

**OSCE-wide Conference on Combating the Threat of Illicit Drugs and
the Diversion of Chemical Precursors**

**“Evolving Threat of Synthetic Drugs: from Addiction to Rehabilitation and
Reintegration”**

*3-4 June 2019
Hofburg, Vienna*

CONCEPT PAPER

Background

Synthetic drugs are addictive and pose a serious threat to the health of individuals and societies worldwide, including in the OSCE area. Regulatory agencies experience difficulties in controlling and/or monitoring production and distribution of synthetic drugs. Manufacturers can slightly modify the molecular structures of illegal or controlled substances to circumvent existing drug laws or label synthetics “not for human consumption” to mask their intended purpose. Easy access, including for youth, low prices and a misconception of their “harmless” have likely contributed to their abuse.

Amphetamine and methamphetamine are highly potent synthetic stimulants that represent a persistent threat to the public of the OSCE participating States. Following the EMCDDA report¹, over the last decade, seizures indicate that the availability of methamphetamine has increased. Both drugs are produced mainly in Europe for the European market but could be exported elsewhere. There are indications that amphetamine production takes place in Belgium, the Netherlands and Poland, and to a lesser extent in the Baltic States and Germany. The Czech Republic, and more recently, the border areas of its neighbouring countries, has long been the source of much of Europe’s methamphetamine. In the Czech Republic, methamphetamine is produced mainly from the precursor pseudoephedrine, which is extracted from medicinal products imported predominantly from Poland or increasingly from elsewhere through Poland² and red phosphorus. Methamphetamine use, generally low and historically concentrated in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, now appears to be present also in Cyprus, the east of Germany, Spain and northern Europe³. Measures targeting supply reduction as well as use of methamphetamine and related health and social harms are the subject of cooperation between the Visegrad Group of countries.

¹ http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/8585/20181816_TDAT18001ENN_PDF.pdf, pg. 28.

² Ibid, pg. 29.

³ http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/8585/20181816_TDAT18001ENN_PDF.pdf, pg. 48.

These and other highly potent synthetic drugs, including NPS and fentanyl, often purchased on the Internet, raise significant challenges for both health and law enforcement services in the entire OSCE area. These substances are easy to transport and conceal. With small volumes they often represent many hundreds of thousands of potential street doses. From a health perspective, they considerably contribute to other illicit drug deaths.

Most recently international community through the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs expressed grave concern by the international challenge posed by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in synthetic drugs to public health, welfare, safety and security.⁴ They also called Member States and relevant international and regional organizations to enhance law enforcement actions in addressing NPS as a type of synthetic drugs. The 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem called the UN Member States to strengthen national and international action to address the emerging challenge of NPS, including their adverse health consequences, and the evolving threat of amphetamine-type stimulants, including methamphetamine.⁵

OSCE participating States in the OSCE Concept for Combating the Threat of Illicit Drugs and the Diversion of Chemical Precursors recognized that the threat of illicit drugs, including opiates from Afghanistan, synthetic drugs, cannabis and cocaine, and the diversion of chemical precursors continue to be one of the most dangerous and profitable forms of transnational organized crime worldwide and across the OSCE area.⁶

Objective

The objective of the 2019 OSCE-wide conference convened by the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship is to provide a platform for experts of the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation to discuss challenges of tackling the trafficking in synthetic drugs, including methamphetamines, NPS and fentanyl, as well as support governments in implementing pertinent thematic recommendations of the UNGASS 2016 outcome document. In particular, participants will review current situation with regard to trafficking in synthetic drugs, their availability, including recent trends and threats posed to the international community. They will discuss how to effectively prevent and counter illicit production and trafficking in synthetic drugs and their precursors, while ensuring access to controlled substances to relieve pain and suffering. They will consider how to more efficiently tackle drug-related crime using tools provided by the international conventions, relevant UN norms, standards and guidelines. Experts will also address treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration approaches rooted in scientific evidence and public health, and discuss cross-cutting issues, including those related to the protection of youth, the most vulnerable drug users, with an insight on potential gender aspects, and respect for human rights in designing and implementing balanced drug control policies.

⁴ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_61/E2018_28_advance_unedited.pdf

⁵ <https://www.unodc.org/documents/postungass2016/outcome/V1603301-E.pdf>, pg. 17.

⁶ <https://www.osce.org/pc/92557?download=true>

The conference is expected to facilitate:

- Increased co-operation between OSCE and UNODC, based on the 2018-2019 Joint Action Plan, as well as with other international and regional actors and stakeholders;
- Focused coherent approaches to avoid overlaps in activities and verified practical proposals on future co-operation;
- More streamlined actions in implementing established policies and measures;
- Enhanced sharing of drug-related information in the OSCE area.

Structure

The conference will be divided into four working sessions:

1. The first session on “Current situation and new trends in trafficking in synthetic drugs” will review threats posed by them. Experts will reflect on the availability of highly potent synthetic stimulants and opioids and consider measures to tackle these challenges.
2. The second session “Supply reduction of synthetic drugs and related measures” will address domestic, regional and inter-regional responses to countering drug-related crimes, as well as promoting law enforcement and judicial co-operation in criminal matters. Participants will discuss topical issues in this area, including countering the supply of methamphetamine and NPS, precursors and pre-precursors, and misuse of the Internet.
3. The third session on “Demand reduction of synthetic drugs and related measures” will address awareness raising and prevention the trafficking in synthetic drugs, as well as health-related issues, including treatment and care.
4. The fourth session “Cross-cutting issues” will consider legal and gender implications in tackling the threat of synthetic drugs, review protective measures, including those designed for the most vulnerable population – children and youth, and discuss human rights issues related to the implementation of balanced drug control policies and promoting the participation of civil society in these activities.

The key findings and outcomes of the conference will be compiled in a final document, which will serve as a basis for further discussions on this topic for the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, as well as a guidance for the OSCE executive structures when providing technical assistance to the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

The conference is targeted at experts from national drug control structures, representatives of relevant international and regional organizations, as well as civil society. Practitioners from pertinent government ministries, such as ministries of Interior, Justice, Health and Foreign Affairs, as well as other related institutions are especially encouraged to participate. They are invited to share concrete examples, best practices and lessons learned as outlined in the draft agenda. Participants are encouraged to discuss and share experiences and to identify specific needs and proposal for possible improvement of the OSCE drug-related activities in line with

its pertinent mandate built on agreed frameworks and based on the principle of shared responsibility.

In order to better promote interactive discussion and productive exchanges among participants, formal statements and interventions in response to speakers are to be as concise as possible, not exceeding three minutes. Interventions should focus on the actual topic of the conference through concrete examples, lessons learned and recommendations; they should lead to follow-up actions directly related to the subject of the session rather than contain explicit and generic institutional background information. Delegations, international and regional organizations, as well as NGOs are requested to pre-register their intention to make short statements.