

# Occasion: Inauguration of the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) | Date: 3 July 2024

## Portuguese Secretary of State for Health, Ana Povo

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Today marks a momentous occasion for the European Union. We gather not just to celebrate the launch of a new agency, but a renewed commitment to tackling the complex issues of drugs across our continent.

For over three decades, Portugal and Lisbon have been proud to house the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, a vital resource for evidence-based drug policy. This dedication continues today as we usher in the European Union Drugs Agency. The EUDA builds upon the incredible foundation laid by the Monitoring Centre. It signifies a deeper commitment, not only to monitoring drug trends, but to actively shaping a more effective response and developing innovative solutions.

Portugal has a long history of innovation and leadership in the area of drug policy. In 2001, we were one of the first countries to decriminalise the use of all drugs. This policy was controversial at the time but has proved to be a great success in public health and social terms and has set Portugal as a model for other countries considering drug policy reforms.

In 2024, Portugal took another step in reinforcing our commitment in the area with the reformulation of the National Institute for Addictive Behaviours and Dependence, combining strategic level and local level intervention services across the country.

Drug use is a complex challenge. It's not simply about law enforcement or treatment. We must address the social and economic factors that contribute to drug use: poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunity. Building strong communities is central to a holistic approach. I'm sure that working together, we can overcome it.

The EU Drugs Agency has the potential to be transformative and it can foster a coordinated European response to new and emerging threats. Portugal stands ready to be a strong partner in this endeavour. We want to continue working together, strengthening partnerships and synergy with our National Institute. The Portuguese government wishes the agency and its team every success. We are sure that Lisbon will continue to inspire you in its history of leadership and action in the area of drug policy.