(English version)

Question for written answer E-001422/24
to the Commission
Paolo Inselvini (ECR)
(24 July 2024)

Subject: The scourge of fentanyl and the increase in drug use

The consumption of narcotic drugs and opioids is unfortunately constantly increasing within the European Union. In 2021 alone, 87.4 million European citizens used drugs, of which 1 million used opioids without medical prescriptions. An alarming trend, which, if linked to the ever-increasing spread of substances such as fentanyl, which is now an uncontrolled scourge in the United States of America, risks shattering and destroying millions of lives in Europe as well. Given that it is sold cheaply and is increasingly widely available on our continent, fentanyl, also known as the 'zombie drug,' may become a new 'black plague' in Europe.

With regard to the above, could the Commission answer the following questions:

1. How does it intend to limit the spread of this dangerous drug in Europe?

2. Does it seek to restrict its medical use to avoid addiction?

3. What measures does it intend to take to raise awareness among the general public — and young people in particular — of the threat posed by this substance and drugs in general, in order to combat the normalisation of drug use?

Submitted: 24.7.2024

Answer given by Ms Johansson on behalf of the European Commission
(20 September 2024)

The EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025 ([1]) and its Action Plan ([2]) identify the EU drug policy priorities, including the reduction of the use of illicit drugs ([3]).

The Council Framework Decision 2004/757/JHA ([4]) lays down minimum rules and penalties to combat drug trafficking. To effectively address synthetic drug threats, the 2023 EU Roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime ([5]) foresees forging alliances as an explicit action.

Accordingly, on 7 July 2023 the EU joined the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats, which deals with manufacture and trafficking of synthetic drugs, detecting threats and patterns, and public health aspects.

The EU4Health Programme ([6]) may support Member States' actions to reduce damage to health due to illicit drug use and addiction.

The Commission is working closely with Member States to ensure that fentanyl and other opioid medications are subject to strict regulatory controls.

This includes the enforcement of rigorous prescription guidelines and monitoring systems to prevent overprescribing and to identify potential abuse ([7]).

Furthermore, the Commission, in collaboration with the European Medicines Agency (EMA), is developing and promoting guidelines for healthcare professionals on the safe prescription and management of medications with high potential for misuse ([8]).

Since 2 July 2024, the EU Drugs Agency (EUDA ([9])) has reinforced health and security threat assessment capabilities and promotes evidence-based interventions to raise awareness on the adverse effects of drugs ([10]).

([1]) EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025, OJ C 102I, 24.3.2021.
([2]) EU Drugs Action Plan 2021-2025, OJ C 272, 8.7.2021.
([3]) Priority area 5.2 of the EU Drugs Strategy, Action 28 of the EU Drugs Action Plan.
([4]) Council Framework Decision 2004/757/JHA of 25 October 2004 laying down minimum provisions on the constituent elements of criminal acts and penalties in the field of illicit drug trafficking.
([5]) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime, COM/2023/641 final.
([6]) Regulation (EU) 2021/522 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 March 2021 establishing a Programme for the Union's action in the field of health ('EU4Health Programme') for the period 2021-2027, and repealing Regulation (EU) No 282/2014, OJ L 107, 26.3.2021, p. 1.
([7]) https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/opioids-drugs-heroin/,
([8]) https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/medicines/psusa/psusa-00001370-202304, https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/medicines/psusa/psusa-00001370-202204
([9]) Formerly European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).
([10]) Regulation (EU) 2023/1322 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2023 on the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1920/2006, OJ L 166, 30.6.2023, p. 16.

To address the increasing availability of drugs to young people on social media platforms, the Commission developed a Knowledge Package on Combating Drug Sales Online ([11]).

([11]) https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-union-Internet-forum-euif_en