

Country: Kingdom of Belgium

Committee: Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)

Topic: Online Drug Trafficking

The Kingdom of Belgium has acknowledged the issue of drugs since the start of this millennium and has pushed for “An integrated approach, in which all the competent players work in a coordinated manner, while respecting the finality and the specific characteristics of each”^[1]. This has not only been demonstrated at a national level, but also at an international level by Matilde Ceravolo asking Belgium, as a maritime nation, to “spearhead the fight against drug trafficking”^[2].

Unfortunately, Europe’s market for cocaine has continued to grow, causing significant strain on European healthcare systems^[3], with Belgium accounting for a third of all cocaine seized in 2017^[3]. On the topic of the darknet, Belgium is a member of Europol, the organisation that raided 9 darknet marketplaces as part of Operation Onymous^[4]. Despite this effort, darknet marketplaces have proven to be resilient^[4]. This is likely due to the fact that buying drugs via the darknet is considered “safer” as the possible violence of meeting face-to-face is removed and that buyers do not consider themselves affected by a closure^[5]. In addition, there are multiple ways to reduce the risk of detection and fraud via services such as bitcoin tumbling and escrow systems^[4].

Belgium calls for support from other European countries, the United States of America, and other countries with significant technological expertise to form an international task force aimed specifically at the investigation of darknet marketplaces. In addition to this, demand reduction efforts must be conducted across Europe and North America which, in tandem with efforts to reduce the production of drugs in countries such as Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru, aim to reduce the volume of drugs being sold.

A significant challenge that will be faced is the coordination of activity between countries to ensure a darknet task force is able to work effectively^[4], this may be solvable via creating secure and robust platforms for confidential information to be shared however the specifics of such a solution are undecided as of yet. Another likely challenge will be how to prevent organised crime groups from maintaining a foothold in drug producing countries^[3]. This issue is unlikely to be solvable in the short term and will require cooperation from the concerned countries to actively seek out these groups and to prevent them from rising to power.

The solutions to the above challenges require input from the concerned countries. That being said, Belgium strongly believes that common international standards must be put in place to ensure the success of any subsequent action and urges other countries to promise their support..

Bibliography

- [1] Belgium, “Communal Declaration of the Interministerial Drug Conference.” *Communal Declaration of the Interministerial Drug Conference*, 2010.
- [2] “CRIMJUST Organizes Investigative Case Forum between the Republic of Ecuador, the Republic of Colombia and the Kingdom of Belgium.” *United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime*,
www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/crimjust/news/crimjust-organizes-investigative-case-forum-between-the-republic-of-ecuador--the-republic-of-colombia-and-the-kingdom-of-belgium.html.
- [3] European Union, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, “European Drug Report 2019: Trends and Developments.” *European Drug Report 2019: Trends and Developments*.
- [4] European Union, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, “Drugs and the Darknet: Perspectives for Enforcement, Research and Policy.” *Drugs and the Darknet: Perspectives for Enforcement, Research and Policy*.
- [5] United Nations, Office on Drugs and Crime, “World Drug Report 2019.” *World Drug Report 2019*, UNODC, 2019.