Monitoring and controlling drug precursors

2025/0384(COD) - 03/12/2025 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish rules for the monitoring and control of drug precursors for both internal and external trade.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: drug precursors are chemicals with an essential role in industries such as pharmaceuticals, flavouring and fragrance, batteries, cosmetics, textiles, oil refinery, water treatment, food additives, explosives, rubber production, fertilisers, plastics or dyes.

In recognition of the need to maintain controls to prevent the diversion of drug precursors towards illicit trade, the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs obliges its Parties to take measures to prevent the diversion of substances frequently used in the illicit manufacture of drugs.

Currently, the United Nations Convention is implemented by Regulation (EC) No 273/2004 on monitoring and controlling drug precursors for their possession and placing on the market, and Regulation (EC) No 111/2005, for their trade between the Union and third countries. These two regulations classify drug precursors as either scheduled (listed and controlled in the regulations) or non-scheduled (for which there are no legally binding obligations).

Since the adoption of these two regulations, the situation has evolved, with a rapid increase in designer precursors - drug precursors which does not have any known legitimate use except research and innovation. Similarly, the obligations set out in the regulations create an administrative burden across the four categories of scheduled substances. Enforcement measures need to be strengthened in order to ensure the uniform implementation of rules across the EU.

Controlling drug precursors is a key element of the policy to reduce the drug supply, as outlined in the EU Drug Strategy 2021-2025. The EU Drug Action Plan 2021-2025 also underlined the need to address the challenge posed by designer precursors.

Faced with the increase in violence and drug trafficking in the EU, the proposal therefore aims to **address the challenge of preventing the use of drug precursors** in the illicit manufacture of drugs, whilst simplifying rules and procedures for legitimate trade.

CONTENT: the proposed Regulation establishes **harmonised rules** for the monitoring and control of the making available on the market, import, export, possession, and use of **drug precursors** and of intermediary activities involving drug precursors with a view to ensuring their free movement in the internal market and preventing their availability for the illicit manufacture of drugs.

The revision of existing legislation pursues **two objectives**:

- reduce the availability of drug precursors for illicit drug manufacture;

- facilitate legitimate trade and use of drug precursors, both in the Internal Market and in relation to external trade.

The specific objectives pursued are as follows:

- **establish more effective and rapid control measures to address designer precursors**. This involves ensuring that rules do not only address traditional drug precursors but also newly emerging designer precursors, for which a global approach is crucial;

- **address the gaps and shortcomings that hinder the implementation and operation of the control system**. The proposal aims to improve the regulations by filling in identified gaps and clarifying existing provisions to provide for a uniform application across the EU and enhance cooperation between authorities as well as with businesses;

- **simplify, modernise and streamline EU provisions for legal trade**. The proposal aims to remove unnecessary obstacles and administrative burdens to the legal trade of drug precursors.

According to the Commission, the merging of currently separate instruments for EU internal and external trade will enhance legal clarity and consistency. Furthermore, the obligations under the two regulations have been **simplified or automated**, in line with the digital agenda. This will help reduce the administrative burden for operators and Member State authorities.

The inclusion of **special rules** for designer precursors in the proposal allows for the more effective monitoring and prevention of the proliferation of drug precursors towards illicit aims. Streamlined administrative procedures and a **central electronic system** will enable greater simplification and reduce overall burden for authorities and business alike. Furthermore, the **drug precursors information repository** will provide the necessary guidance to stakeholders.

Overall, the streamlining and digitalisation of procedures is expected to lead to an administrative burden reduction of **EUR 25.27 million per year**. These changes should contribute to effectively facilitating trade and promoting the competitiveness of the sector.