3 July 2019

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**Thirteenth Meeting of Heads of National
Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Europe**
Lisbon, 2–5 July 2019

Draft report

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Consideration of topics by working groups

Issue (a): The misuse of new technologies and communication modes for drug-related activities

1.   The working group held one meeting on 3 July. In its consideration of the topic under review, the working group made the following observations:

(a)   Criminals are actively using new technologies for the purposes of communication, advertisement of illegal drugs and related trade, as well as for laundering the proceeds of illegal drugs trade;

(b)   New technologies allow criminals to operate from different geographic locations using computer equipment and resources located in several different jurisdictions or even "in the cloud";

(c)   The Darknet and cryptocurrencies provide a high level of anonymity to criminals;

(d)   The large volume of freely available technologies, widespread use of mobile applications, high degree of anonymity, and low amount of the minimal initial investments attract young people to get involved in the illegal drug trade in Darknet.

2.   The working group drew up the following conclusions:

(a)   The growth of virtual drug markets poses a major challenge to law enforcement and the effective implementation of drug control policies. The fact that manufacturers, suppliers, retailers, Internet site hosting services and payment processing services may all be based in different countries makes monitoring of online drug markets and related investigations particularly difficult;

(b)   It is important to combine traditional law enforcement investigative techniques with the techniques based on the new technologies and tools, inter alia related to Darknet and cryptocurrencies;

(c)   Law enforcement agencies have officers with experience of investigating new technologies, but they are not necessarily available as trainers. To create a

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"critical mass" of officers able to investigate new technologies it is necessary to conduct specialized trainings for law enforcement agencies to enable them to use the tools based on new technologies for detection, monitoring and investigation of Darknet illegal drug trafficking, misuse of cryptocurrencies and related laundering of crime proceeds. Training should also be given to judicial competent authorities e.g. prosecutors with the aim to broaden the knowledge and understanding of the misuse of new technologies;

(d) The legal status of cryptocurrencies in different national legislations can be challenging, leading to difficulties in relation to the freezing and management of seized cryptocurrencies and their final forfeiture;

(e) The development of countermeasures against the misuse of new technologies it is important to take into account all areas of the illegal drug business, including cultivation, chemistry, transport, communication, distribution, sale channels and laundering of the proceeds.

3. The working group adopted the following recommendations:

(a) Governments are encouraged to strengthen cooperation between law enforcement, financial intelligence, financial supervision agencies, judicial authorities as well as the private sector to prevent the misuse of new technologies and combat illegal drug trade in the Darknet and with the use of cryptocurrencies. Such cooperation should take place both at the national and international levels;

(b) Governments should use the HONLEAs and other relevant regional and international fora for exchange, for systematization and sharing of good practices in the area of combating illegal drug trade with the use of new technologies;

(c) Governments should ensure wide-scale basic training for law enforcement officers, such as through the UNODC Cryptocurrency Training, focused on key skills related to the new communication tools, Darknet and cryptocurrencies.

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