P-PG/COST (2016) 1

12 February 2016

**3rd meeting of the E**xpert group on Effects and associated costs of drug control policies

Paris, 20-21 January 2016

**REPORT**

1. Objectives of the meeting

In meeting the objectives of the third meeting the expert group addressed the following items:

* Discuss the drafts of each chapter prepared by the split expert groups, identify the gaps and overlaps.
* Review the structure of the study.
* Agree on chapter ‘what can be done in an imperfect world’.
* Agree on chapter on cost benefit analysis.
* Agree on timeline leading to the delivery of the final report on 1 October 2016.
* Prepare the 4th meeting.

The agenda of the meeting was adopted as in appendix 1, the list of participants in appendix 2.

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened Mrs Anne Line Bretteville-Jensen, the Chair of the Expert Group. Secretariat informed the group that the elements of the ‘key messages” to the Permanent Correspondents on unintended effects and associated costs of policies governing the control of illicit psychoactive substances prepared by the Expert group last autumn were welcomed by the PCs who would incorporate some elements in their statements either for the forthcoming CND or UNGASS meeting. The Chair, Mrs Bretteville-Jensen was also invited to the next PC meeting that will take place in Strasbourg on 31 May-1 June 2016 in order to present the work of the group, outline the main findings and report on the state of progress.

1. Summary of discussions

As it was agreed at the previous meeting the study would contain two main chapters covering public expenditure and unintended consequences. Experts were divided according to their preferences in two groups: those with more experience and interest to work on “public sector”, and others to consider costs borne by “individuals”, in order to prepare their input to the report. The drafts of two main chapters as well as the first introductory chapter prepared by the Chair were presented at the meeting. It was unanimously noted that being written by several people the presented drafts were sometimes lacking structure, contained too much detail and references in the text. Not being written by native English speakers, the language and terminology varied considerably.

It was noted that the style of writing and presentation was primarily of an academic nature and as such not seen as sufficiently oriented on the perspectives, structure and language mainly used in the sphere policy making. Therefore, even though it is important to include the scientific and theoretical part, it is not the academic vigour that is primarily expected from the study, but it should first of all provide clear and practical guidance, as well as concrete tools, for policy shaping and decision taking. It has to be borne in mind that these processes regularly take place in contexts that do not provide the optimum of needed prerequisites. Political decision making as well as their implementation take place in an imperfect world with imperfect tools and often inadequate data including a lack cost-benefit analysis and an understanding of the possible solutions.

The added value of the study to be prepared by the Group will be to provide the guidance for all policy regimes under any circumstantial situation, helping the politicians to make informed choices and decisions and to introduce a new taxonomy that would serve as a tool to measure unintended consequences and harms of different types of policy regimes. In this context it should also be borne in mind that drug policy depends on quickly changing socio cultural influences and drug use patterns, consequently it was agreed that the report should integrate these dynamics such as social exclusion, migration, etc.

**Chapter I - Introduction**

Mrs Bretteville-Jensen presented the overview of the first Chapter she prepared– Introduction part. It sets out the aims of the report, defines main concepts. It was noted that the introduction should mention that public expenditure and unintended effects of drug policies are interrelated phenomena, but are separated artificially in the study only for a better understanding of the structure of the report.

**Chapter II – Public expenditure**

Mrs Sanja MIKULIC presented the draft work of the group. In order to achieve a better result, it was decided to, first of all, to identify the main messages of the chapter and illustrate them with concrete examples. This part should cover the following questions: (i) what is the public expenditure, (ii) what do we know about it (especially about the one related to drug control policy), (iii) what are the benefits of estimations, giving concrete examples, e.g. estimation of costs in prisons underlining the strengths and limitation of such estimates, (vi) analysis of existing methodologies.

**Chapter III – Unintended consequences**

Besides general explanation of the unintended positive and negative effects generated by the drug control policies, this chapter should list and categorize unintended consequences across different drug policy regimes. The Expert Group had an extensive discussion on how to define a taxonomy of the costs of unintended consequences from drug policy interventions. It was finally decided that a model based on different drug policy regimes would be difficult to define and could cause complications and misunderstandings with the target audience. There would be the risk of implicitly judging regimes according to the levels of incurring costs, and such approach the Group had agreed would need to be avoided in order to ensure a broad acceptance of the findings in the report.

It was noted that this chapter should also (i) better define the drug control policies of different regimes; (ii) include positive unintended consequences in society with the focus on individuals; (iii) mention unintended consequences in the new policy changes, (vi) develop the part on “non-using population”, e.g. access to essential medicine.

The group responsible for the preparation of this chapter decided to review their draft, fill in identified gaps and meet before the next Expert group meeting in May in order to work further on the revised version. The Norwegian Ministry of Health offered to host and sponsor this meeting on 1-2 March in Oslo.

**Chapters IV on cost benefit analysis and V on ‘what can be done in an imperfect world’**

The Secretariat suggested that the Group add two relatively brief additional chapters, one on cost benefit analysis and a further one on possibilities to calculate costs in the absence of certain data, relevant information of analytical sources and resources.

An overview on cost benefit an analysis together with information on the principle ways to conduct these on an applied level is of great interest to policy makers and managers. In times of budgetary constraints they not only have to demonstrate costs of proposed policies and interventions but also the cost benefit ratio. Mrs Claudia Storti had provided input to this extent at the 2014 Executive Training of the Pompidou Group that could possibly be used for inclusion in a chapter on cost benefit analysis.

To bring the additional added value to the study, it is not enough to only provide theory, methodology and tools for the policy makers, but also to give them the concrete examples of how, under the circumstances of an ‘imperfect world’, either due to austerity measures or because of difficulties in data collection, how it can still be possible to male reasonable and useful cost estimates. In this context the presentation by Mr Yossi HAREL-FISCH given at the 2nd meeting of the Group on a ways to make use of proxy indicators could serve as an example and inspiring starting point. In this context the 4th meeting in Iceland will hopefully provide additional input how cost related decisions in drug policy were handled in a very complex period of austerity.

Having these experiences as a part of the study will certainly send an encouraging message to the policy makers giving them ideas on how to apply the methodology to the real situations of their countries.

1. Conclusions

Following intensive discussion an understanding was reached to include some basic information on cost benefit analysis in the report given that this aspect is crucial in political decision making. An absence of such information may significantly reduce the interest in the report.

In view of preparing information, guidance and tools easily accessible and put to use by policy makers, it was agreed that the body of the report should be kept rather short and focus on (i) the main aspects and challenges related to the topics in order to gain a proper understanding, (ii) a systematic overview on policy options, intended and unintended consequences, (iii) the type, dimension and bearers of costs and consequences; (iv) the types and calculation methods of incurring costs, (v) models and tools to analyse exisiting policies with respect to consequences and resulting costs. More detailed information, such as models, methodologies and technical information should be included in appendices (eg. list of data sources) or addenda (eg. literature review) for further reading. Once the full text elements for the report are available the Group will take decisions at its 4th meeting (in Reykjavik) where and how to include what part.

In order to ensure that key messages and concept are gaining the necessary prominence it will be necessary to highlight specific passages and make use of info graphics and other visual means facilitating a better and easier understanding. The Secretariat is requested to render support to this extent once the text of the report is finalized.

Taxanomies are of paramount interest to policy and decision makers. It was therefore agreed that the report should include and propose a taxonomy model. Existing ones can serve as a starting point but would require further elaboration. The taxonomy to be developed should rather list policy measures than be based on a categorization of policy regimes. It should identify the policy measure (source), the intended and unintended consequences, the bearers (collective/society and individual), the aspects that influence the dimension and intensity of the consequences. It was agreed in this context that no attempt should be made to quantify costs since this would be beyond the means of the group in view of too great variations between countries simply not possible in a meaningful way.

In terms of terminology and clarity of text it was agreed to use commonly adopted WHO terminology where possible and include a glossary of terms in the report. In view of the political sensitivity of language being used in the sphere of drug policy, particularly on the level of international cooperation, the Secretariat is requested to revise the final text in this respect.

To ensure coherence throughout the report in terms of structure and coherence of text, it will be necessary to have the report revised and edited. This task will have to be accomplished in close consultation and cooperation with the Secretariat.

1. Way forward and timeline

By the end of the discussion it was agreed to:

* Restructure the existing drafts taking into consideration the remarks done by the group.
* Shorten the main chapters and to place the research and methodology analysis parts in the Addendum in order to satisfy any reader (those interested in theory, methodology and databases or guidelines only).
* Find common concepts and definitions throughout the study and refer to them in the glossary.
* Nominate a responsible for each chapter for a global overview. This person will ensure that the logical chain of the content is respected without unnecessary overlaps. Mrs Sanja MIKULIC would be reviewing the Chapter 2 and Mr Janusz SIEROSLAWSKI – Chapter 3.
* Mr Yossi HAREL-FISCH will prepare the information on Israeli experience as it was presented at the 2nd meeting in Israel which would be a part of the chapter ‘’what can be done in an imperfect world’.
* Mr Fivos PAPAMALIS will finalise the literature review that will constitute and appendix or addendum to the report.
* Mr Yossi HAREL-FISCH agreed to take on the task of reviewing and revising the report (see above 4.).

In order to facilitate reading all are requested to, as far as possible, to:

* Use subtitles in each chapter
* Refer to the references in the footnotes
* Use more visuals and graphics
* Use more examples to illustrate theoretical parts

**Agreed timeline and tasks:**

23 February              Send revised chapter contributions to all other group members and Secretariat

1-2 March          Meeting of the group working on chapter 3 in Oslo

31 March           Anne Line will put contributions under the agreed structure (first draft) and identify gaps and allocate tasks to fill gaps

                         Consultant will be engaged to revise the first draft

30 April              Group members submit their contributions to fill any remaining gaps

15 May               Consultant submits revised 1st draft

25-26 May           4th meeting – Reykjavik

1. Consideration of possible aspects related to austerity to be included in the report (in this context information on drug policy decisions under austerity budgets and the role of calculating costs will be provided first hand from Iceland)
2. Discussion and finalization of contributions to ‘fill the gaps’
3. Review of revised first draft
4. Agreement of final conclusion/output/tool (taxonomy)

1 June                  Presentation of preliminary results to the Permanent Correspondents by Anne Line

15 June                Revised draft (second draft)prepared on the basis of the outcomes of the

     4th meeting and sent to consultant

20 July                 Consultant submits revised draft

31 August            Anne Line finalizes revised draft and submits to group

20 September         Deadline for any final comment/agreement by the group of the second

                             draft for presentation to the Permanent Correspondents

1 October            Report due for submission to the Secretariat

16-17 November            Submission of the report at the 79th PC meeting for feedback by the Permanent Correspondents

10 December      Deadline for any written comments by the Permanent Correspondents

                           Final revision of the report based on feedback and written comments by PCs

Spring 2017             Revised final version available for publication

1. Date and place of the next meeting

4th meeting of the Expert Group – 25-26 May 2016, Reykjavik, Iceland

Appendix 1

**Agenda of the meeting**

1. Opening of the meeting

2. Up-date by the Secretariat on recent developments of relevance to the group

3. Taking stock of contributions received – identifying gaps

4. Discussion of draft contributions to chapter 1-3

5. Discussion of content elements for the introduction

6. Finalising literature review

7. Agreement of work and tasks to be completed in preparation of the 4th meeting

8. Planning of the 4th meeting

9. Any other business

Meeting documents

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| --- | --- |
| Report of the first meeting | P-PG/COST (2015) 3 |
| Background document on Effects and associated costs of drug control policies | P-PG/COST (2015) 2 |
| Report of the second meeting | P-PG/COST (2015) 5 |

Appendix 2

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