

EUDA Scientific Committee formal opinion on the Single Programming Document 2026–2028

The Scientific Committee (SC) welcomes the Single Programming Document (SPD) 2026 – 2028 and presents a series of reflections intended to facilitate its successful implementation.

1. Acknowledging the transitional context

The SC acknowledges that the SPD 2026–2028 is ambitious, informative and appropriately aligned with the evolving responsibilities of the agency. The Committee recognises the considerable efforts involved in its development, particularly considering the transitional phase marked by the new EUDA mandate, institutional growth, and changes at the senior management level.

The SC commends the document's responsiveness to the current context and concurs that it is well-suited to address the agency's near-term priorities. At the same time, the Committee emphasises that future SPDs should reflect a mature institutional framework, closely aligned with the new strategic guidelines and the ongoing implementation of the EUDA mandate.

The SC also notes that SPD documents need to be aligned with key EU strategic documents, such as ProtectEU Internal Security Strategy and the future EU Drug Strategy, and related action plans to ensure relevance and the impact of the EUDA work.

The SC welcomes the agency's support for new initiatives and efforts to adapt to changing circumstances and new responsibilities. The Committee particularly values the inclusion of staff training and internal capacity-building efforts, which are vital for sustaining institutional vitality and fostering knowledge exchange. These endeavours are essential for maintaining the dynamism and effectiveness of the agency's operations, ensuring that it remains responsive and innovative in addressing emerging needs. However, the Committee also acknowledges the concerns regarding the implementation of these initiatives, including their prioritisation, the allocation of budget and the feasibility of achieving the significant number of set goals under the current human resources constraints.

The shift from EMCDDA to EUDA involves both opportunities and challenges, especially regarding staffing and resource distribution. The SC recognises the inherent tension between annual budget allocations and the necessity to retain flexibility for rapid responses. Additionally, the Committee underlines the emphasis on delivering outputs from major contracts and activities, leveraging past achievements to fuel future ambitions.

The SC also notes that the full realisation of these ambitions will require time and that mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress should be considered. The Committee also encourages the EUDA to further invest in reviewing its performance model, especially with regard to documentation of the impact and evidence of the effectiveness of EUDA's activities.

2. Scope and content of the SPD 2026-2028

Promoting transversality

The SC appreciates the agency's commitment to transversal and multi-sectoral work, aligning with broader trends observed in academic interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and acknowledges that such integration requires careful coordination to maintain coherence and avoid fragmentation. Therefore, the Committee suggests investing in conceptual work related to the implementation of the intersectional activities and defining cooperation principles with key information and data providers, especially with the Reitox National Focal Points.

The SC welcomes the integration of gender as a cross-sectional dimension and the strengthening of migrants-related issues. Moreover, the Committee stresses the importance of a multidimensional approach also in areas such as criminality and mental health. Embedding this intersectional approach within the broader context of EU-wide strategies and programmes will ensure greater coherence, visibility, and impact.

Developing new EUDA services

The SC acknowledges the SPD 2026-2028 as an impressive commitment in terms of the breadth of outputs and of the agency's willingness to explore new areas. The Committee applauds the agency's ambition to expand its data collection efforts and several commendable new initiatives, including the shift toward city-level and micro-level policy analysis, and the emphasis on long-term structural development.

Nevertheless, the SC also suggests that the agency remains attentive to the fact that the core monitoring activities need further investments, as specified in the SPD, without being overshadowed by new initiatives, as balancing short- and long-term projects is vital to prevent fragmentation. It is also crucial that the developmental work upholds high data quality standards with comprehensive and feasible coverage in both time and geography, clear timelines for data delivery and analysis, in order to enhance the impact and planning of related activities. Including clear guidelines for the role of the Reitox National Focal Points in strengthening the EUDA's data ecosystem in the new Reitox Alliance is key.

The SC emphasises the need for health economic interpretation and socio-economic analyses, particularly those examining the factors influencing individuals to engage in the drug market economy and developing more evidence-based interventions. Expanding qualitative methods of analysis can offer unique insights into the drug market.

The SC supports the initiatives being taken by the Agency to implement the elements of the new mandate related to drug precursors, noting the importance of this topic and the serious challenges caused by illicit drug production in a number of EU Member States. In addition, the SC is pleased that work is progressing to develop the routine monitoring of drug-related homicide in the EU and notes that the success of this initiative will require investment on the part of the Reitox National Focal Points. The focus that the EUDA is placing on the prevention of youth involvement in drug markets and drug-related criminal activity, including violence is also worthwhile.

The Scientific Committee welcomes the strong emphasis placed on strengthening the monitoring of the EU drug situation and enhancing the identification and exchange of information on new psychoactive substances through the EU Early Warning System (EWS). Given the availability of highly potent synthetic drugs in the European Union, it is crucial to improve Europe's capacity to detect new substances, assess their purity, and conduct pharmacological profiling of the substances circulating on the market. The EWS remains a key instrument in supporting awareness at both national and EU levels, providing essential information for preparedness, planning, and responses to new drug threats.

We also note positively the establishment by the EUDA of a European network of forensic and toxicological laboratories to complement the work of the health and security monitoring and analysis as well as the EWS. Strengthening both EU and national monitoring capacities with forensic and toxicological expertise is essential to improving information exchange and ensuring high-quality data on drug consumption, harms and markets.

Noting that the core monitoring work of the agency remains fundamental to achieving a comprehensive, holistic, and up-to-date understanding of the European drug situation, the Scientific Committee underlines the need to further strengthen risk awareness for emerging threats. In this regard, we welcome the EUDA's plans to establish and operationalise a European drug alert system. This system will enable the issuance of targeted, rapid health and security alerts on serious drug-related risks,

thereby enhancing risk communication and supporting timely preparedness and response measures at both EU and national levels.

The Committee further welcomes the development of enhanced capacity to support health and security threat assessments. We note that the ability to respond rapidly to identified threats is of critical importance, and emphasise the need for clear guidance on prioritisation, given the resource constraints inherent in conducting such assessments. We also recognise the value of close collaboration with national experts, drawing on diverse data sources and multidisciplinary expertise to ensure robust and credible outputs.

Furthermore, the SC notes the importance of including in the SPD cross-cutting topics that are necessary for the implementation of the EUDA's mandate, notably research, innovation and foresight. The Committee reiterates the support for futures thinking (foresight) and suggest its integration into the agency's strategic planning. The Committee also welcomes the new EUDA role in conducting studies, supporting drug-related research initiatives and identifying priorities and encourages the development of gap maps to identify areas requiring further research, in line with efforts in other EUDA domains.

The SC values the practical orientation of EUDA's outputs and highlights the relevance of its communication products, particularly for education and outreach purposes.

Fostering new partnerships and stakeholders' engagement

The SC commends the EUDA for its impressive engagement with EU neighbouring countries and other key third countries around the world. Of particular relevance is the agency's role in supporting candidate and potential candidate countries to the EU to develop their policies, their responses and their national monitoring systems in the drugs field. The Committee notes with particular satisfaction recent developments in the submission of data from these partners and encourages the agency to further develop these efforts.

The SC highlights the importance to further promote synergies with other organisations and agencies, to maximise efficiency and effectiveness of the new services that the agency will offer. Enhanced cooperation with the scientific community and research centres in Europe and globally is needed to improve the agency analytical insights on international and European scientific development. In this regard, the Scientific Committee congratulates the engagement of the Agency with the scientific and research community, notably the outcomes and overall impact of Lisbon Addictions conferences.

The SC notes that further collaboration between EUDA, UNODC and WHO may be further promoted, especially considering recent financial constraints affecting the UN system. The Committee suggests remaining attentive to this evolving landscape.

The SC welcomes EUDA's new mandate to collaborate with civil society organisations and affected communities and individuals. To further enhance this dimension, the establishment of a civil society advisory group may be considered. Such a platform could provide innovative and unconventional perspectives.

Digital transformation

Digital transformation, including the application and integration of artificial intelligence in future work will be crucial. Efforts outlined in the SPD to create a more digital, inclusive and sustainable agency are very timely, as is the emphasis placed on creating new digital platforms to facilitate collaboration and enhance communication and stakeholder engagement. While welcoming developments in this area, the SC reminds the agency of the need to maintain high scientific standards and to take a neutral and independent approach to the evaluation and reporting of evidence in all areas of its mandate.

3. Conclusions

The Scientific Committee endorses the SPD for 2026-2028 as a valuable framework that is appropriate to the efforts needed for the full implementation of the EUDA mandate.

The Scientific Committee remains committed to accompanying the EUDA in this period of transition and growth.

Adopted in October 2025