



# DRUG POLICIES WITH AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH:

## A commitment to improve their effectiveness and sustainability

**D**rug-related issues encompass a series of increasingly complex phenomena throughout the entire chain, from illegal crops, through the appearance of new drugs and psychoactive substances such as synthetic opioids and the dynamics of the money laundering architecture that sustains drug trafficking, to the effects of problematic drug use and problems of criminal justice, imprisonment and reintegration processes. In this context, the formulation of effective and sustainable drug policies must be based on knowledge. However, having empirical evidence has proven to be a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, for the design and

implementation of policies. Innovation has been shown to act as a catalyst for organising multi-level and multi-actor mechanisms that respond to the interests and needs of all the actors involved. Regional programmes such as COPOLAD III provide a favourable space for the generation of knowledge, by allowing a wide range of forms of innovation with different degrees of experimentation. Specifically, the programme promotes studies with innovative approaches, the exchange of experiences and study visits, pilot schemes at national and regional level (with a view to scaling), territorial social innovation laboratories (with experimentation portfolios, which in-

clude innovation prototypes), and a multi-country learning community.

#### 4 implementing PARTNERS:

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

**GIZ** (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH, the main German development agency)

**IILA** (Italian Latin American Institute)

**EUDA** (European Union Drugs Agency)

#### TECHNICAL SUPPORT:

**ALC** (Agirre Lehendakaria Center)





# WHAT STRATEGY DO WE FOLLOW

## CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES

- ▶ Mainstreaming of innovation in thematic lines, based on different plays and forms of innovation.

## COMBINATION OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF INNOVATION

### 1) Studies with an innovative approach

- Carrying out studies, reports and diagnoses aimed at generating new empirical evidence of effects and/or proposing new approaches to addressing drug problems.

### 2) Exchange of experiences and study visits

- Exchange between peers through webinars, regional meetings and forums and visits between countries.
- Facilitation of regional working groups.

### 3) Pilot actions aimed at scaling

- Design and implementation of pilot actions to test adapted prototypes with the aim of institutionalisation and scaling up in public policies.
- Coordination at the national and regional levels.

### 4) Social innovation laboratories

- Iterative form of innovation based on providing local learning infrastructures and ecosystems to try out new comprehensive responses to the challenges identified.
- The generation of local capacities for mapping, listening, collective interpretation and co-creation of prototypes is seen as the main desired outcome.

### 5) Learning communities

- Facilitation of a multi-country learning community among the five social innovation laboratories.

## MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH

- ▶ The programme seeks to influence four levels, which are sometimes interconnected:

- I) community mechanisms;
- II) public programmes and/or services;
- III) national scaling (regulation and/or state institutions);
- IV) regional escalation (protocols and/or standards at the LAC level).



## ALIGNED with REGIONAL POLICIES on innovation

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

Pillar 1 on Institutional strengthening; Priority action 2.4: "Engage private sector entities to develop innovative approaches to implementation of drug policy, including the exchange of information on emerging substances and new drug trafficking modalities that may affect the private sector, and best practices for denying criminals access to the private sector platforms and technologies that facilitate international trade."

### EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025 - European Council.

Pillar 5 on Research, Innovation and Foresight; Strategic priority 10: "Building synergies to provide the EU and its Member States 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, and to increase the preparedness of the EU and its Member States to respond to future challenges and crises."



# IN WHICH AREAS DO WE WORK



## PREPARATION AND DISSEMINATION OF STUDIES WITH AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

From a **REGIONAL and/or NATIONAL** perspective, COPOLAD III has promoted the preparation of reports, diagnoses and studies, with innovative themes and/or approaches:

### ▶ **Women and Drugs**

In 2022, at the request of the CELAC-EU Drug Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism, we updated "Women and Drug Policies: Situation in LAC, progress and priorities", to incorporate gender conditions and the effects of COVID. The report was presented at the High Level Meeting of the Mechanism (Asunción, 2022).

### ▶ **Strengthening the gender approach in the design of studies on addictions**

In six countries in the region (Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Venezuela and Jamaica).

### ▶ **Cannabis policies**

The regional report "*Monitoring and evaluating changes in cannabis policies: insights from the Americas*" (EUDA, 2020), is being updated in order to incorporate new developments in a very dynamic context of political initiatives.

### ▶ **Link between human and drug trafficking**

The programme has supported the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors (AIAMP) in carrying out a diagnosis of the link between drug trafficking and human trafficking, to generate new knowledge about the discrimination suffered by women involved in drug trafficking who are conditioned by or subjected to hu-

man trafficking circuits. The diagnosis has been key to developing regional guidelines.

### ▶ **Operation of undercover agents**

The AIAMP has also been supported in a regulatory diagnosis of undercover agents in transnational investigations into drug trafficking, at the level of international law and national regulations. The diagnosis is aimed at overcoming legal barriers and identifying operational needs to develop a regional protocol on the matter.

### ▶ **Penal problems arising from micro-trafficking crimes**

The Conference of Ministers of Justice of Ibero-America (COMJIB) has been supported in carrying out a diagnosis of the legal framework to identify regional problems in criminal justice and prison policy relating to micro-drug trafficking crimes.

### ▶ **New cocaine concealment practices**

The EUDA has produced a report on forensic capabilities, which describes recent cocaine concealment methods and associated illicit laboratories that have been found in Europe. A meeting of experts on chemical concealment of cocaine was organised for this purpose, in coordination with the Dutch police and the EU-funded CHEMTEC project.

### ▶ **AD in non-traditional contexts**

The GIZ has promoted a Study on *Innovative Approaches to Comprehensive Sustainable Alternative Development (AD) in "non-traditional" contexts*: a) urban contexts; b) vulnerable border areas; c) indigenous territories; and d) integration of traditional growers into the legal cannabis and industrial hemp chains.



## EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND STUDY VISITS

Through a broad array of interventions, COPOLAD III has promoted spaces for reflection and exchange of experiences in the following areas" (see Illustration 1):

This exchange activity has generated **peer-to-peer innovation processes at the NATIONAL level**:

▶ **SPAIN and COLOMBIA:** The participation of the Catalan institution Metzneres in the COPOLAD III exchange forums and the subsequent study visit of a delegation of the Colombian MJD to Catalonia (May 2024) has stimulated Colombian interest in innovative harm reduction practices (e.g. supervised consumption rooms and women's shelter environments). These practices have enriched the national risk and harm reduction policy, in particular, the design and promotion of a network of community harm reduction systems in five cities with a high incidence of drug injection.

▶ **PORTUGAL and TRINIDAD & TOBAGO:** For its part, the participation of the Trinidadian delegation in the Working Group on Penal Alternatives led to knowledge of the Portuguese model of decriminalisation based on the Drug Dependency Deterrent Commissions. This exchange has been key to supporting Trinidad's internal reflection process in the face of increasing overcrowding of its prisons due to minor crimes linked to cannabis. Following this exchange, Trinidad & Tobago is designing a penal alternative policy.

▶ **AD WORKING GROUP and ECUADOR:** The participation of the Min-

TABLE 1: Exchange of experiences promoted by COPOLAD III

THEMATIC LINES	EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES
<b>Prevention and harm reduction-programmes and services and comprehensive care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Institutional prevention and harm reduction programmes.</li> <li>● Experiences of civil society with the incorporation of the gender approach in care.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention and harm reduction programmes and services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Socio-labour inclusion of persons deprived of liberty in connection with drug-related crimes.</li> <li>● Social integration for persons in recovery.</li> <li>● Community treatment for women victims of micro-trafficking.</li> </ul>
<b>Regionalisation</b>	Experiences around seven axes of analysis (drugs and migration, street life, care services, gender and intercultural, social and/or economic inclusion, comprehensive interventions in regions, and regional networks of socio-health services).
<b>Comprehensive and Sustainable Alternative Development (AD)</b>	Public AD programmes and initiatives managed by civil society on gender, intercultural aspects, territory and peace.
<b>Proportionality and alternative penal approaches</b>	Specialised penal defence protocols with a gender focus, affirmative actions for female heads of household in matters of criminal and prison policy, restorative justice, decriminalisation and deterrence of consumption and models for shifting towards non-penal mechanisms.
<b>Cannabis policies</b>	Experience from Uruguay and Jamaica.
<b>Social reuse of confiscated assets.</b>	Experiences of the Libera Network (Italy) and the National Drug Plan (Spain).

istry of Public Health (MSP) in the programme exchanges has served to open the work on AD to the urban area and to the participation of civil society. As a result, the MSP has established a collaboration with PREVENSD, a civil society organisation, to formulate the pilot project "Sin Presión, hay Diversión" ("Without Pressure, there is Fun") in the city of Quito. The project is aimed at preventing and reducing the demand for drugs by adolescents and young people from the city centre integrated into programmes at the Cumandá Urban Park. The intention, guided by an educational and communicational approach, is to install social laboratories and a media lab, as well as a programme of financial education.

► URUGUAY, COLOMBIA and CHILE: A fourth case is due to the study visits carried out by SENDA (Chile) to Uruguay and Colombia to learn

about advanced experiences of community treatment, which have been useful for designing the territorialisation model that SENDA is promoting in its new Action Plan.



### PROMOTION OF PILOT SCHEMES FOR PUBLIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

In this case, the innovation consists in transferring learning from a pilot scheme to the formulation of policies. COPOLAD III contributes to the design and implementation of **pilot schemes that interconnect the REGIONAL and/or MULTI-COUNTRY level with the NATIONAL level** of drug policies, in several thematic lines of intervention:

**(1) Evaluation of drug policies from human rights perspectives:** Preparation of the *Guide to Evaluative Analy-*

*sis of drug policies with a gender and human rights-based approach* (pending approval). We plan to undertake pilot evaluation exercises of a selected set of policies in two countries:

- COSTA RICA: Evaluation of treatment, prevention and harm reduction.
- URUGUAY: Evaluation of health strategies, criminalisation and market regulation.

The countries involved intend to use the evaluation exercise to shine a spotlight on the traditionally unknown effects of drug policies on human rights, in order to provide evidence on which to base future political reforms.

**(2) Territorialisation programmes:** Projects are promoted in 12 countries in the region, with differentiated objectives and scopes. In some countries (Belize, Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay),

the emphasis is on strengthening public policy territorialisation processes, through guides, protocols and proposals for intervention with socially vulnerable populations.

In other countries, support is provided for community development proposals, either aimed at the population in general (Bahamas, Brazil, Colombia, Jamaica and Peru) or specifically at groups of young people and adolescents (Bahamas, Brazil), migrant population (Trinidad and Tobago), women (Dominican Republic) or people in prison (Suriname).

**(3) Link between human and drug trafficking:** The programme provides technical assistance to the AIAMP in preparing the *Regional Guidelines for incorporating the gender approach in the linkage between human and drug trafficking*. The roadmap includes pilot schemes in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, countries in which training of civil servants in the prosecutors' offices is planned.

**(4) Proportionality and penal alternatives:** It is planned to promote a national pilot scheme of the *Regional Specialised Defence Protocol for Women in Conflict with the Law by the Drug Crime Commission*, which is being prepared within the framework of the Inter-American Association of Public Defenders (AIDEF):

▶ **PARAGUAY:** Support to the National Anti-Drug Secretariat (SENDA) and the Ministry of Public Defence (MDP) in the design of criminal defence strategies with a gender focus. In particular, a "Defence Proto-

col for Women in conflict with the law due to the commission of drug crimes" is being developed, linked to the regional standards that are being developed in AIDEF.



## PROMOTION OF SOCIAL INNOVATION LABORATORIES

This is the programme's most advanced and systematic commitment to innovation. Based on the knowledge accumulated by the Agirre Lehendakaria Centre (ALC), the objective of the laboratories is the generation of new social innovation infrastructures, connecting public policies and community initiatives. They adopt an **iterative approach to social innovation**, based on the permanent coordination of five elements or vectors:

**1. Mapping** of the ecosystem (identification of the most important actors and initiatives, as well as potential interconnections).

**2. Listening** to social perceptions of the problems to be addressed (identification of actors' patterns of perception and of the explicit and implicit narratives prevailing on the ground).

**3. Collective interpretation** (validation of expert and popular knowledge, and mutual recognition of agendas).

**4. Collaborative creation** of prototypes (joint design of the prototypes in dialogue with perceptions and narratives, coordinating collaboration agreements among actors).

## 5. Management of the experimentation portfolio

At the **NATIONAL** level, COPOLAD III promotes **five social innovation laboratories**, aimed at improving public services and community initiatives related to prevention and damage reduction (Chile and Colombia), as well as promoting an Early Warning System in the Amazon (Peru) and a Comprehensive Sustainable Alternative Development (AD) scheme in an urban context (Uruguay).

▶ **CHILE:** The programme supports the National Service for the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Drug and Alcohol Consumption (SENDA) in launching a social innovation laboratory in Talca (Maule Region) to improve the state response to drug consumption of minors in state care (children, adolescents and young people at risk). A mapping of local, regional and national agents and initiatives was prepared, identifying the factors which condition care and the potential areas of inter-institutional coordination, in order to create more effective care systems. Of an initial portfolio of 24 prototypes, five have been prioritised in the short term, aimed both at classifying public services and at institutionalising learning in SENDA (see Figure 2). For more information, please consult the visual map of the laboratory.

▶ **COLOMBIA:** Unlike Chile, the Colombian laboratory is geared mainly to community and small and medium-scale mechanisms. We collaborate with the Ministry of Justice and



**The innovation approach helps provide comprehensive responses to the challenges faced by drug policies.**

Law (MJD) and the “ Living” association in designing and launching two social innovation laboratories in Santander de Quilichao (Porvenir neighbourhood) and Cali (Sucre neighbourhood). The aim is to reach young people in situations of high vulnerability to micro-trafficking and problematic drug use. The actor mapping and listening phase had the active participation of women leaders, women’s groups focused on food production, young people, and relevant neighbourhood initiatives. Currently, the laboratory’s experimentation portfolio is being designed based on 15 initiatives in each location, including a “House of Culture” with assets seized from drug traffickers, “community connectors” (kind of liaison officers), community harm reduction mechanisms, gastronomic micro-enterprises managed by women, recipe books, a dealers’ cooperative and a

travelling museum with photovoice techniques (promoted by the MJD), among others. The prototypes, promoted by different agents in the territory, are connected to existing initiatives. For more information, please consult the visual map of the laboratory.

► **PERU:** We support the National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs (DEVIDA), the governing drug policy body in Peru, in promoting a space for advanced experimentation consisting of an Early Warning System to protect native communities in territories affected by the invasion of settlers in illicit businesses (illegal logging and coca cultivation) in the Flor de Ucajali native community (Peruvian Amazon). We work in close coordination with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (MinJUS) and the Ombudsman’s

Office. Four blocks of innovation prototypes have been identified, which coordinate public services (anticipatory system of alert indicators, patrolling, connectivity,) with community actions (indigenous surveillance and AD initiatives) as well as involving institutionalisation and escalation to national level (through the MinJUS and the Ombudsman’s Office). The main innovation commitment lies in creating inter-institutional coordination between the different existing monitoring systems, including the Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (MinJUS), environmental oversight and official monitoring of park rangers in protected areas (Ministry of the Environment) and community indigenous surveillance systems, among others (see Figure 2). For more information, please consult the visual map of the laboratory.

## EXPERIMENTATION PORTFOLIOS

### COMMUNITY MECHANISMS AND SMES

### CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

### INSTITUTIONALISATION AND SCALING

**CHILE - TALCA**  
*(prioritised portfolio)*

- **Family residences for mental health support** for adolescents (with a gender focus)
- **Youth Portfolio** (intervention tools for comprehensive care of young people: reintegration and employment)

- System of **digital geolocation of existing resources** at various levels (with a view to coordination)
- **Laboratory network** at the national level
- **Multi-level learning community** in SENDA for social innovation

**COLOMBIA - CALI AND SANTANDER DE CHILICAO**  
*(prioritised portfolio)*

- **“House of culture”** with seized assets
- Role of **community connectors**
- Community **damage reduction** mechanisms
- **Gastronomic initiatives** of women (...)

**PERÚ - UYACALI**  
*(in final identification phase)*

- **Anticipatory system** of key indicators in the territory to anticipate alerts of violation of rights (data catalogue) – Ombudsman’s Office
- **Rapid response** (satellite communication, interconnectivity and patrolling)

**URUGUAY - MONTEVIDEO**  
*(pending prioritisation)*

- **Inter-agency coordination** of official monitoring systems and indigenous surveillance practices (through a coordination subgroup in the Defender Protection Mechanism of the MinJUS)
- **Connection of AD initiatives with the EWS - DEVIDA**

FIGURE 2: Social innovation laboratories



► **URUGUAY:** The National Drug Board (JND) is supported in its promotion of a space for experimentation on Comprehensive Sustainable Alternative Development (AD) in an urban context. The focus is on women in vulnerable situations with minors in their care and linked to the drug production and micro-trafficking chain. The laboratory is in the initial phase of listening and mapping key agents and initiatives in the Metropolitan Region of Montevideo from the perspective of penal alternatives or care. For more information, please consult the visual map of the laboratory.

### FACILITATION OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY OF SOCIAL INNOVATION LABORATORIES

At the **MULTI-COUNTRY** level, ALC promotes a learning community to exchange advances and learnings derived from innovation laboratories.

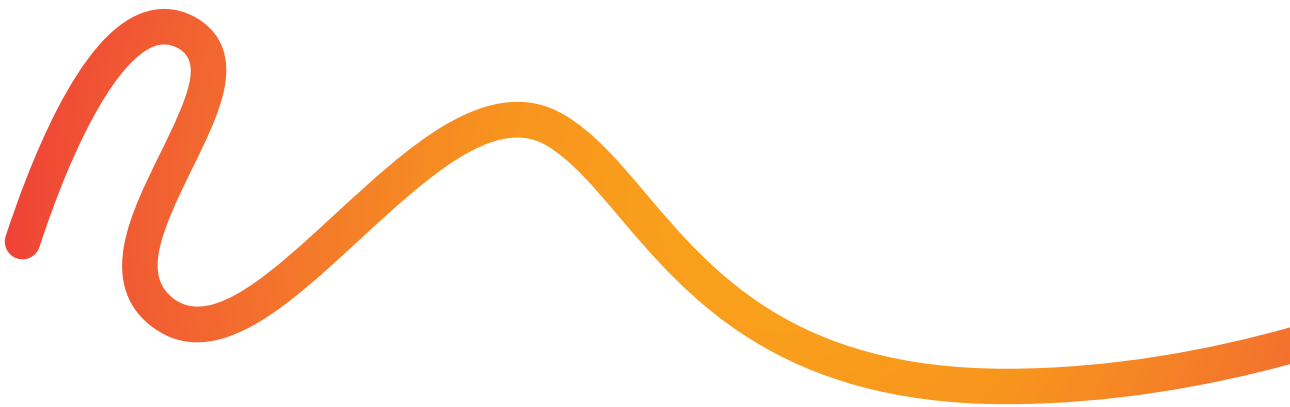
► Social innovation tools have been disseminated, through an open invitation to several countries (based on eight virtual sessions, on a monthly basis, with the participation of representatives of National Drug Agencies, technical teams and community agents).

► It has been decided to concentrate the Learning Community on the five countries that promote laboratories in their territories, through dialogue sessions aimed at discussing the challenges identified in common. For example, Colombia and Peru have identified overcoming the digital divide as a common challenge. On the other hand, Chile and Colombia want to delve deeper into the challenge of providing sustainability to the laboratory, as well as transferring practical knowledge of social innovation to local teams.



### VIDEO

[Innovation laboratories in drug policies](#)



COPOLAD III is a consortium formed by:



Collaborating partners:

