Narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances: trade in drug precursors, monitoring and surveillance

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PURPOSE : to improve the system of drug precursors. CONTENT : the European Commission has presented a proposal for a new EU Parliament and Council Regulation aimed at improving the monitoring and control of EU trade in chemicals known as precursors, in order to prevent them being diverted towards the illegal manufacture of drugs and psychotropic substances The new proposal would strengthen the existing rules on a number of substances used in the production of some illegal drugs, such as heroine and cocaine. In addition it would include rules on licensing, customer declarations, labelling and a monitoring procedure. It would also take account of the changeable nature of the illicit manufacture and traffic of narcotic drugs, and thus align the new Regulation with other legal instruments, both at EU and at international level. By replacing the old Directive, the new Regulation would also simplify the legislation and would make it more user-friendly, both for economic operators and for the Competent Authorities in the Member States. By transforming the current Directive into a Regulation the Commission aims mainly at simplifying the legislation and thus making it more user-friendly. This becomes especially important in the context of the on-going process of enlargement of the European Union where each modification of the Directive and its annexes would have triggered national implementation measures in some twenty-five Member States. The current system, in operation since 1992, is based on a Council and European Parliament Directive, which has been instrumental in establishing good cooperation between EU institutions, Member States' authorities and economic operators, against illegal use. A further improvement to the current situation will be to oblige the Member States to distribute to economic operators information on how to recognise and notify suspect transactions so that economic operators inform the competent authorities of suspect transactions involving substances not currently mentioned in the Directive but which are nevertheless frequently used to manufacture synthetic drugs. The Commission, assisted by the Committee referred to in Article 15 of the new Regulation, will be responsible for drawing up and constantly updating the lists of products which are to be subject to such surveillance. These lists will be distributed to economic operators by the Member States. The Commission also proposes to define "non-scheduled substances" in conformity with Article 12(12)b of the United Nations Convention. As a final point, the Commission considers this a good opportunity to take into account the revision of the classification for Potassium Permanganate as well as for Acetic Anhydride to ensure that internal trade of these products will not be negatively affected.