



**Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse
and illicit trafficking in Drugs**

P-PG/COST (2015) 3
3 July 2015

**1st meeting of the Expert group on Effects and associated costs of drug
control policies**

Oslo, 8 - 10 June 2015

REPORT

1. Background and objectives

The terms of reference for the expert group are contained in doc. P-PG/Cost (2015) 1, the background document was prepared by Mrs Anne Line Bretteville-Jensen, Norway (doc. P-PG/Cost (2015) 1). The agenda of the meeting was adopted as in appendix 1, the list of participants in appendix 2.

The objectives of the first meeting were to:

- Discuss the expected outcome from the work of the Group in terms of type and volume of output
- Discuss the necessary steps in organizing the work to achieve the expected results set out in the terms of reference
- Present the initial views and thoughts of each expert on the subject, to share the already existing knowledge and materials.

2. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by Mr Torbjørn Brekke, the Permanent Correspondent of Norway who underlined the importance of the project for his country as well as the interest of the issue in view of upcoming UNGASS 2016. Drug policy being based on a balanced approach, a balance between supply and demand reduction efforts is more and more often criticised for being imbalanced and over focusing control measures. Moreover, this approach is being criticised for causing more harms and costs than the benefits it produces. For more than 50 years, most countries' drug policy has relied on law enforcement: politicians emphasised criminal justice measures and the overwhelming majority of government expenditure in response to drugs was allocated to law enforcement area. Yet during the last half-century, drug markets expanded and became more dangerous. Deaths, disease, crime, corruption and violence increased substantially. Evidence that supply control is effective is scant yet there is abundant evidence of its serious adverse effects. The intention of the Norwegian Presidency behind this project is not to consider what is right or wrong or to propose drug reforms, but to first of all define the common language, to do the thorough search on the already existing literature on the effects and associated costs of drug control policies and to provide the policy makers with the better overview of possible consequences of these policies.

Mr Thomas Kattau, Secretariat, welcomed participants and thanked the Ministry of Health and Care Services of Norway for hosting the meeting. He informed that four more experts, Mr Yossi Harel-Fish (Israel), Mr Janusz Sieroslawski (Poland), Mr Sergey Tsarev (Russian Federation) and Mr Christian Schneider (Switzerland) had been nominated by Permanent Correspondents for participation in the group

Mrs Anne Line Bretteville-Jensen, the expert nominated by Norway was elected as the Chair of the Expert Group.

3. General discussion

Participants held an initial general discussion on the need to assist the policy makers in understanding why it is important to calculate the costs of drug control services and presented their initial thoughts of the possible elements that should be included in their study based on their country's situation, needs and data available. Main challenges of public expenditure in Europe, estimation of labelled and unlabelled public expenditure as well as methodological challenges were touched upon. Following discussions there was agreement that all existing drug control policies carry unintended consequences for societies and individuals that so far have not been appropriately defined and quantified.

At the beginning of the discussion, the participants came across the problem of the absence of a common definition of the term 'drug control policies'. The agreed scope of the analyses the group will conduct is the focus on the supply reduction pillar, notably police, customs, and criminal justice responses, governing the control of illicit psychoactive substances only.

Another major point of discussion concerned the types of costs and consequences to be considered in the study. In order to achieve concrete results within the expected time frame and resources available, it was discussed how to focus and narrow down the work of the Group. In this context several existing concepts were referred to: cost-benefit, cost-effectiveness, cost-utility, cost –illness. While cost-of-illness analysis is easier to produce, it will only measure the economic “burden” of a “disease”. To produce a cost-benefits model requires in depth study which could be difficult to apply across different countries. Besides, not all the governments are doing enough efforts to collect data to estimate their costs. Therefore it was decided to focus on the costs of drug control policies for public expenditure and the costs and adverse effects from the individuals' perspective.

Taking in consideration that the individuals will be affected differently in different drug policies regimes, the different types of consequences of illegality of drugs under different regimes should be specified. Harmful effects varying across substances and among different parts of population should also be taken into account when listing types of harms, as well as different degrees of severity of consequences depending on the drug control regime. In view of the absence of any systematic studies on the costs and adverse effects of drug control policies for individuals a focus by the Expert Group on this aspect would be a valuable contribution for the policy makers.

In conclusion, Lilly Ottesen, the Chair of the PG Permanent Correspondence, present at the end of the first meeting of the Expert Group, encouraged participants in their conclusions underlining the importance of the study also as a contribution to policy debates in UNGASS 2016 and beyond. This study would help policy makers to better understand the volume of the costs of control policies and whether needs for changes are indicated.

4. Agreed scope of the study

- 1) The group decided to analyse effects and associated costs of policies governing the control of illicit psychoactive substances.
- 2) The study will differentiate between the economic costs for society and consequences and harmful effects borne by individuals. While the group recognises that there is a wide range of interdependent effects and harmful consequences for society that may arise from control measures of illicit substances (organised crime, public health and safety risks etc.) the study will be limited to assessing economic costs in terms of public expenditure.
- 3) Analysing consequences and harmful effects borne by individuals will constitute the second major component of the work. Such an analysis is particularly timely and important since little work has been done so far to this extent. Furthermore these aspects are little recognised on the level of policy makers, including the difference in impact under different drug control regimes. Consequently the study will have two main components requiring two work streams:

Public sector: focus on public expenditure for the control of illicit drugs (law enforcement, justice responses etc.)

Individuals: focus on consequences and adverse effects borne by individuals in economic, social and legal respects differentiate by:

- Individuals caught using illicit drugs
- Individuals using illicit drugs not being caught
- Individuals not using

4) The aim of the final report is to familiarize the readers with the already existing literature, indicate the blanks in order to assist governments in a better way in the policy making process. For the moment experts propose to provide with a more politically oriented technical report representing the social part of the problem. It will include fundamental principles, possibly a set of guiding principles, guidelines and/or a tool model for governments for better understanding and assessing costs effects of drug control measures. Additionally the group may wish to propose a research project (application of a tool model and/or comparable data collection) with the participation of a group of interested countries for the period 2017-2018.

5) The conclusions and proposals from the report could be considered by the Permanent Correspondents for adoption as a policy paper by the Pompidou Group.

6) In order to avoid the misunderstanding of terminology, it was proposed to take as a starting point the existing documents with already established definitions, for example; the study done by Pierre.Kopp.

7) In the first chapter of the study, it was agreed to make reference to the conventions. Even though they are interpreted differently in different policy regimes, conventions as a starting point for all control policies with their main direction towards health and well-being should be the starting point of the report.

8) Experts agreed on the type of literature for the review which will be conducted by Mr Fivos Papamalis from Greece

9) It was agreed that the experts at the next meeting will be divided according to their preferences in two groups, those with more experience and interest to work on “public sector” or “individuals” part of the study in order to prepare their input to the global report.

10) The final report is expected to be delivered to the Secretariat by 1 October 2016 for its further presentation at the 79th PC meeting in November 2016.

5. Elements for ‘key messages to Permanent Correspondents’

In view of the importance of the reflection of the topic in UNGASS 2016 and taking in consideration the timeline, the experts decided to prepare before the study the elements for ‘key messages to Permanent Correspondents’ on unintended effects and associated costs of policies governing the control of illicit psychoactive substances, mainly highlighting the adverse effects and burdens on individuals. These will be communicated to the Permanent Correspondents of the Pompidou Group as a possible input contribution for UNGASS 2016 by 1 November 2015 for their further discussions at the 77th PC meeting.

6. Date and place of the next meetings

2nd meeting of the Expert Group - 16-17 September 2015 in Jerusalem, Israel

3rd meeting of the Expert Group – third week of January 2016 in Paris, France (to be confirmed by the Secretariat)

Appendix 1

Agenda of the meeting

1. Welcome and presentation of participants
2. Election of the Chair
3. Adoption of the draft agenda
4. Discussion of expected outcome from the work of the Group in terms of type and volume of output
5. Discussion of necessary steps in organizing the work to achieve the expected results set out in the terms of reference
6. Expert presentations. Each expert is asked to give a 10 minutes presentation on initial views and thoughts on the given subject. The experts are also encouraged to search for relevant publications and share them with the group.
7. Start the work of defining and identifying essential cost elements
8. Agreement on tasks and deadlines leading up to the next meeting of the group in Jerusalem. Suggested dates are 16-17 September 2015
9. Any other business

Meeting documents

Terms of reference for the Expert Group on Effects and associated costs of drug control policies

P-PG/COST (2015) 1

Background document on Effects and associated costs of drug control policies

P-PG/COST (2015) 2

Appendix 2

List of Participants

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