

I-SEE, Project for strengthening information exchange between Italy and South East Europe neighbouring countries on New Psychoactive Substances.

SUMMARY

The project has been granted by the European Commission to the University of Florence, Department of Health Science, Forensic Toxicology Unit. The project coordinator is Prof. Elisabetta Bertol from the University of Florence.

Partners of the project are: from Slovenia, the National Institute of Public Health, the Ministry of Interior Police and the Association DrogArt; from Croatia, the University of Split School of Medicine.

The main objective of the project, involving the National Early Warning Systems (EWS) on drugs of Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, is to strengthen information exchange on New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) between Italy and South East Europe neighbouring countries.

To reach the objective, a number of professionals have been involved from Law Enforcement, analytical laboratories, clinical centres and NGOs.

Activities have been organized in 3 steps:

1. Building up a network with Law Enforcement, NGOs and health sector (Slovenia). The Slovenian EWS has been enlarged, including health professionals and Law Enforcement, providing people tools to exchange information on NPS within the country. In collaboration with Law Enforcement, NGOs have developed a method to anonymously collect NPS sample, send them to the Forensic Institute and, after analysis, provide information to consumers.
2. Building up a clinical network (Croatia). The Croatian EWS has developed a new network in clinical settings, including clinical toxicology laboratories, emergency wards, departments of forensic medicine and other relevant subjects in the health sector, so as to increase scientific and professional capacities related to the identification of NPS in biological samples and effective treatment of intoxicated patients.
3. Developing tools for strengthening NPS information exchange and identification (Italy). The University of Florence has coordinated the whole project and has arranged a model for information flows among the three EWS (Italy, Slovenia, Croatia), acquiring new technical and analytical tools and enabling laboratories to identify NPS. The University also shared with project partners the existing Italian online database containing analytical and clinical information on NPS.

Several national meetings and trainings have been organized during the project to inform professionals about the NPS phenomenon and provide them skills to recognize it. Two study visits were also organized, one in Italy and one in Slovenia, to exchange experience and expertise.

The project has contributed to a **more coordinated and effective operational response to NPS phenomenon**, including activities to identify transnational criminal networks. The project has also allowed the **creation of transnational networks** where Law Enforcement, analytical laboratories, clinical centers, NGOs and other health units may benefit from information gathered by neighbouring countries. As a result, the project fulfils the need for a **reinforced coordination, information sharing and tasks**, and **enhanced regional cooperation**. Finally, by means of a balanced approach, the project has enabled partners to **boost the circulation of information about NPS and new distribution patterns** among national authorities, European Commission and European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction in Lisbon.