

Early Warning Systems on drugs: Challenges and Innovations for an Effective Response

Mexico City
From 11-12 September 2025







Óscar Duarte
Senior Officer of
International Relations
and Cooperation Unit

COPOLAD III es un consorcio formado por:



Socios colaboradores:



Instituto para os Comportamentos Aditivos e as Dependências, I.P.
Institute on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies, P.I.
Tel: +351 211 119 000 | E-mail: icad@icad.min-saude.pt
www.icad.pt    

The EU EWS Network



Collaboration with other agencies



Objectives of the National Early Warning System



Monitoring and Detection

- Identify and rapidly track the appearance of new psychoactive substances on the market, both nationally and internationally.

Analysis and Evaluation

- Gather information on the chemical composition, effects, abuse potential, health risks and social impact of these substances.



Information Sharing

- Facilitate the exchange of data between health agencies, public security, forensic laboratories, toxicology centers and other relevant entities.

Objectives of the National Early Warning System



Rapid Response

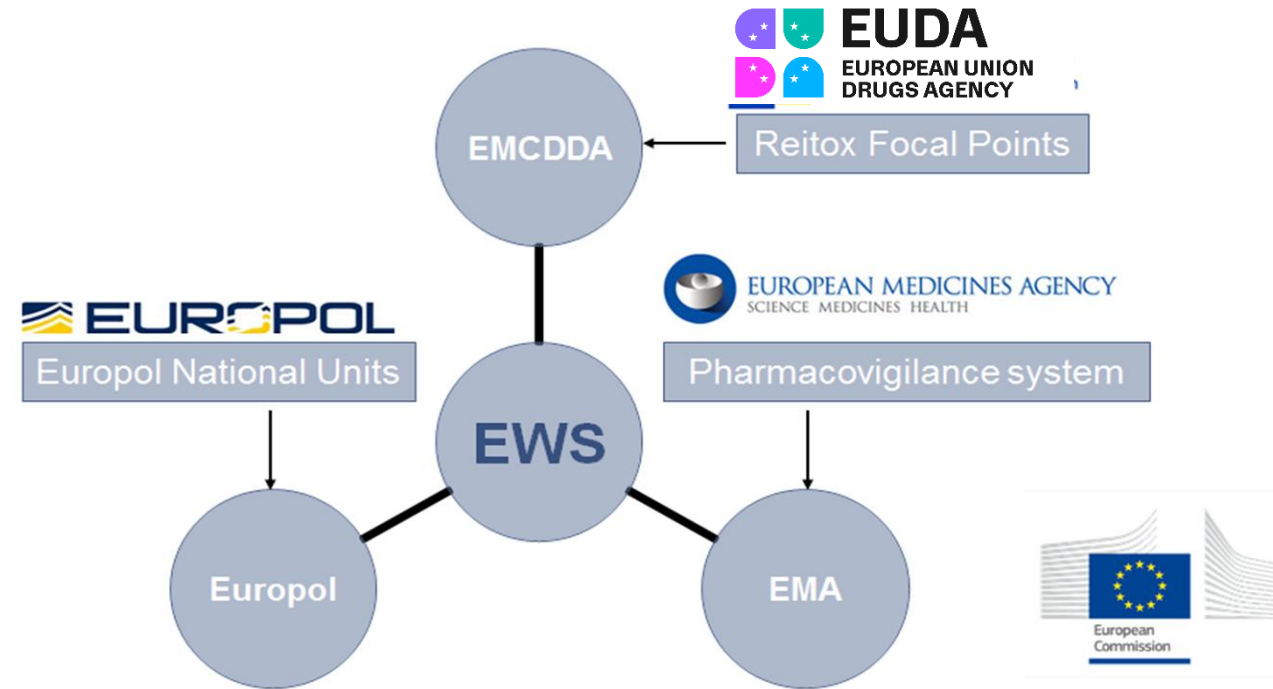
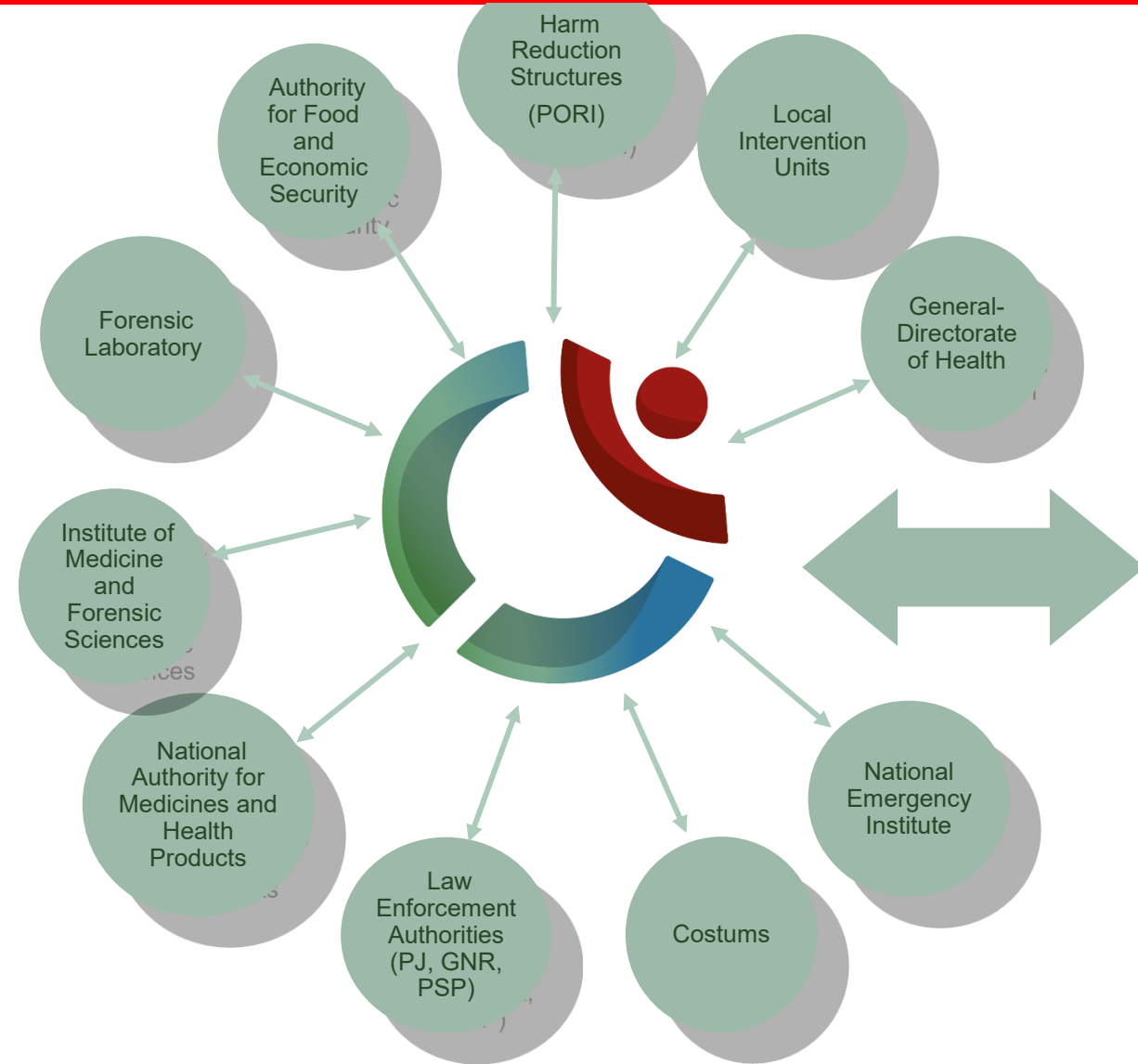
- Propose control and regulatory measures, population alerts, awareness campaigns and public health interventions.

International Cooperation:

- Working in collaboration with other countries and international organisations, such as the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).



NATIONAL ALERT MECHANISM OF NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES (NPS)



EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Different types of studies developed

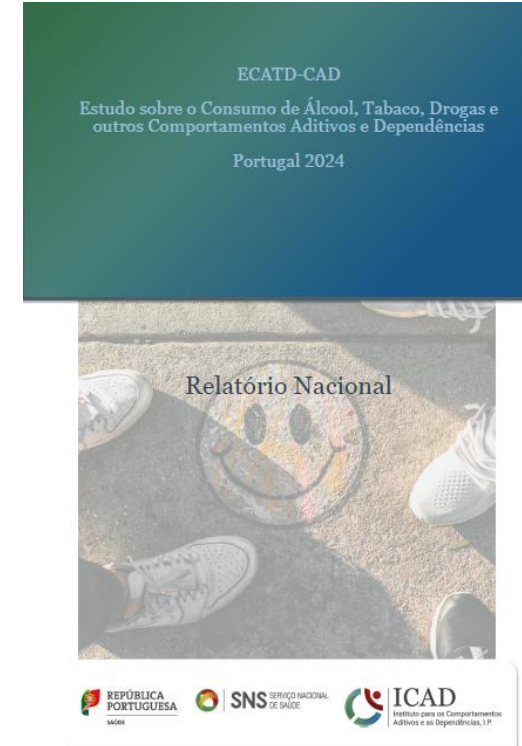


European Web Survey on Drugs - Portugal 2021

Online self-completion survey, an initiative of the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction, aimed at drug users aged 18 or over, applied between March and May 2021, in around 30 European countries, including Portugal, through SICAD - General-Directorate for Intervention on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies.

Its objective is to deepen the knowledge about the patterns of use of illicit drugs, aiming at the better adequacy of public policies.

155 New Psychoactive Substances users participated in this survey in Portugal. It is important to notice that, although this sample contributes to further the knowledge on NPS patterns of consumption in Portugal, the results must be regarded on the basis of the sample dimension.



Example of alert



ALERTA

LISBOA, FEVEREIRO 2024

Pastilha vendida como MDMA (ecstasy)

Contém apenas **3-MMC**
3-metilmetcatinona



Nos últimos meses testámos 6 pastilhas
"Bitcoin" cor-de-rosa com a forma de
pentágono. Todas as pastilhas foram vendidas como MDMA (ecstasy)

O resultado foi sempre **3-MMC**

O 3-MMC é uma substância estimulante com efeitos e riscos diferentes do MDMA



CONTUDO, o logo, a forma ou a cor
da pastilha não querem dizer nada



**TESTA AS
TUAS DROGAS**
NA KOSMICARE

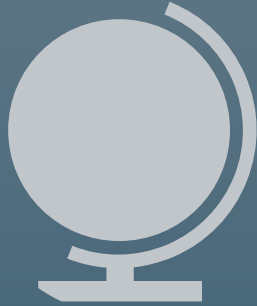
www.kosmicare.org



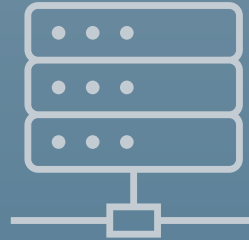
Main challenges



Rapid
emergence of
new
substances



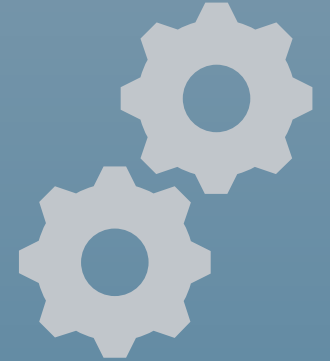
Dynamic
Market



Online sales
and the
darknet –
difficult to
control



Lack of
scientific
evidence



Preparedness



Main challenges



Public health response



Laboratory and forensic
challenges



Legal differences
between Member States



Lessons learned



The dissemination of early warnings about adulterated batches prevent serious poisoning in recreational settings.



Cooperation between drug checking and hospital services enables the rapid identification of a new synthetic substance and the adaptation of clinical protocols.



The most important lesson: the earlier and more clearly you communicate, the greater the confidence of users and institutions, which strengthens the entire system.

Thank you for your attention!

Ana Sofia Santos
sofia.santos@icad.min-saude.pt

António Óscar Duarte
oscar.duarte@icad.min-saude.pt

International Relations and Cooperation Unit
Focal Point to the EUDA



Instituto para os Comportamentos Aditivos e as Dependências, I.P.

Institute on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies, P.I.

Tel: +351 211 119 000 | E-mail: icad@icad.min-saude.pt

www.icad.pt

