

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001815/24
to the Commission
Ioan-Rareş Bogdan (PPE)
(25 September 2024)**

Subject: Alarming increase in dependency on fentanyl among the young

Thousands of young people in the European Union have fallen victim to the illicit trade in fentanyl, a synthetic opioid considered to be 50 times stronger than heroin.

The warnings issued by the Commission and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the danger of not controlling fentanyl consumption are far from unfounded as tens of thousands of people have died after taking this synthetic opioid with analgesic properties.

Swift and effective measures therefore need to be taken to combat this extremely worrying state of affairs.

In Europe, fentanyl can be purchased on the black market in the form of nasal sprays, drops, lozenges, sweets, powders or solutions for injection, but the substance is often combined with heroin, cocaine or MDMA.

What steps will the Commission take to combat the illicit use of fentanyl and reduce the number of young people falling victim to this synthetic opioid?

Bearing in mind that China is one of the world's largest producers of fentanyl and of the chemical precursors used to manufacture this opioid, can the Commission clearly state:

are the European Union and China formally cooperating to combat the illicit trafficking of fentanyl, given the serious impact of this drug on public health and safety in Europe?

Submitted: 25.9.2024

**Answer given by Ms Johansson on behalf of the European Commission
(19 November 2024)**

The Commission is aware of the threat posed by synthetic opioids. The EU Drugs Agency (EUDA) ⁽¹⁾ 2024 European Drug Report ⁽²⁾ points to growing public health concerns regarding synthetic opioids, including fentanyl.

On 30 September 2024, the EUDA Executive Director launched a call for action against synthetic opioids to Member States and all EU partners ⁽³⁾.

The EU Drugs Strategy ⁽⁴⁾ and Action Plan 2021-2025 ⁽⁵⁾ already identify synthetic drugs as one of the priorities for the EU drug policy. They aim to reduce the use of illicit drugs and increase evidence-based targeted prevention efforts for vulnerable groups.

This includes young people, disproportionately affected by synthetic opioids ⁽⁶⁾. The Commission's comprehensive approach to mental health ⁽⁷⁾ supports Member States in addressing the mental health needs of young people affected by drug use, focusing on early intervention and prevention.

Acknowledging these threats, the Commission intensified its activities in this area with the EU Roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime ⁽⁸⁾, stepping up law enforcement action against synthetic drug production and the organised crime groups behind it.

The EU takes part in the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats, which allows exchange of best practices and global cooperation on this matter.

Cooperation with China is key to address the threat of synthetic opioids. The EU currently pursues three dialogues:

⁽¹⁾ The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions (EMCDDA) became the European Union Drugs Agency on 2 July 2024 with the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2023/1322.

⁽²⁾ EU Drugs Agency, European Drugs Report 2024: Trends and Developments, https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/european-drug-report/2024_en
⁽³⁾ https://www.euda.europa.eu/news/2024/euda-executive-director-issues-call-action-new-synthetic-opioids-european-parliament_en

⁽⁴⁾ EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025, OJ C 102I, 24.3.2021.

⁽⁵⁾ EU Drugs Action Plan 2021-2025, OJ C 272, 8.7.2021.

⁽⁶⁾ Also see the Commission's replies to Parliamentary questions E-001333/2024 and E-001422/2024.

⁽⁷⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/european-health-union/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en

⁽⁸⁾ 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.

- The EU-China Dialogue on Drugs covering synthetic drugs, drug demand and harm reduction, among others. The last meeting took place on 23 April 2024.
 - The EU-China Joint Follow-up Group meeting on Drug Precursors ⁽⁹⁾, which last met on 22 April 2024.
 - Customs cooperation with China to help preventing the entry of Drugs Precursors in the EU.
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⁽⁹⁾ Substances that are used for the manufacture of drugs.