

SUMMARY

The policy document 'A combined effort to combat XTC' contains a plan of action aiming at reaching a considerable reduction in the production and trafficking of XTC. It mentions a large number of action points that should lead to a better approach to XTC production and trafficking in the Netherlands and also to a higher chance of arresting offenders.

In order to monitor the implementation of the action points, a number of indicators have been developed. By means of these indicators, the first assessment gives the state of affairs in 2002. The indicators are subdivided into, on the one hand, the efforts made by the participants (input indicators and process indicators) and, on the other hand, the results flowing from these efforts (output indicators and outcome indicators). The indicators are based on data from registrations. Data from questionnaires were used for the indicators monitoring the process.

The first assessment shows that the points of action mentioned in the policy document have to a large extent been realised. However, more assessments and further research are needed in order to establish exactly how successful the implementation of the intensified approach to XTC has been.

Efforts

The number of people involved in tracking down the production and trafficking of XTC was nearly doubled in 2002. The extra manpower especially went to five XTC teams set up by the police, the Economic Inspection Service of the Fiscal Intelligence and Investigation Service (Dutch: FIOD/ECD), Customs, and the Dutch Royal Military Police (Kmar). The other bodies involved - the Dutch Public Prosecution Department (OM), the judiciary, the Netherlands Forensic Institute, the Embassy counsellor, and police liaisons - also saw an increase in their number of employees.

Not only did Customs and FIOD/ECD employ more people, they also received better equipment to gather information. At Customs this equipment is used to check for XTC at the country's borders. FIOD/ECD uses the equipment to improve the tracking down of precursors, i.e. raw materials which are needed to produce synthetic drugs.

The collaboration among partners involved in the XTC- approach is monitored by means of a questionnaire. Data from this first assessment show that the frequency of collaboration among partners varies from a few times a year to daily. When questioned about the significance of collaboration, partners value the importance at average with a 6 (on a scale from 1 to 10). The quality of the collaboration scores at average a 7. Furthermore, the accessibility of collaboration partners is regarded 'good'. The quality of information exchange and collaboration during criminal investigations can however, according to the partners, be improved.

Employees of Core Team South Netherlands/Unit for Synthetic Drugs (KTZ/USD) have the strongest cooperative link in which the collaboration is less intense. On average they attach more importance to collaboration than the other partners.

Results

The output indicators show that the bodies involved in enforcement and investigation have in general become more productive. More inspections took place, more research projects were started, more (international) collaborative ventures were realized, knowledge about XTC and precursors increased and better equipment became available.

In order to monitor developments on the XTC market – which indeed are to be expected because of the implementation of extra actions from the policy document –

various outcome indicators have been developed. Just like the policy document, these outcome indicators cover a broad area and open the door to monitoring a wide range of developments on the XTC market which may occur as a result of the intensified approach to XTC. The indicators are not directly derived from the policy document on XTC. This was not possible because the policy document does not mention any explicit objectives. After consulting the steering committee, the researchers indicated which results were to be expected, showing a subdivision into results concerning supply and results concerning demand. These expectations may initiate more clearly formulated objectives.

The outcome indicators show that the year 2002 saw more seizures of XTC (pills, powders, and pastes) and bulk chemicals, more dismantling of production facilities in the Netherlands and less environmental dumping than preceding years. The data come from a preliminary assessment which took place in the first part of the year 2002. Some of the data from before 2002 are not known. These data will get more meaning after follow-up assessments have taken place.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the first assessment, this report makes several recommendations.

As also mentioned in the policy document, it is recommended to have at least two follow-up assessments done by an independent research institute. In 2004 an interim evaluation may take place combined with a more in-depth study. This in-depth study may already start in 2003. The final assessment may take place in 2006. Data for all indicators may be collected in this assessment as well as interviews with those involved.

It is recommended to further specify the expectations concerning the results of the XTC policy document and, if necessary, to improve the quality of the indicators. It is also recommended to focus on the most important expectations. These expectations can be subdivided into, on the one hand, results regarding supply and, on the other hand, results regarding demand. The expectations need to be submitted for review to all authorities involved in the implementation in a supplementary study. These authorities then need to determine whether these expectations are in accordance with the implicit objectives of the policy document.

An in-depth study may contain interviews with suspects caught in the Netherlands in order to find out if they were involved in the production, facilitation, distribution and/or trafficking of XTC or precursors. Apart from interviewing suspects, it is advisable to gather additional information about production sites (both in the Netherlands and abroad) in order to get information about where and on what scale the production takes place. Finally, it is recommended to interview employees of Customs and the police in order to gain an insight into trends in the trafficking of not only raw materials but also half-finished and final products.