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ANTI-DRUG POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Антинаркотическая политика Европейского союза

Пасюкевич М.А.

Научный руководитель: ст. преподаватель Точилина А.К.
Белорусский национальный технический университет

Nowadays, one of the most serious threats to the security of the European Union is international drug trafficking. Drug expansion is closely linked to terrorism, cross-border crime, smuggling and human trafficking, causes irreparable damage to entire states, knocking out the youngest and most dynamic population from normal life.

Modern problems of global drug addiction in Europe

Opportunities for expanding drug trafficking in Europe were created by the abolition of controls at internal borders, significant differences in the laws of member states and insufficiently effective law enforcement cooperation. Drugs circulate almost freely and without interruption within the European Union, as they come simultaneously from multiple delivery points and are processed in laboratories located in all member states.

According to the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), in the EU countries as a whole, there are more than 70 million cannabis users, more than 12 million cocaine users, more than 9.5 million – ecstasy users and more than 11 million - amphetamine users (including those who have tried drugs only a few times). At least half a million EU residents are being treated for heroin addiction, about 7.5 thousand people die each year from an overdose [1].

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (ODC) points out three weak points in the international response to drug business:

- heroin production in Afghanistan,
- supply and consumption of cannabis throughout the world,

- fashion for cocaine in Europe.

In its annual reports on the fight against organized crime, Europol reports on the elimination of large organized criminal groups specializing in drug trafficking. Although heroin consumption in the EU countries is not as significant as cannabis or ecstasy consumption, the social problems of heroin addicts place a heavy burden on local authorities, so the seriousness of the problem cannot be measured by quantitative indicators.

At the present time, it is already a question of “drug addiction of entire countries and regions through which the main drug trafficking routes run”. Deliveries of drugs, despite opposition from both member states and the European Union, remain one of the most profitable types of criminal business.

The main routes of drug trafficking

Intensive trade between Europe and the Asian continent, the availability of infrastructure for land, sea and air transport greatly simplify the supply of drugs to European countries.

Drug transportation routes have long existed. Basic, traditional routes maintain their positions. Nevertheless, there is a significant diversification of the routes and means of their transportation. Traditionally, opiates were transported to Europe mainly through two transport corridors:

- from Afghanistan to Central Asia and further west along the northern or “silk road”;
- from Afghanistan through Iran to Turkey and further along the “Balkan route”, through Iran, Turkey, the Balkan countries and further to Southern and Central Europe towards the Netherlands.

Thanks to international cooperation, poppy cultivated areas were reduced by 21% in Afghanistan. However, due to the high yield per hectare, this measure led to a decrease in the amount of raw materials obtained by only 2% [2]. In recent years, a powerful industrial and financial system has been built in the country, covering all stages of the business: harvesting opium poppy and raw opium, its centralized delivery to warehouses, processing into morphine and heroin, and then further transportation along well-functioning routes to countries of sale. The reasons that virtually nullify the efforts of the authorities to eradicate the drug business are traditional - corruption, high incomes from the drug business, and the lack of other means to live with the peasants.

Belgium and the Netherlands play an important role in the secondary distribution of heroin of Afghan origin. They supply the largest consumer, the United Kingdom, and in recent years, France, Germany and Spain. Heroin trafficking into the European Union is controlled by Turkish criminal groups and drug dealers from the countries of South-West Asia who are in their service, who buy goods directly from manufacturers. Inefficient border controls, lack of

technical resources and personnel, and well-established connections between the drug business along the entire route facilitate traffic.

In recent years, new routes have been developed in the framework of traditional drug trafficking routes. Europe is supplied with drugs through Pakistan, Iran, the Middle East, East Africa. Afghan opiates are shipped to Europe by sea and air through Pakistan. The role of transshipment points in the seaport of Karachi is increasing. The Black Sea route, which begins in Iran and passes through the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine to Romania, is increasingly being used.

Turkey remains the main corridor for heroin traffic to the European Union. It is here that the Balkan route of drug supply from Southeast Asia and ecstasy in the opposite direction begins. The entire route is equipped with storage facilities.

Today we can speak with confidence about the emergence of a new “golden triangle” in the territory of the Balkans - Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, where heroin production has been churned out.

The air route is also used - through Moscow’s Domodedovo Airport, Novosibirsk, Samara, etc. According to UN estimates, in order to satisfy the population’s needs of the Russian population for heroin, 13 tons of this substance are imported annually, the remaining 27 tons of imported drugs follow further, through Belarus and Poland to the west [3].

Cocaine enters Europe through the Atlantic Ocean by sea and air to the main reception centers in Spain (Galicia), Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium and France from Colombia, Bolivia, Peru. These countries in the Andean region remain the world’s largest cocaine producers. The Netherlands plays a key role in Europe as a center for transporting, storing and producing and consolidating lots of drugs of various kinds.

Fight against drug trafficking - the answer of the European Union

Since the late 1990s, the European Union has been developing a comprehensive strategy for actions in respect of drugs. In December 2004, the Council approved the EU Anti-Drug Strategy for 2005–2012, within which two Action Plans were developed, each for a four-year period.

The strategy is based on the relevant UN conventions that serve as the main anti-drug legal instruments: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, as amended by the Protocol of 1971, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, the Convention on Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

The strategy states the main objectives of the EU policy:

- Achieving a high level of health care and social equity in the EU through Community activities that complement the national policies of member

states to prevent and reduce drug use, drug addiction and harm to the health of citizens;

- Ensuring public security through the cooperation of member states in combating the illicit drug production and trafficking;
- Strengthening coordination mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels, which should enhance the effectiveness of drug policy both in the European Union and in the international context and in its relations with partners.

The fight against drug trafficking, in accordance with the strategy, is also conducted in three directions:

- Operational cooperation of member states with the support and participation of Europol, Eurojust, the MAOC-N and CELAD maritime anti-drug centers;
- Formation of EU anti-drug legislation;
- International cooperation.

The need for a global fight against the threat of drugs

The whole world recognizes that drug trafficking threatens the world order, however, international cooperation is unproductive in comparison with the operation of illegal business both at the regional level and globally. Routes of drug trafficking are well known, stops and places of warehouses also, nevertheless, the flexibility of the network organization, which allows changing the routes and moving production and storage of drugs, makes drug trafficking and business invulnerable. The exchange of information between cooperating criminal groups is also better than between law enforcement agencies. Europol is limited in operational capability with member states. International cooperation is hindered by the divergence of interests of countries in a particular region. The effectiveness of the fight against the threat of drugs depends on the integration of the efforts of partners, on the degree of interaction within the framework of special programs and strategies.

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