European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

1997 Joint Action on new synthetic drugs and draft Council Decision on new psychoactive substances

Alain Wallon , March 2005

The 1997 Joint Action on NSD

Operational since 1998; concerns the information exchange, risk assessment and the control of new synthetic drugs:

- which are not listed in any of the Schedules of 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances
- which pose a serious threat to public health comparable to the substances listed in Schedules I or II
- which have a limited therapeutic value

The 1997 Joint Action on NSD

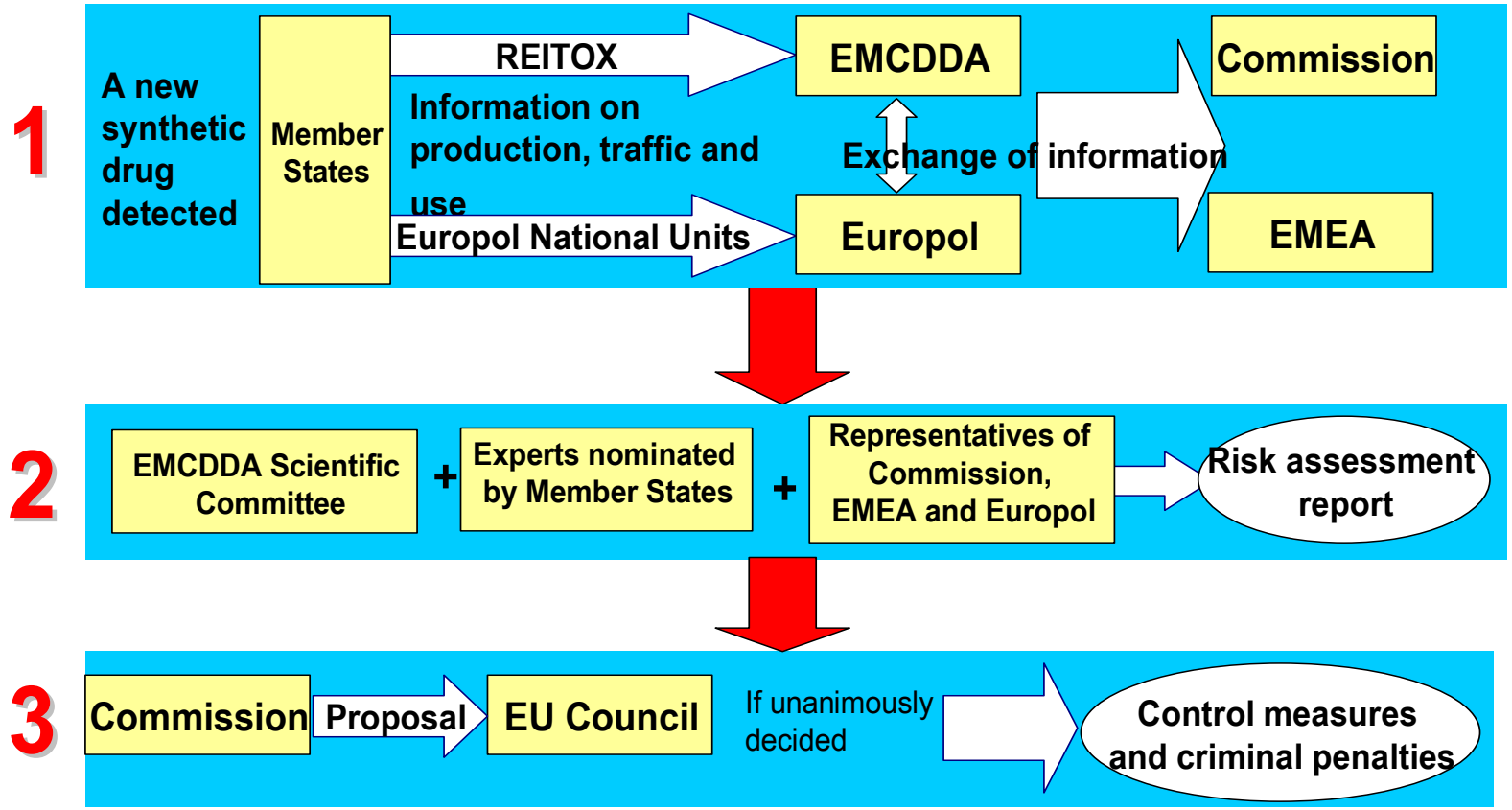
- provides for the establishment of an Early-warning system to identify new synthetic drugs as soon as they appear on the European drug scene
- incorporates a mechanism for assessing the risks of these drugs
- comprises a decision-making process through which these substances may be placed under control in the European Union

Implementing the Joint Action NSD

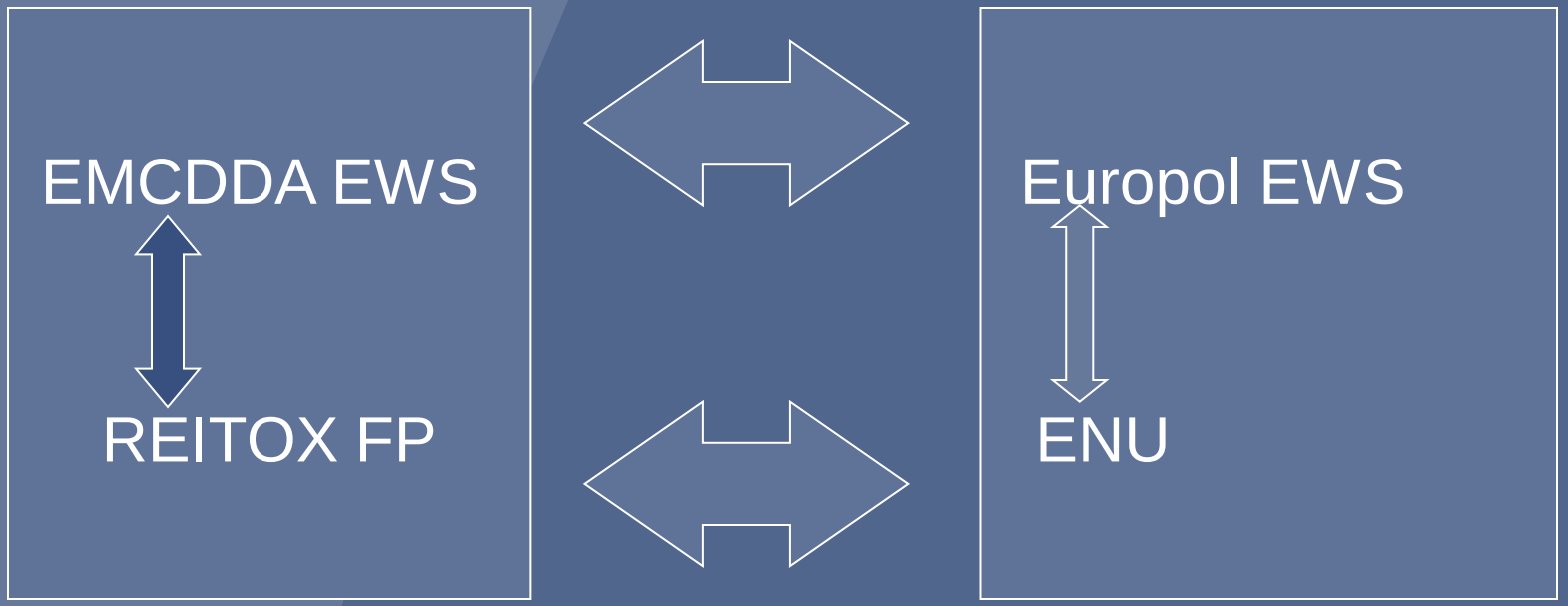
- Phase 1: Early-warning system (EWS)
- Phase 2: Risk assessment
- Phase 3: Control measures

Joint Action on new synthetic drugs

(Joint Action on New Synthetic Drugs OJ L 167, 1997)



European Early-warning system (EWS):



Joint Action results: EWS

- EWS is set up and operational – EWS correspondents and multi-disciplinary national networks are in place
- Guidance document on the EWS implementation is available (publication) and is being implemented
- Strong cooperation with main partners (e.g. Europol, EMEA, the Commission) is established
- EWS functions beyond the legal scope of the Joint Action f.e. collects/exchanges information not only on new drugs but also on various new phenomena related to ‘old’ drugs with potentially important public health dimension)

Joint Action results: risk assessment

- Enlarged Scientific Committee is operational for the purpose of risk assessent
- Guidelines for the risk assessment are available (publication); and developing (e.g. benchmarking substances and/or types in addiction potential)
- Risks of nine substances assessed (publications avilable): MBDB, 4-MTA, GHB, Ketamine, PMMA, 2C-T-7, 2C-T-2, 2C-I, TMA-2.

Joint Action results: control measures

- Council Decisions making 4-MTA and PMMA subject to control; 4-MTA placed then under Schedule I of 1971 UN Convention;
- GHB : assessed by the SC; not falling into the Joint Action scope; then placed under Schedule IV of 1971 UN Convention;
- Ketamine: assessed by the SC; not falling into the JA scope; possible measures discussed in the Pharmaceutical Committee;
- 2C-T-7, 2C-T-2, 2C-I, TMA-2 – placed then under control at EU level through Council Decision

Outlook into the future: Challenges

- Enlargement and further improvement of the EWS
- Setting up and operationalisation of database on new drugs
- New Council Decision to replace the 1997 Joint Action is agreed at COREPER level and ready for adoption by the Council

The new Council Decision

- Repeals/replaces the Joint Action while keeping the notion of EWS - risk assessment - control measures
- Extends the scope to all new psychoactive substances i.e. includes new psychotropic and new narcotic drugs alike (i.e. Similar to those listed in 1961 & 1971 UN Conventions)
- Introduces stricter deadlines and clearer definitions
- Provides for a possibility for an increased role of EMEA
- Provides for an increased transparency and visibility through Europol/EMCDDA Annual Report to the Council, European Parliament and the Commission

Changes in the EWS and Risk Assessment

Rapid adaptation of procedures to reflect the extended scope, modus operandi and reporting requirements of the new Council Decision. As follows:

- review of internal and external working methods (timing and sequencing of actions)
- initial revision of the Guidelines for EWS and Risk Assessment
- revise main monitoring and reporting tools: (a) EMCDDA-Europol Reporting Form; (b) the EMCDDA-Europol Joint Report (both in cooperation with Europol); and (c) EWS Progress Report (in cooperation with the REITOX NFPs)
- prepare EMCDDA-Europol Annual Report on the implementation of the new Council Decision to be submitted by to the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission