



Fight against illicit drugs: Commission proposes to ban seven new substances

Brussels, 18 December 2017

Today, the Commission is proposing to ban seven new psychoactive substances (NPS) across the European Union, in addition to nine others banned previously this year.

These toxic substances can cause severe harm to health and can even lead to death, and pose a growing threat to public health in Europe.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"New psychoactive substances pose an increasingly serious threat to public health. In Europe, we work to make sure that we stay one step ahead of this fast-moving and dangerous business. More needs to be done to keep European citizens safe, especially the younger generations. We need to ensure not only that these new drugs cannot be bought, but also that they don't appear on the market in the first place. I now call for the Council to take a swift decision in order to speedily remove those new drugs from the market."*

The seven new psychoactive substances, including those commonly known as "spice", "herbal incense" and "legal weed", belong to two categories: four of them are synthetic cannabinoids, with effects similar to cannabis but much more toxic, while the other three substances are synthetic opioids closely related to fentanyl, a substance controlled at international level. According to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), these toxic substances are associated with over 170 deaths across the EU and a number of acute intoxications.

Currently, these seven new psychoactive substances are not covered by international drugs controls and remain a serious challenge to European public health, especially for young people.

The Commission therefore considers that there are grounds for subjecting all seven substances to control measures across the EU. The Commission's proposal will now be discussed in the Council, which, in consultation with the European Parliament, will decide whether to adopt the measures.

Background

Over the past two decades the European Union and the Member States have developed a sustainable European approach to addressing drugs. This approach is enshrined in the [EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020](#) which is operationalised in two consecutive four-year Action Plans. The proposal to ban seven NPS falls under the drug supply reduction action as set out in the EU Action Plan for Drugs for the period 2017-2020. In 2016, 66 new psychoactive substances were detected via the EU Early Warning System (EWS) – a rate of over one per week. Although this number is decreasing – 98 substances were detected in 2015 – the overall number of substances available remains high.

Given this rapid rise of new psychoactive substances, the system to detect new substances on the market, set up in 2005, was no longer considered effective and fast enough. Therefore, in 2013, the Commission adopted a package of legislative proposals to enable the EU to act swifter and more effectively to address new psychoactive substances, which was finally adopted in November 2017. These new rules will become applicable on 23 November 2018, one year from now. Today's proposal to ban seven new psychoactive substances is still based on the control system set up in 2005. Following the Commission's proposal, nine drugs have already been banned this year alone, in addition to the seven outlined today.

The objective of the Commission proposal is to call on the Member States to subject the seven substances to control measures and criminal penalties according to their legislation, thus fulfilling their obligations under the 1971 United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances or the under the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended by the 1972 Protocol, respectively.

For More Information

[EMCDDA Risk Assessments](#)

[Regulation \(EU\) 2017/2101](#) of 15 November 2017 as regards information exchange on, and an early

warning system and risk assessment procedure for, new psychoactive substances

[Directive \(EU\) 2017/2103](#) of 15 November 2017 to include new psychoactive substances in the definition of 'drug'

[Council Decision 2005/387/JHA](#) of 10 May 2005 on the information exchange, risk-assessment and control of new psychoactive substances

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