



# NATIONAL DRUG OBSERVATORIES (NDO)

## Generating empirical evidence to design better policies

**T**his line of action aims to influence the basis of drug policy reforms. The dynamics of drug markets, which are constantly changing, translate into a greater capacity for damage to public health and the emergence of new driving forces of inequality and social exclusion, which particularly affect women and other vulnerable groups, limiting the effectiveness of current policies. The need for updated scientific evidence is wide-

ly acknowledged by countries in the region and international organisations as crucial. Despite some progress, research and information mechanisms are still weak in most Latin America and Caribbean countries. The Programme supports efforts to advance in strengthening drug research systems in a context of great disparity and institutional instability.

### 2 implementing PARTNERS:

#### FIIAPP

(International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies)

#### EUDA

(European Union Drugs Agency)



## WHAT STRATEGY DO WE FOLLOW

### REGIONAL SCHEME

- ▶ Three Working Groups were formed (28 countries are participating) to generate reflection, through:
  - Webinars.
  - Conceptual and methodological guides.
  - Exchange of experiences.
- ▶ Coordination with the Inter-American Drug Observatory (OID) of the Inter-American Commission for the Control of Drug Abuse (CICAD-OAS).

### MULTI-COUNTRY AND NATIONAL APPROACH

- ▶ 22 national actions to strengthen NDOs have been launched, with planned goals and support routes.



# IN WHICH AREAS DO WE WORK



## STRENGTHENING OF NATIONAL SYSTEMS AND REGIONAL NETWORKS FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON DRUGS.

COPOLAD III has defined a roadmap for strengthening drug research systems that includes, as main actions:

- ▶ Technical support for the preparation of mapping of financial, human and institutional resources FOR research on drugs, which raises the profile of the different resources available in the countries.

- ▶ Promotion of National Agendas for Scientific Research on Drugs. These constitute the main instrument for systematising research priorities and represent an opportunity to involve and align all interested actors.
- ▶ Technical advice for the incorporation of Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs), to provide support to NDOs in the development of research and in making decisions on programmes.

Focusing on the REGION, four Conceptual and Methodological Guides, have

been produced, aimed at strengthening NDOs' research capabilities:

- a. Guide to mapping drug research resources and establishing scientific advisory committees.
- b. Guide to developing national research agendas, with a gender focus.
- c. Guide to incorporating the rights-based approach into drug information and research systems.



## ALIGNED with REGIONAL research POLICIES

**Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2021-2025, OAS/CICAD.**

Pillar 4 on Research, Information, Monitoring and Evaluation, Objective 1: "Establish or strengthen national observatories on drugs, or similar technical offices, strengthening national drug information systems, and foster scientific research to generate, collect, organise, analyse and disseminate information to inform the development and implementation of evidence-based drug policies and strategies."

**EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025, European Council.**

Strategic priority 10: "Building synergies to provide [countries] with the comprehensive research evidence base and foresight capacities necessary to enable a more effective., innovative and agile approach to the growing complexity of the drugs phenomenon."

d. Guide to incorporating the gender perspective into drug information and research systems.

- ▶ In parallel, and taking these products as a reference, a training programme was promoted based on webinars and bilateral technical assistance with 11 countries.
- ▶ Research resource mappings on drugs were prepared for eight countries (Brazil, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and Venezuela). During 2024 and 2025, efforts will focus on the final preparation of strategic agendas for drug research and the setting up of scientific advisory committees in countries where it is institutionally viable to move in that direction.



## MAINSTREAMING THE GENDER APPROACH IN THE OBSERVATORIES

The incorporation of the gender and rights-based approach in NDOs is key to making visible the gaps and barriers to access to prevention and comprehensive care services associated with gender. But it is also key to identifying the specific vulnerabilities suffered by

women, the LGBTQ+ population and other particularly vulnerable groups in society in the various parts of the consumption, trafficking and criminal justice chains. The intersection approach allows us to identify complex situations in which gender, race, ethnicity, social class, migrant status and other drug-related factors intersect and interact with one another.

At the NATIONAL level, the incorporation of the gender perspective was promoted in eight NDOs, through research protocols, improvement of questionnaires and review of gender categories for data registration and analysis:

- ▶ ARGENTINA: Progress was made in incorporating the gender approach in a qualitative study on people who attend Community Living Centres (CCC) of the SEDRONAR federal network, with specific approaches to women and LGBTQ+ people. The study analyses the barriers to access and the reconciliation of treatment with childcare responsibilities for women and members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- ▶ CHILE: A process of conceptual unification of generic sex categories is being carried out for the data registration sources of the National Service for the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Drug Use (SENDA). In

addition, the gender approach was included in a study to characterise the population that consumes synthetic drugs in the metropolitan region of Santiago.

- ▶ COSTA RICA: The design of a study on the prevalence of drug consumption in women in prison was supported, with a gender-based approach, and support will also be provided for the design of a survey on the experiences of women once they are released from prison.
- ▶ ECUADOR: The quick survey of drug use by university students was reviewed with a gender focus, as regards both the questionnaire and the calendar and time frames, with support from the household survey.
- ▶ JAMAICA It has been agreed with the National Council on Drug Abuse to incorporate gender into the methodological design of two studies on drug consumption in two groups: a) pregnant adolescents; and b) persons with disabilities.
- ▶ MEXICO: The Mexican Observatory of Mental Health and Drug Use was supported by means of a review with a gender perspective of the National Mental Health and Addictions Survey and the field survey form, as well as the data analysis plan.



## ALIGNED with GLOBAL POLICIES

General Assembly resolution S-30-1 on drugs - UNGASS, 2016  
*"Our Joint Commitment to Effectively Addressing and Countering the World Drug Problem"*

- ▶ Operational recommendations on cross-cutting issues: drugs and human rights, youth, children, women and communities:
  - a) Enhance the knowledge of policymakers and the capacity, as appropriate, of relevant national authorities on various aspects of the world drug problem in order to ensure that national drug policies, as part of a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach, fully respect all human rights [...].
  - g) Mainstream a gender perspective into and ensure the involvement of women in all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of drug policies and programmes, develop and disseminate gender-sensitive and age-appropriate measures that take into account the specific needs and circumstances faced by women and girls with regard to the world drug problem [...].

▶ SURINAME: Technical assistance was provided to the National Anti-Drug Council to improve a questionnaire on drug use for the LGBTQ+ population with a gender perspective.

▶ VENEZUELA The methodological design of a study of patients admitted to the emergency room due to drug use is being reviewed with a gender perspective.



## SUPPORT FOR DRUG POLICY MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS

The programme supports countries in undertaking impact assessments of drug policies in line with the postulates of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. In **REGIONAL terms**, the following progress has been achieved:

▶ Preparation of the Guide to Evaluative Analysis of drug policies with a gender and human rights-based approach. The guide consolidates contributions from the UN and civil society networks (the Global Drug Policy Consortium and the Ibero-American Network of NGOs that Work on Drugs and Addictions). The Guide includes several analysis tools:

- List of evaluative questions for the eight drug policy areas.

- Complete set of indicators and verification sources.

▶ The aim is to address, in two countries, a process of pilot evaluation of their policies. To this end, several policy areas have been identified that require new angles and analysis criteria:

- Treatment, prevention of consumption and harm reduction (Costa Rica).
- Health strategies, criminal justice and market regulation (Uruguay).

▶ The countries involved intend to use the evaluation exercise to make visible the traditionally unknown effects of drug policies on human rights, in order to provide evidence on which to base future political reforms. For example, Uruguay intends to use the findings of its evaluative analysis in the cannabis policy review process scheduled for 2024.

In strategic terms, the programme supports the **REGIONAL evaluation of CANNABIS policies**:

▶ Due to the dynamism of recent years, work is being done to update the regional report "Monitoring and evaluating changes in cannabis policies: insights from the Americas", prepared in 2020 by the EUDA.

▶ In addition, a regional exchange has been promoted at a technical level, on the occasion of two seminars in Montevideo (2023) and Kingston (February 2024), in which actors from different countries in the region participated to share policy models, lessons learnt from more advanced countries (Uruguay and Jamaica) and the findings of the available studies.

In addition, the EUDA is also helping to generate **NATIONAL results** in the field of cannabis:

▶ URUGUAY: A technical dialogue on cannabis policies is being promoted with regulatory authorities, security forces, private companies and NGOs. In this context, a roadmap has been agreed to support the Uruguayan NDO by advising on the conceptual and methodological design of the second evaluation of Uruguayan Law 19172 on the Regulation of the Cannabis Market.



## DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS (EWS)

The EUDA works within a framework of coordination and complementarity with the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID-CICAD) and the Global SMART Programme of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). In this



**The program accompanies efforts to strengthen drug research systems that provide strategic information for a comprehensive response to existing challenges.**

context, we have contributed to the following **REGIONAL** advances:

▶ The added value of the programme consists in providing Latin American and Caribbean countries with training in complementary topics to the training offered by OID-CICAD, which are in demand in the region. Efforts have been focused on:

- New data collection methods (wastewater analysis and web surveys).
- New psychoactive substances.
- European EWS model (legal and institutional framework, expert networks, information exchange mechanisms).
- Risk communication.

▶ The EUDA is using the EWS Implementation Manual (COPOLAD II). In addition, EUDA has generated, translated and adapted EWS training material, which has been made available to the countries of the region through the Cumulus digital platform.

▶ It promotes a regional diagnosis on EWS, based on the completion of questionnaires by eight countries.

▶ A mapping of forensic capabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean is promoted, in coordination with the Dutch Police and the CHEM-TEC project, funded by the EU. Its purpose is to identify existing capabilities in the face of the challenge posed by the emergence of new

chemical concealment techniques for drugs.

From a **NATIONAL** perspective, the programme is accompanying several countries in the process of launching their EWS:

▶ JAMAICA On the occasion of the launch of the EWS (February 2024), EUDA has supported the training of Jamaican experts in new psychoactive substances, new consumption practices and the European EWS model. A roadmap is being discussed to extend support during 2024.

▶ PERU: Within the framework of the bilateral cooperation agreement, EUDA is exploring a technical assistance roadmap for the EWS. Furthermore, the Agirre Lehendakari Centre is supporting the country in designing a risk analysis and early warning methodology aimed at preventing and/or reducing the possible negative impact of drug policies on the human rights of vulnerable populations (with a pilot project in Ucayali).



## BI-REGIONAL COORDINATION AND PROJECTION OF THE EUDA IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

▶ Bi-regional coordination has been intensified between the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID-CICAD) and the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA):

• A dynamic of coordination based on periodic meetings and the joint organisation of seminars to generate synergies has been strengthened.

• The seminars in Montevideo (2023) and Kingston (February 2024) have also operated as bi-regional exchange spaces due to the participation of European actors.

• In addition, one meeting of a LAC NDO was co-organised in Europe (Lisbon, May 2023). Subsequently, the NDOs were invited to participate in the annual meeting of the European Network of Observatories (Reitox), and two study visits were carried out to observe good practices in Portugal (mobile drug use rooms and scientific police laboratory).

▶ In short, the programme contributes to consolidating greater dialogue and a relationship-based agenda of the EUDA with LAC. EUDA and CICAD have a memorandum of understanding (2000), as well as a joint work programme 2020-24. In 2023, EMCDDA signed the first bilateral working arrangement with a country in the region (Peru), while also talking with Ecuador and Colombia. These alliances generate conditions to provide sustainability to bi-regional technical cooperation efforts on NDOs in the future.



## INTERVIEWS

[National Drug Observatories: COPOLAD III approach](#)

[Interview with Alexis Goodsel, EMCDDA Director](#)





## PUBLICATIONS

[Guide to identifying resources for NDOs' research](#)

[Guide to the development of national research agendas.](#)

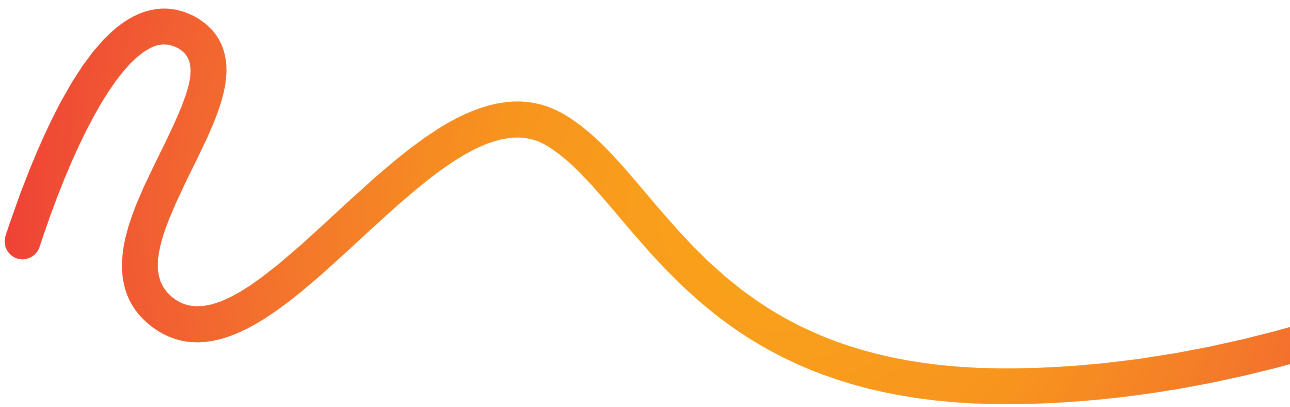
[Guidelines for integrating the gender perspective in the NDOs' information systems](#)

[Incorporation of the Differential Approach to Rights in Information and Research Systems](#)



## MEETINGS

[Meeting of NDOs in Lisbon \(2023\)](#)



COPOLAD III is a consortium formed by:



Collaborating partners:

