. AT has organised an official visit of the EMCDDA Director to Vienna in March 2023, which included meetings with Ministers, high-level officials, the Austrian National Public Health Institute and NFP and other services. He expressed confidence in the collective success of the new Agency.

4.2. Rules of procedure for the EUDA Management Board: oral report from the working group of the Management Board **EMCDDA/32/23**

The **Chair** reminded that the Management Board decided to set up a working group to draft the rules of procedure of the EUDA Management Board, which was chaired by Ms Elina Kotovirta (FI) and included members of the Management Board, representatives of the EC and EMCDDA staff members for technical support. The working group has prepared a draft document that was submitted to the Management Board members. The EUDA Management Board will have to adopt the rules of procedure at its first meeting in July 2024.

The Chair noted that if there were comments on specific points on which different opinions will be expressed, the working group could meet again.

Ms Kotovirta, Chair of the working group, briefly introduced the proposed draft rules of procedure. This document is based on the current rules of procedure of the EMCDDA Management Board, which have been updated in the light of past experience and compared with rules of procedure of the Management Board of other EU Agencies. Some new aspects such as the possibility to organising hybrid meetings, have been included. The working group also discussed the issue of transparency and possible conflicts of interest. The document will be checked for possible typing errors.

Mr Gillard noted that the working group discussed the added value of the Budget Committee, which is not explicitly foreseen in the EMCDDA nor in the EUDA Regulation. He stressed the importance of the Budget Committee in preparing the decisions to be taken by the Management Board on budgetary and financial issues, in a global and transversal manner.

FR supported the need of an advisory group on budget issues, which is essential in particular in a transition period.

The **Chair** thanked Ms Kotovirta and the members of the working group for their fruitful cooperation. Any comments on the draft rules of procedure should be addressed to the Chair by the end of 2023 to finalise the document.

4.3. Rules of procedure for the appointment of national representative laboratories to the European Union Drug Agency (EUDA) network of forensic and toxicological laboratories and terms of reference concerning the establishment and the operation of the EUDA network forensic and toxicological laboratories **EMCDDA/33/23 EMCDDA/34/23**

The **Director** reminded that the EUDA Regulation stipulates that the Agency shall set up a network of forensic and toxicological laboratories active in investigations of drugs and drug-related harms to address the growing need for forensic and toxicological data, specialist expertise and better coordination between laboratories in the Member States. Each Member State has the right to appoint to the network, through its representative in the Management Board, up to three laboratories specialising in forensic analysis, toxicology or other relevant fields related to drugs to act as national representative laboratories. The Member States shall appoint their representatives to the network by 31 May 2024. The list shall be made available to the Management Board for information and shall be valid for a four-year period.

Ms Malliori, representative of the European Parliament, welcomed this excellent additional tool for data collection at European level, but wondered about the articulation of the network of forensic and toxicological laboratories with the NFPs at national level. The Director replied that the two different networks will provide data to the EMCDDA, which will make them available for all Member States. The network will elaborate its own guidelines later on, but the working methods will also depend on the organisation in each Member State. The coordination at national level will become increasingly important.

The **Chair** informed that he contacted the Austrian Ministry of Finances, the Ministry of Interior and the Customs Laboratory earlier in 2023 to inform about the establishment of the network. He stressed that a common understanding of the rules and procedures, as well as the profiles/terms of reference for the laboratories is essential at national level. The documents provide a sound basis for Management Board members to contact as soon as possible all involved stakeholders at national level. The Chair will convene an inter-ministerial meeting and the relevant official stakeholders in Austria still in December 2023.

Decision: The Management Board adopted the rules and procedures for the appointment of national representative laboratories to the EUDA network of forensic and toxicological laboratories, and the proposed application form.

The Management Board further adopted the terms of reference concerning the establishment and the operation of the EUDA network of forensic and toxicological laboratories.

4.4. Update on the EUDA branding project

EMCDDA/35/23

The **Director** provided an update on the EUDA branding and corporate image project.

The EMCDDA Strategy 2025 identified three groups of primary customers (EU decision makers, national decision makers, practitioners), but the new Agency will also provide outputs and services for more and new customers. The work with the EMCDDA and the support provided, the delivery of additional information has been qualified by its stakeholders as 'EMCDDA experience'. The crucial question is to define what is our identity, how do we present ourselves, why do we exist, what makes us different, what do we provide and how we are perceived externally. This reflection has two components, on the one hand the image and identity of the Agency, and how it is perceived outside, and on the other the values and shared understanding internally. The EMCDDA has formally established a Forum on Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The values also cover workplace ethics and processes, and further develop an 'EUDA attitude' for every staff member, sharing a common reference to represent the identity and services of the Agency.

The EMCDDA has organised internal branding workshops, and the results were shared with the designer for the new logo. A fundamental shift will take place from a monitoring centre with a primary role to observe, to an agency empowered to act. This has an impact on multiple dimensions:

- our **organisational culture** – values, beliefs, attitudes
- our **contents** – new contents, new formats
- our **processes** – agility, communication, interaction, timeliness
- our **people** – internal evolution, human resources, new skills and roles, pace of work
- our **targets** – new target groups, new expectations, new channels

Science is the backbone of the EUDA, as it was for the EMCDDA. Evidence-based knowledge builds a capital of trust and a long-term guarantee of credibility. An EUDA brand guide has been produced internally with an external facilitator, involving staff, management and the Reitox NFPs. The ultimate aim is to build a strong identity perceived by all customers. The Director will further update the Executive Committee members in April 2024, and a complete briefing will be provided to the Management Board members before the first EUDA Management Board meeting on 4–5 July 2024.

5. Activity reports:

5.1. Report on the activities of the Chair

EMCDDA/36/23

No comments were made.

5.2. Report from the Budget Committee

EMCDDA/37/23

The **Chair of the Budget Committee**

The Chair reminded that the Budget Committee will examine in April 2024 the EMCDDA provisional accounts for 2023, the remarks of the European Court of Auditors and draft an opinion on these accounts. As per the Financial Regulation applicable to the EMCDDA, the Management Board will have to adopt its opinion on the EMCDDA final accounts for 2023 by 1 July 2024.

The first meeting of the EUDA Management Board will however take place on 4–5 July 2024. The Director reminded that the Internal Audit Service (IAS) recommended that he also presents an overview on the key performance of the agency of the past year on this occasion.

The Budget Committee and the Executive Committee recommended launching a written procedure in May 2024 for the adoption of the opinion of the Management Board on the EMCDDA final accounts for 2023. The Director will present the performance of the agency in 2023 to the Management Board members at their meeting on 4–5 July 2024. In the meantime, the General Report of Activities 2023, as it will be approved by the Management Board by written procedure, will be made available in the EMCDDA public website for consultation.

Decision: The Management Board agreed to launch a written procedure for the adoption of the opinion of the Management Board on the EMCDDA 2023 final accounts in May 2024.

5.3. Report on the external activities of the Director **EMCDDA/38/23**

No comments were made.

6. EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime and evaluation of the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021–2025: oral presentation by the European Commission

Mr Onidi, representative of the EC, presented the EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime, which was adopted on 18 October 2023. This initiative is complementary to the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021–2025, the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021–2025 and the EUDA Regulation.

The EU roadmap is a direct consequence of a collective effort to include the subject in the list of priorities at political level, focusing on the nexus between networks of organised crime and drugs, which has a major impact on our societies. Trafficking of drugs has become the main source of revenue of organised crime groups, which leads to the need of a major political response.

Four priority areas for increased action linked to drug trafficking and use of drugs have been identified. The first priority concerns the European Ports Alliance, which aims at strengthening the resilience of logistic hubs in EU ports, which are important in drug trafficking routes. This will require the mobilisation of national/local authorities, as well as the resources of the customs community, and a better sharing of information of all port actors involved.

Secondly, the focus on the work on seizures should shift towards dismantling high-risk criminal networks, and depriving them from their illicit gains by confiscation and asset recovery, with the support of some organisations like Europol.

Crime prevention is the third priority and an integral part of a long-term response to combating organised crime. The EC counts on the support from the Agency in this large area which has to be stepped up to combat the proliferation of designer precursors, preventing criminal networks from recruiting children and young people and improving public safety and public health in areas affected by the use and sale of drugs and drug-related crime..

Finally, the fourth priority is given to further developing international cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking. The associations with Western Balkan countries and candidate countries (Türkiye, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia) have been successful to expand the outreach to critical partners around the EU. Decisive steps have been reached under the ES Presidency in the cooperation with key Latin American countries through progress on the Working Arrangements between the EMCDDA and Colombia, Chile and Ecuador, in addition to international agreements which are being negotiated by the EC for the exchange of personal data between Europol and Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru, or already existing agreements/arrangements between the different Agencies and Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru. Enhanced quality was reached in EU dialogues, such as the EU dialogue with Colombia which was held at ministerial level.

The **Director** expressed the support of the EMCDDA to the EU roadmap. The document mentions two high-level conferences in 2024. The EMCDDA will organise its conference on drug-related violence in the last week of November 2024 in Brussels. The Director suggested to combine the EMCDDA conference on drug-related violence with the conference proposed by the EC under Action 13 of the EU roadmap, and that the EMCDDA provides support to the conference on crime prevention proposed by the EC under Action 12 of the EU roadmap on the condition that it takes place before the European elections.

Mr Onidi, representative of the EC, noted that the EC was fully flexible for the timing of the conference. It is important to manage well the calendar of events to give international events or conferences on this subject an

extremely high visibility by ensuring high-level participation. An event will take place at the beginning of the BE Presidency to launch the European Ports Alliance.

7. Presentations by EU Presidencies

7.1. Presentation on the conclusions of the Spanish Presidency

Mr Villalbí Hereter presented the first conclusions of the **ES** Presidency of the Council of the EU in the area of drug policy.

At the HDG, the priority in the area of drug demand focused on people with drug use disorders and other mental health disorders. Harm and risk reduction was the topic for the EU National Drug Coordinators meeting in Barcelona. In the drug supply area, priority has been given to special regional plans to tackle drug trafficking in highly affected areas. The destruction of drugs and effects seized represented another topic of interest.

The ES Presidency aimed at reinforcing the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs, for which conclusions will probably be approved under the next EU Presidency. The ES Presidency prepared the UNODC/CND meetings and followed up on their conclusions. EU Dialogues with third countries were organised with Colombia (organised by the EC), US and Central Asia. The HDG also cooperated with the US Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats.

Mr Villalbí Hereter thanked the EC, the Secretariat of the Council and in particular his team, led by Ms Elena Alvarez from the Ministry of Health, for their support.

On behalf of the Management Board, the **Chair** congratulated the ES Presidency for its achievements.

7.2. Presentation of the programme for the Belgian Presidency

Mr Gillard informed that the programme of the **BE** Presidency during the first half of 2024 will be presented at the HDG meeting of 11–12 December 2023. The main priorities in the field of drugs will be the access and availability of medicines, drug trafficking in maritime ports and prisons and drugs.

Mr Gillard has chaired the HDG during 3 Belgian Presidencies of the EU in the past, and will retire soon. He has lived the history of the EMCDDA, having participated in the Management Board as Belgium's representative since its very first meeting of the EMCDDA's Management Board in 1994. He has been a member of the Budget Committee since its creation, and chaired it during 20 years. Mr Gillard took part in the nomination of 3 Directors of the agency.

On behalf of the Management Board, the **Chair** thanked Mr Gillard for his extraordinary contribution to the work of the agency with his expertise and know how, ensuring continuity and providing future oriented advice, and wished him all the best for the future.

8. Operational and financial programming:

8.1. Reitox co-financing: oral report from the working group of the Management Board EMCDDA/39/23

The **Chair** declared that, in line with the EMCDDA policy for the prevention and management of conflicts of interest, it was a duty of the Management Board to assess whether a situation of conflict of interest exists in relation to its works/decisions and whether such a situation requires or recommends the adoption of specific and proportional prudential measures.

The Management Board is requested to endorse the proposal resulting from the works carried out by the working group on the Reitox co-financing that it has set up in June 2023. The Budget Committee and the Executive Committee validated this proposal at their meetings of 25–26 October 2023. This proposal encompasses the 'provisional' reinstatement for 2024–25 of the Reitox co-financing at the level of 2013 (i.e. before the two following reductions imposed by existing budget constraints), with no change in the existing 50%/50% distribution key. In this context, the Members of the Management Board are required to decide on this endorsement by acting exclusively in this capacity, according to the rules and procedure established for the adoption of this decision.

It could therefore be considered that the circumstance that some members of the Management Board (3) are also currently appointed as Head of a Reitox NFP, does not entail a situation of conflict of interest likely to jeopardise the overall decision of the Management Board and justify specific prudential measure to ensure this

decision. This is the approach that the Management Board has consistently applied in the past in similar circumstances, including when it decided on the reduction of the Reitox co-financing. The Management Board agreed with this approach and proceeded with the discussion on this item, without further action.

Mr Sannes, Chair of the working group, reported that the working group considered that the EMCDDA 2024 and 2025 budget may reinstate (when the maximum annual co-financing for each Reitox NFP amounted to EUR 101 297), subject to actual budget availability. The amount of this reinstatement should consistently take into account the annual budget made available to the EMCDDA/EUDA, which relies and depends on the amount of the annual EU subsidy to the agency. During the 2024–2025 period the current 50/50% co-financing scheme should be maintained, without prejudice to its possible revision for 2026 onwards, as a result of the envisaged new 'Reitox Alliance' to be adopted by the EUDA Management Board in December 2025.

Ms Ioanna Yiasemi, Spokesperson of the Reitox NFPs, thanked the working group for its proposal, which would be very welcomed by the NFPs.

The **Chair** thanked the members of the working group for their collaboration, and stressed that working groups are very helpful to find solutions together.

Decision: The Management Board endorsed the proposals from the working group to reinstate the appropriations for the annual Reitox co-financing to the level of 2013 in the EMCDDA budget for 2024 and preliminary draft budget for 2025. The amount of this reinstatement will consistently take into account the annual budget made available to the EMCDDA/EUDA, which relies and depends on the amount of the annual EU subsidy to the agency. During the 2024–2025 period the current 50/50% co-financing scheme will be maintained, without prejudice to its possible revision for 2026 onwards, as a result of the envisaged new 'Reitox Alliance' to be adopted by the EUDA Management Board in December 2025.

8.2. EMCDDA Draft budget for 2024 — EMCDDA/40/23

The **Chair of the Budget Committee** summarised the main figures of the draft EMCDDA budget (DB) for 2024.

The EU budget adopted for 2024 confirmed the amount of 32 131 775 EUR proposed by the EC for the EU 2024 subsidy to the EMCDDA, which takes into account the programming relating to the current EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) as well as the legislative financial statement attached to the Regulation on the new European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA). Mr Gillard thanked DG HOME for its support.

The total EMCDDA budget for 2024 includes the EU 2024 subsidy to the EMCDDA, the contributions from Norway and Türkiye, as well as assigned budget appropriations for the second year of the EU4MD 2 project and the last year of the COP III project, for a total of about EUR 34 600 000. The Chair stressed that the staff-related expenditure represents less than 50% of the total budget, which is very positive. It is proposed that the EMCDDA 2024 budget appropriations for the annual Reitox co-financing are reinstated to the level of 2013, i.e. from EUR 60 000 to 100 000 per NFP for the tasks being currently performed by the NFPs, while keeping current 50/50% distribution key of this co-financing. The draft budget for 2024 includes 13 newly authorised posts for temporary agents for the implementation of the EUDA mandate.

The Budget Committee recommended to the Management Board to adopt the proposed EMCDDA DB for 2024.

Decision: The Management Board adopted unanimously the EMCDDA budget for 2024.

8.3. EMCDDA Single Programming Document for 2024–26 and work programme for 2024 — EMCDDA/41/23

Ms Comiskey, Chair of the Scientific Committee, stated that the Scientific Committee expressed its full support to the EMCDDA SPD for 2024–26 and 2024 work programme. The formal opinion of the Scientific Committee has been disseminated to the Management Board members.

The Scientific Committee very much values the work of the EMCDDA, and stressed that maintaining the EMCDDA's longstanding reputation for scientific rigour, evidence-based analysis and independence in all aspects of its work will be of critical importance to ensuring the future success of the work of the EUDA. The agency will have to maintain the knowledge transfer and continuity in a transition period marked by the retirement of senior management and the arrival of new staff. Finally, the definition of a value system for the new agency is crucial.

Ms Yiasemi, Spokesperson of the Reitox NFPs, noted the Reitox network equally supports the EMCDDA SPD for 2024–26 and 2024 work programme. She acknowledged the preparatory work and co-creation undertaken in

several joint working groups set up with NFPs, which is highly appreciated. Ms Yiasemi thanked the EMCDDA Director and his staff for their support.

Mr Onidi, representative of the EC, thanked the EMCDDA for the document, which is drafted in line with the comments made by the EC in its formal opinion and fully aligned with the new mandate.

The **Director** thanked the Management Board for its decision on the Reitox co-financing in 2024. He reminded that the Management Board had committed to restore the original amount of the Reitox co-financing appropriations when the budget conditions would allow to do so, because the budgetary cuts had a negative impact on the capacity of NFPs to fulfil their obligations. The Member States will hopefully now be able to increase their financial contribution to the NFPs by the same amount. The Director informed that he would be available to visit Member States upon request to explain the mandate of the new agency.

The EMCDDA prepared the Multi-annual Single Programming Document (SPD) for 2024–26 in line with Article 32 of the EMCDDA Financial Regulation, and following the relevant guidelines and template issued by the EC. The SPD is the planning and financial instrument that allows the centre to operate and implement the EMCDDA Strategy for 2025.

The Director highlighted some elements of the roadmap and selected activities for 2024. In Q1, the EUDA Management Board members and alternate members will be nominated, and the EUDA Reitox NFPs and heads of NFPs will be designated. The Management Board will need to appoint the members of the EUDA Scientific Committee and approve the list of experts to be used by the EUDA Executive Director to extend the Scientific Committee for the purposes of the assessment of the risks posed by new psychoactive substances.

In Q2, the Threats Assessment System and the European Drug Alert System will be presented to the Executive Committee, and a new International Cooperation Framework will be developed for adoption by the Management Board in 2024. According to the Director, the EUDA Regulation foresees that the EC has to issue a formal opinion on each Working Arrangement to be concluded by the agency, not only with third countries but also with universities, networks and civil society organisations. The Director proposed to draft an umbrella framework agreement in consultation with the EC with a first list of Working Arrangements to be concluded with a specific type of organisations, with a justification of the benefit for the agency, to be presented to Management Board for approval in July 2024, subject to a positive opinion of the EC. This would allow to avoid launching different consultations with the EC. This list would be updated annually by the agency.

The EUDA will be launched in Q3, with the constitutive meeting of the EUDA Management Board on 4–5 July 2024, hopefully with the presence of the Commissioner, and in an extended format with representatives from candidate and potential candidate countries, as well as from the third countries with whom the EUDA has Working Arrangements (see agenda item 10.6.). It will also be the moment for launching new services, new features and the new Corporate Image.

The Q4 will be marked by the Lisbon Addictions Conference, which will take place on 23–25 October 2024. The agency will also organise the first European Conference on drug-related violence in the last week of November in Brussels. The first meeting of the new European Forensic and Toxicology Laboratories Network will be organised in December 2024.

The Director gave an illustration of some new projects, services and activities. The new 'Socrates' project will aim at increasing the capacity of detection and responses for new drugs. In the area of the work on 'Futures', the agency will continue supporting decision-making with strategic futures scenarios and analysis, launch a study on the future impact of emerging technologies on drugs markets and contribute to the Innovation Hub. The European Drug Alert System (EUDAS) will build on the Early Warning System, with a broader coverage and range, to ensure that this information reaches the field level (practitioners). The EMCDDA has already started working on risk communication in a joint working group with NFPs. Concerning the European Threat Assessment Service (ETAS), both in the area of health and security, the agency will work on a pilot rapid intervention team and a pilot threat assessment on ports managed by Chinese state-owned companies. The agency continues investing in an interactive digital eco-system, which is at the heart of the interaction with customers and data providers, by building a Data Foundation Model for delivering data fabric services and drug data related support services.

The agency runs or plans several platforms, such as for ESCAPE, drug checking (TEDI), waste water (SCORE), drug consumption rooms (Correlation), drug-related homicides and drug-related violence, drug precursors, etc. The EMCDDA expands further the Monitoring 3.0 project, and has launched web surveys with 130 000 respondents. The EMCDDA will explore with the Joint Research Centre the possibility to transfer and host database systems for the monitoring of drug markets on the Darknet.

In terms of development of proactive responses, the EMCDDA works on prevention systems and harm reduction systems. A new project EU-DECIDE is presented in the work programme. PLATO concerns the training for decision makers on the European Union Prevention Curriculum (EUPC). A pilot project for prevention and harm reduction will be carried out with the Belgian NFP, in partnership with neighbouring countries, for drug checking at the Tomorrowland festival. The agency will also have a new role in identifying European research needs through a platform or database. Finally, the Director mentioned a joint project with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) on tools and resources for addressing drug-related needs of migrants and 'transient' communities.

NL congratulated the Director and the staff on the impressive work and comprehensive document. Mr Sannes wondered what the agency plans to mitigate the risks described for the transition period and in the Annex XIV on 'Risk Factors' that may impact on the ability of the Agency to implement the SPD for 2024–26. The main risk seems to be the pressure on the human resources capacity, due to a very heavy workload. Human resources are the main asset of the EMCDDA, and it is important to pay due attention to the wellbeing of staff. In addition, staff will be involved in many selection procedures and will have to integrate new colleagues.

The **Director** agreed that one of the major challenges lies with the human resources capacity, and informed that it will not be possible to have all the new 13 posts operational as of 2 July 2024. The agency will remain still a relatively small agency. An external contract with the company Deloitte helped building a methodology for assessing the needs for these 13 new posts, and for the recruitment procedures. The Human Resources Sector prepared a succession plan, an onboarding programme to integrate and welcome newcomers, revised the training plan and prepared the profiles for the new posts with the units. The agency updated its internal risk assessment. It is difficult to cope with transition and transfer of knowledge. Standard operating procedures are being set up to ensure continuity and document decisions, in view of the future retirement of senior management. The EMCDDA is the first agency to have organised a Mental Health training for staff, and has set up a gender balance and diversity project. It will be necessary to be realistic and maybe less ambitious, and the Director will meet with all Heads of units to discuss the detailed Management Plan for 2024. The Director might have to present substantial changes to the 2024 work programme to the Management Board along the year.

The **Head of the Executive Office** added the Director, the 'Resources management and administrative services' Unit and the Human Resources Sector are taking a human approach to problems, and staff is encouraged to express concerns. The agency is relatively small and ageing. It is increasingly requested by EU institutions and Member States, and has to reply to the supervisory instances concerning compliance, such as on issues of transparency conflicts of interest, bi-annual internal audits, audits of the European Court of Auditors and requests for public access to documents. The agency tries to streamline and simplify recruitment procedures, but has to fulfil the EU rules on recruitment.

The **Chair** supported the human approach adopted by the Director and stressed the importance of the human capital in an organisation.

Decision: The Management Board adopted unanimously the EMCDDA Single Programming Document for 2024–26 and work programme for 2024.

8.4. EMCDDA Preliminary draft budget for 2025 — EMCDDA/42/23

The Chair of the Budget Committee informed that the EMCDDA/EUDA 2025 preliminary draft budget (PDB) relies on an EU 2025 subsidy of EUR 33 988 672. This amount encompasses the figures set by the last updated EC programming for the EU 2025 subsidy to the EMCDDA under the EU 2021–27 MFF (EUR 18 354 672), as well as the additional budget appropriations earmarked for 2025 for EUDA, pursuant to the the legislative financial statement attached to the EUDA Regulation (EUR 15 634 000). The EMCDDA 2025 budget appropriations for the annual Reitox co-financing are maintained at the same level as in 2024, while keeping the 50/50% distribution key for the Reitox co-financing. Reflections on a possible indexation of the appropriations for the annual Reitox co-financing and change in the distribution should be postponed until 2026. A joint working group has been set up between the EMCDDA and the Reitox NFPs to prepare the framework for a 'Reitox Alliance', to be submitted to the Management Board for adoption in December 2025. The PDB for 2025 includes 9 newly authorised posts for temporary agents for the implementation of the EUDA mandate.

The Budget Committee recommended to the Management Board to adopt the proposed EMCDDA PDB for 2025.

Decision: The Management Board adopted the EMCDDA preliminary draft budget for 2025, with the abstention of the European Commission for institutional reasons.

8.5. EMCDDA Preliminary draft Single Programming Document for 2025–27 and preliminary draft work programme for 2025 **EMCDDA/43/23**

After the formal transmission of the EMCDDA draft SPD for 2025–27 and the work programme for 2025 by 31 January 2024 to the EC, the EC will adopt its formal opinion, as usual, after an inter-service consultation.

Decision: The Management Board adopted the EMCDDA Preliminary Single Programming Document for 2025–27 and preliminary draft work programme for 2025, with the abstention of the European Commission for institutional reasons.

8 DECEMBER 2023

PART IV: *Restricted session*

9. Restricted session:

The **Chair** reminded that the restricted session was held only with the presence of the members and substitute members of the Management Board, without the observers. According to the rules of procedure of the EMCDDA Management Board, its decisions are adopted by a two-thirds majority of its members with the right to vote. The 27 EU Member States have one vote each, the European Commission 2 votes and the European Parliament 1 vote (total: 30 votes). Denmark and the Netherlands gave their proxy votes to Finland. Norway and Turkey are members of the EMCDDA without voting rights.

Since the Management Board has to decide on an exceptional extension of a mandate of an Executive Committee member until the entry into application of the EUDA Regulation, the Executive Committee proposed to proceed by show of hands, instead of organising a secret ballot with the EU survey for voting by secret ballot, in presence and online. The Management Board members agreed.

9.1. Renewal of the mandate of one EMCDDA Executive Committee member **EMCDDA/44/23**

Ms Elina Kotovirta, member for FI on the Management Board, was elected by the Management Board members for a mandate which comes to an end on 31 December 2023 and cannot be renewed immediately in the following term.

However, in view of the Regulation (EU) 2023/1322 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the new European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) of 27 June 2023, which will enter into application on 2 July 2024, and of the forthcoming elections of members of the Executive Committee at the constituent meeting of the EUDA Management Board on 4–5 July 2024, it is proposed to exceptionally renew the mandate of Ms Elina Kotovirta until the entry into application of the EUDA Regulation.

Decision: The Management Board unanimously renewed the mandate of Ms Elina Kotovirta, member for Finland on the EMCDDA Management Board, as member of the Executive Committee until the entry into application of the EUDA Regulation.

9.2. Recruitment procedure for the post of the EUDA Executive Director: oral presentation by the European Commission

Mr Onidi, representative of the EC, announced that Ms Floriana Sipala had been appointed Director for Internal Security at DG HOME as from 16 November 2023. Ms Alexandra Antoniadis is now Acting Head of the Organised Crime and Drugs Unit at DG HOME.

Mr Onidi reminded that the second mandate of the EMCDDA Director, Mr Alexis Goosdeel, comes to term on 31 December 2025. The procedure for the recruitment of the EUDA Executive Director will be launched approximately one year before the end of his mandate.

The EC will consult the Executive Committee on the draft vacancy notice at its meeting of 18 April 2024, before submitting it to the EUDA Management Board at its meeting of 4–5 July 2024 for approval. The EC will request the Management Board to formally appoint an observer to participate in the recruitment procedure and testify that all steps have been implemented following the rules. The vacancy notice will be published in the OJEU. The EC will present a shortlist of at least 3 candidates to the Executive Board in April 2025. This should allow enough time for all shortlisted candidates to be invited to a hearing at the competent committee or committees of the European Parliament, which may adopt and submit its opinion to the Management Board. The EUDA Management Board will appoint the EUDA Executive Director at its meeting of June/July 2025.

The **Chair** and the **Director** congratulated Ms Sipala on her appointment as Director, and thanked her and her team for her support in particular for the new mandate of the agency. They also looked forward to a constructive collaboration with Ms Antoniadis.

PART V: *Items for decision and information*

10. International cooperation:

10.1. Outcomes of cooperation with non-EU countries, international organisations and other EU agencies — EMCDDA/45/23

The **Director** highlighted some strategic developments in the area of international cooperation. The basis is the EMCDDA's International Cooperation Framework, which was adopted by the Management Board in 2018 and sets priorities in the area of the international cooperation aligned with the EMCDDA Strategy 2025.

Notwithstanding the primacy of the EU Member States and the countries with which the EU has concluded agreements for their participation in the work of the EMCDDA, three groups of priority countries were identified, each of them under specific EU policies, instruments and programmes: 1) candidate countries and potential candidate countries of the EU, 2) eastern and southern neighbouring countries and 3) other third countries. The Strategy was more restricted, but the new Regulation will bring a change of approach with broader mandate for the area of international cooperation and a timely budget increase.

The increase in drug-related violence in all EU Member States, above all in cannabis markets, and the increase in seizures in some European ports, in particular of cocaine, led to raise this issue to the highest political level in the EU starting with Commissioner Johansson and the Belgian Minister of Interior. Following a visit to the Port of Antwerp in February 2023 together with the Director, Commissioner Johansson and the Belgian Minister of Interior paid an official visit to Ecuador and Colombia, and the Management Board gave the Director the mandate to negotiate Working Arrangements with these countries at its meeting in June 2023. The Management Board also mandated the Director to negotiate a Working Arrangement with Chile. The EMCDDA has indeed a broader cooperation with some Latin American countries in the context of the COPOLAD III (Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean and the EU on drugs policies) programme, and channelling most of the cooperation through CICAD, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.

The Director thanked the EC for its very good collaboration in this field. Through its international cooperation activities, the EMCDDA contributes to the external dimension of the EU Drugs Strategy as far as its resources allow. In addition, it is important to understand the drugs situation in countries or groups of countries to detect possible threats for the EU and its Member States. Thirdly, the EMCDDA provides capacity development, in particular in offering technical and methodological support through technical assistance projects to upscale or create national drug information systems. Some existing Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) or Working Arrangements are being partly updated upon the request from partner countries because of national institutional changes. It would be important to agree together with the EC on a new template for these Working Arrangements with third countries, for which the principles should be the same, being well balanced and referring to the new priorities of the EUDA Regulation. The EMCDDA will propose to the Management Board for its next meeting a new approach for these Working Arrangements. The Agency will also explore with the EC ways for future technical cooperation and sources for funding, also in the context of the future EU Enlargement Policy. It is necessary to encourage countries to enter in a different relationship with the Agencies.

The EUDA Regulation created the legal possibility for the Agency to report data on drugs to the UN on behalf of the EU Member States, to avoid overlaps for NFPs which report for the time being both to the EMCDDA and the UN. The Agency will propose a possible approach at the Management Board meeting of July 2024. The reporting of the data is of the competence of the EU Member States to the UN, but the EMCDDA will explore ways to reduce the burden on the Members States.

The EMCDDA has a MoU with WHO North Europe, but it would be necessary to explore solutions to strengthen the partnership with WHO Geneva. Some MoUs with other international organisations will have to be updated and cooperation with other partner EU Agencies (Europol, Eurojust, ECDC) upscaled and accelerated.
Finally, two networks are potential key partners for the Agency, namely the European Crime Prevention Network (EUPCN) and the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS).

Ms Ferreira Borges, representative of WHO, thanked the Director for his work and important milestones achieved even in difficult period, and in particular for the cooperation between the EMCDDA and WHO in the area of prison settings, both in terms of health and security. Ms Ferreira Borges agreed that the lack of resources has

had an important impact on international cooperation, and appreciated the support from the EC for the EUDA Regulation. It will have an impact to avoid overlap in reporting and working with other UN platforms and with WHO, and increase international collaboration. Ms Ferreira Borges expressed her readiness to facilitate the dialogue with WHO Geneva, and appreciated the EMCDDA participation in the Forum on WHO global Forum on Alcohol, Drugs and Addictive Behaviours held in June 2023 in Geneva. WHO will take part in the European Conference on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies – Lisbon Addictions 2024.

10.2. Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Ecuador **EMCDDA/46/23**

The **Director** informed that the Working Arrangement with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador is still being negotiated. The final text will be forwarded to the EC for opinion.

10.3. Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Colombia **EMCDDA/47/23**

The **Director** announced that the EC adopted a favourable opinion on the Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Colombia on 7 December 2023. The opinion was circulated to the Management Board members as room document.

Decision: The Management Board took full note of and agreed with the Working Arrangement with the Ministry of Justice and Law of Colombia, and mandated the Director to sign such Working Arrangement on a date and place to be jointly decided.

10.4. Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Chile **EMCDDA/48/23**

The **Director** informed that the negotiated Working Arrangement has been submitted to the EC on 15 November 2023 for its formal opinion. He suggested that the Management Board could adopt the Working Arrangements with Ecuador and Chile by written procedure, subject to the positive opinions of the EC.

10.5. Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Montenegro **EMCDDA/54/23**

The **Director** informed that on 4 December 2023, the Mission of Montenegro to the EU officially transmitted a letter from the Minister of Health and the Minister of Internal Affairs of Montenegro requesting to negotiate a working arrangement with the EMCDDA in order to strengthen cooperation between the EMCDDA and the Montenegrin authorities. The EMCDDA has informed the EC about the request.

Decision: The Management Board mandated the Director to negotiate a Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Montenegro.

10.6. Extended EUDA Management Board meetings

The **Director** explained the idea of an annual extended Management Board meeting, that he has discussed already some time ago with the Deputy Director-General of DG HOME. The objective is to invite every year in June/July high-level official representatives from candidate countries and potential candidates, as well as from the third countries with whom the EMCDDA has Memoranda of Understanding or working arrangements, to join the Management Board members for a day of geo-strategic drug-related discussions. The first EUDA Management Board meeting and official launch of the Agency would include a first day for all institutional issues, while the second day would be dedicated to discussions with partner countries and make international cooperation more tangible. The Executive Committee welcomed this proposal.

Decision: The Management Board agreed to organise an annual extended Management Board meeting in June/July with high-level official representatives from candidate countries and potential candidates, as well as from the third countries with whom the EMCDDA has Memoranda of Understanding or Working Arrangements. The first EUDA Management Board meeting on 4–5 July 2024 will be an extended meeting.

11. Financial Regulation applicable to the EMCDDA:

11.1. Charter of the EMCDDA accounting officer **EMCDDA/49/23**

No comments were made.

Decision: The Management Board adopted the Charter of the EMCDDA accounting officer.

12. Performance:

12.1. State of implementation of the recommendations issued by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) **EMCDDA/50/23**

No comments were made.

12.2. EMCDDA Action Plan further to the 2023 IAS Audit on International cooperation in the EMCDDA **EMCDDA/51/23**

No comments were made.

Decision: The Management Board endorsed the EMCDDA Action Plan further to the 2023 IAS Audit on International cooperation in the EMCDDA.

13. Prevention and management of conflicts of interest:

13.1. Assessment of the implementation of the EMCDDA Policy for the prevention and management of conflicts of interest for Management Board members, substitutes and observers **EMCDDA/52/23**

The **Director** assessed that the declarations submitted by the new members of the Management Board until 4 December 2023 show no existing conflicts of interest.

The **Head of the Executive Office** drew the attention of the Management Board members to the fact that the European Parliament noted in its report on the 2021 discharge to the EMCDDA 'the Centre's reply to have published on its website all summaries of the CVs of its management board members and senior management staff; regrets, however, that a summary of only their current professional activities is available on the Centre's website; calls on the Centre to update their website as to include CVs listing the full professional background of its management board members and senior management staff.' The EMCDDA replied that the Management Board will address at the end of 2023 the terms of feasibility/implementation of the updating referred to above by taking into account, in particular, that the appointment of its members falls within the remit of the EU Member States.

In consultation with the EC and on the basis of the EC guidelines on this issue, the EMCDDA suggested to publish CVs of members, alternate members and observers of the Management Board on the basis of the templates used by colleague Agencies, from the Justice and Home Affairs cluster. The summary of the activities is up to the choice of each member by taking into account the most relevant professional experience linked to the role of the representative in the future EUDA Management Board. No private information is to be included. The picture is up to the member/alternate member/observer, although in general the pictures are published on the dedicated Management Board Website. Instead of containing a signature, the published CV will read 'Signed in original'. Indeed, the original CV properly signed will have to be sent to the EUDA Management Board Secretariat for storage in line with the EU data protection rules, for audit purposes.

Decision: The Management Board took note of the outcome of the assessment carried out by the EMCDDA Director that has revealed that for the moment there is no conflict of interest.

The Management agreed with the modalities proposed for updating the summaries of professional activities of members, alternate members and observers of the Management Board.

14. Any other business:

14.1. Lisbon Addictions Conference 2024 (Lisbon, 23–25 October 2024) **EMCDDA/53/23**

PT provided information about the fifth European Conference on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies – *Lisbon Addictions 2024*, which will take place from 23 to 25 October 2024, under the overarching theme 'Empowering the workforce of the future'. As in previous editions, the Conference will be organised by the Portuguese General Directorate for Intervention on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies (SICAD), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), the journal Addiction/Society for the Study of Addiction (Addiction/SSA), and the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors (ISAJE).

The deadline for submitting abstracts is 31 January 2024, and the registration fee for EMCDDA Management Board members wishing to participate in the Conference will be waived (one fee per Member State).

Mr Goulão thanked the EMCDDA for its excellent cooperation and support in shaping the *Lisbon Addictions 2024* programme, and for the continuous commitment to preparing next year's edition of this major event on addictions.

The Chair thanked the Director and the EMCDDA staff for the preparation of the meeting, and the Board members for their contributions. The Chair also expressed his thanks to the interpreters.

The next meeting will take place online on 4–5 July 2024.

Franz Pietsch
Chair of the Management Board

Annexes:
I List of participants
II List of decisions and conclusions
III List of action points

Copy: Members, substitutes and observers of the Management Board

ANNEX I

68th meeting of the EMCDDA Management Board

Lisbon, 7-8 December 2023

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Belgium	Mr Claude GILLARD
Bulgaria	Ms Tsveta RAYCHEVA
Czechia	Ms Katerina HORÁČKOVÁ
Germany	Mr Burkhard BLIENERT
	Mr Jörg PIETSCH
	Ms Marina HORN
Estonia	Ms Kristiin MIKKO
Ireland	Mr Jim WALSH
	Mr Eamon KEENAN
Greece	Mr Geranimos PAPANASTASATOS
Spain	Mr Joan R. VILLALBÍ HERETER
France	Ms Laura d'ARRIGO
Croatia	Mr Željko PETKOVIĆ
	Ms Sanja MIKULIĆ
Italy	Ms Elisabetta SIMEONI
Cyprus	Mr Christos MINA
Latvia	Mr Dzintars MOZGIS
Lithuania	Ms Gražina BELIAN
Luxembourg	Mr Xavier POOS
Hungary	Mr György SURJÁN
Malta	Mr Richard MUSCAT
	Ms Marilyn CLARK
The Netherlands	Mr Victor SANNES
	Mr Mathijs GEILENKIRCHEN
Austria	Mr Franz PIETSCH

	Ms Sabine GSAXNER
Poland	Ms Bogusława BUKOWSKA
Portugal	Mr João GOULÃO
	Mr Manuel CARDOSO
	Ms Sofia SANTOS
Romania	Mr Catalin NEGOI-NITĂ
Slovenia	Ms Vesna MARINKO
Slovakia	Ms Eva DEBNÁROVÁ
Finland	Ms Elina KOTOVIRTA
Sweden	Ms Kajsa MICKELSSON
Norway	Ms Hege Christina BREDESEN
	Mr Torbjørn BREKKE
Türkiye	Ms Duygu KARAASLAN
EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Mr Olivier ONIDI (DG HOME)
	Ms Alexandra ANTONIADIS (DG HOME)
	Mr Philippe ROUX (DG SANTE)
	Mr Francesco CANNONE (DG HOME)
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT	Ms Meni MALLIORI
SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE	Ms Catherine COMISKEY
REITOX	Ms Ioanna YIASEMI
WHO	Ms Carina FERREIRA BORGES
POMPIDOU GROUP OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE	Ms Florence MABILEAU
EMCDDA	Mr Alexis GOOSDEEL
	Mr Fabian PEREYRA
	Ms Monika BLUM

ANNEX II

LIST OF DECISIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Adoption of the agenda

EMCDDA/30/23 rev 2

The Management Board adopted the revised agenda of the meeting.

4. Preparation of the EMCDDA for the entry into force of the new Regulation on the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA)

4.3. Rules of procedure for the appointment of national representative laboratories to the European Union Drug Agency (EUDA) network of forensic and toxicological laboratories and terms of reference concerning the establishment and the operation of the EUDA network forensic and toxicological laboratories

EMCDDA/33/23
EMCDDA/34/23

The Management Board adopted the rules and procedures for the appointment of national representative laboratories to the EUDA network of forensic and toxicological laboratories, and the proposed application form.

The Management Board further adopted the terms of reference concerning the establishment and the operation of the EUDA network of forensic and toxicological laboratories.

8. Operational and financial programming

8.1. Reitox co-financing

EMCDDA/40/23

The Management Board endorsed the proposals from the working group to reinstate the appropriations for the annual Reitox co-financing to the level of 2013 in the EMCDDA budget for 2024 and preliminary draft budget for 2025. The amount of this reinstatement will consistently take into account the annual budget made available to the EMCDDA/EUDA, which relies and depends on the amount of the annual EU subsidy to the agency. During the 2024–2025 period the current 50/50% co-financing scheme will be maintained, without prejudice to its possible revision for 2026 onwards, as a result of the envisaged new 'Reitox Alliance' to be adopted by the EUDA Management Board in December 2025.

8.2. EMCDDA budget for 2024

EMCDDA/40/23

The Management Board adopted unanimously the EMCDDA budget for 2024.

8.2. EMCDDA Single Programming Document for 2024–26 and work programme for 2024

EMCDDA/41/23

The Management Board adopted unanimously the EMCDDA Single Programming Document for 2024–26 and work programme for 2024.

8.3. EMCDDA Preliminary draft budget for 2025

EMCDDA/42/23

The Management Board adopted the EMCDDA preliminary draft budget for 2025, with the abstention of the European Commission for institutional reasons.

8.4. EMCDDA Preliminary draft Single Programming Document for 2025–27 and work programme for 2025

EMCDDA/43/23

The Management Board adopted the EMCDDA Preliminary Single Programming Document for 2025–27 and draft work programme for 2025, with the abstention of the European Commission for institutional reasons.

9. Restricted session

9.1. Extension of the mandate of one Executive Committee member — EMCDDA/38/22

The Management Board unanimously renewed the mandate of Ms Elina Kotovirta, member for Finland on the EMCDDA Management Board, as member of the Executive Committee until the entry into application of the EUDA Regulation.

10. International cooperation

10.3. Working arrangement between the EMCDDA and Colombia — EMCDDA/47/23

The Management Board took full note of and agreed with the Working Arrangement with the Ministry of Justice and Law of Colombia, and mandated the Director to sign such Working Arrangement on a date and place to be jointly decided.

10.5. Working arrangement between the EMCDDA and Montenegro — EMCDDA/54/23

The Management Board mandated the Director to negotiate a Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Montenegro.

10.6. Extended EUDA Management Board meetings

The Management Board agreed to organise an annual extended Management Board meeting in June/July with high-level official representatives from candidate countries and potential candidates, as well as from the third countries with whom the EMCDDA has Memoranda of Understanding or Working Arrangements. The first EUDA Management Board meeting on 4–5 July 2024 will be an extended meeting.

11. Financial Regulation applicable to the EMCDDA

11.1. Charter of the Accounting Officer — EMCDDA/49/23

The Management Board adopted the Charter of the EMCDDA accounting officer.

12. Performance

12.2. EMCDDA Action Plan further to the 2023 IAS Audit on International cooperation in the EMCDDA — EMCDDA/51/23

The Management Board endorsed the EMCDDA Action Plan further to the 2023 IAS Audit on International cooperation in the EMCDDA.

13. Prevention and management of conflicts of interest

13.1. Assessment of the implementation of the EMCDDA Policy for the prevention and management of conflicts of interest for Management Board members, substitutes and observers — EMCDDA/52/23

The Management Board took note of the outcome of the assessment carried out by the EMCDDA Director that has revealed that for the moment there is no conflict of interest.

The Management agreed with the modalities proposed for updating the summaries of professional activities of members, alternate members and observers of the Management Board.

ANNEX III

LIST OF ACTION POINTS

Agenda point	Action to take	Responsable	Date
4.2.	Finalise draft rules of procedure EUDA Management Board	EMCDDA	MB meeting 4–5 July 2024
4.3.	Send request with application form to Management Board to nominate forensic and toxicological laboratories	EMCDDA	January 2024
4.4.	Update Executive Committee and Management Board on the EUDA branding project and corporate image	EMCDDA	By June 2024
8.3.	Send consultation draft SPD for 2024–26 to EC, EMCDDA Scientific Committee for consultation and EP, Council and Management Board members for information	EMCDDA	31 January 2024
10.2.	Send final Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Ecuador to the Management Board for adoption by written procedure, subject to the favourable opinion of the EC	EMCDDA	2024
10.3.	Sign the Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Colombia	EMCDDA	2024
10.4.	Send final Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Chile to the Management Board for adoption by written procedure, subject to the favourable opinion of the EC	EMCDDA	2024
10.5.	Negotiate a Working Arrangement between the EMCDDA and Montenegro	EMCDDA	2024
10.6.	Organise an extended constituent EUDA Management Board meeting on 4–5 July 2024	EMCDDA	4–5 July 2024
13.1.	Request Management Board members, substitute members and observers to update their summaries of professional activity	EMCDDA	January 2024