



Message from the Director

from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon



COVID-19: WHO DECLARES END OF GLOBAL HEALTH EMERGENCY

EMCDDA: committed to protecting public health and supporting vulnerable populations

(10.05.2023) I was very pleased to learn that the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) declared this month that COVID-19 no longer constitutes a global health emergency. This is positive news for all of us, since it reflects the progress made in the fight against the disease, thanks to determined action at global and EU Member State level.

This decision was made based on the WHO's assessment of the current state of the pandemic, taking into account factors such as transmission rates, vaccine distribution and the impact on health systems worldwide. However, it is important to note that this declaration does not mean that the pandemic is over. Moving forward, we must all remain vigilant in our efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which remains an established and ongoing health issue.

It is crucial that we continue our work to protect vulnerable populations that may be facing challenges in accessing healthcare and other resources. As our President Ursula von der Leyen said, this pandemic changed the face of the EU, which has become a true European Health Union. We now have the tools, the crisis preparedness mechanisms and the Health Emergency and Response Authority (HERA) to better prepare us for health emergencies in the future.

Along with the Member States and partner institutions, we must continue our monitoring and surveillance, support vaccination of the vulnerable and work to increase preparedness. As an agency, we must ensure that the specific needs of people who use drugs receive the attention they deserve and are met with tailored services.

Thanks to an upcoming new regulation and mandate, to be applied from 2024, our newly formed European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) will support preparedness against health and security threats and will recommend evidence-based responses. Our reinforced agency will also strengthen its role in promoting and implementing prevention measures, harm reduction services and specialised health care.

While the WHO's announcement is a positive step, we must remain committed to protecting public health. Following evidence-based guidelines for vulnerable populations, we will continue to safeguard the health of those affected by drugs at different levels.

Finally, I would like to thank the many frontline professionals in the European and neighbouring countries who continued providing high-quality, adapted services to people who use drugs. Their extraordinary efforts and dedication over the past three years has allowed us to arrive where we are today.

Please continue to stay safe and healthy.