European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

NEWS RELEASE from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

COUNCIL DECISION: 'APPROPRIATE CONTROLS' FOR BZP

New drug BZP to be placed under control across the EU

(3.3.2008, LISBON) Europe has responded today to concerns over the use of the stimulant drug BZP by subjecting it to 'control measures and criminal provisions' across the EU Member States. The decision of the Council of the EU ([1]) was adopted today in the final stage of a three-step procedure designed to respond to potentially threatening new psychoactive drugs in the EU ([2]).

The Council Decision is based on the findings of a formal risk-assessment report on BZP produced in 2007 by the Scientific Committee of the **EU drugs agency (EMCDDA)**, with participation of additional experts from the **European Commission, Europol** and the **European Medicines Agency (EMEA)** ([3]). The report, submitted to the European Commission and Council of the EU on 31 May 2007, examined the health and social risks of the drug as well as information on international trafficking and the involvement of organised crime.

The Council Decision states that: 'due to its stimulant properties, risk to health, the lack of medical benefits and following the precautionary principle, there is a need to control BZP', through measures 'appropriate to the relatively low risks of the substance'.

EU Member States are thus called on today to take, within one year, the necessary measures to submit BZP to: 'control measures proportionate to the risks of the substance' and 'criminal penalities' in line with their national laws (which in turn comply with the UN drug conventions). Eight EU Member States (**Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta** and **Sweden**) already control BZP under drug control or equivalent legislation and two (**Spain** and the **Netherlands**) regulate it under their medicine-related legislation.

BZP (1-benzylpiperazine) is a psychoactive drug belonging to the group of piperazine derivatives, which includes substances such as mCPP and TFMPP. Like amphetamine and methamphetamine, BZP is a central nervous system stimulant and is reported by users to provoke similar effects to these substances, although it is less potent (around 10% of that of d-amphetamine). Whereas the parent compound piperazine has been widely used for many years as an anti-worming drug in animals, BZP has never been used for such a purpose.

Health risks or adverse reactions reported by BZP users include: vomiting, headaches, stomach pains/nausea, anxiety, insomnia, mood swings and confusion — with certain symptoms sometimes lasting for up to 24 hours. Clinical reports on BZP patients have suggested links between use of the drug and grand mal seizures, although this finding is based on a very small number of cases. BZP has also been found in some post-mortem samples, but the extent to which the drug was implicated in the deaths is unknown as other substances or circumstances were also involved.

BZP was first notified to the EMCDDA and Europol via their early-warning system on new drugs in 1999, but there was an increase in the number of notifications of BZP to the agencies at the end of 2006. Over the last two years, BZP-containing products have been aggressively marketed by various retailers and websites as 'natural' or 'herbal' highs and as a legal alternative to ecstasy ('Legal E', 'Legal X') ([4]), misleading potential users to believe the drug is safe. Many BZP tablets and capsules contain TFMPP, the combination of the two substances mimicking some of the effects of ecstasy.

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To date, **15 EU Member States** and non-member **Norway** have reported to **Europol** and/or the **EMCDDA** seizures of BZP in powder, capsule or tablet form, ranging from small seizures (**Belgium** and **Greece**) to up to 64,900 tablets (**UK**).

The risk-assessment report revealed little information on large-scale synthesis, processing or distribution of BZP or on the involvement of organised crime. This may be explained by the fact that, in the countries where it has not been subject to legal controls, there has been no need for illicit production as it has been available from retail chemical suppliers.

BZP has no established or acknowledged medical value and there are no known licensed medicinal products containing the substance in the EU. Today's Council Decision states that placing the drug under control in the EU Member States may help avoid problems in international law enforcement and judicial cooperation. BZP is currently not under assessment by the UN drug control system.

Notes:

([1]) Council Decision formally adopted on 3.3.2008 at the Environment Council meeting in Brussels.

Document number 6603/08: Proposal for a Council Decision on defining 1-benzylpiperazine (BZP) as a new psychoactive substance which is to be made subject to control measures and criminal provisions.

http://register.consilium.europa.eu/servlet/driver?page=Result&lang=EN&typ=Advanced&cmsid=639&ff_COTE_DOCUMENT=6603%2F08&ff_COTE_DOSSIER_INST=&ff_TITRE=&ff_FT_TEXT=&ff_SOUS_COTE_MATIERE=&dd_DATE_DOCUMENT=&dd_DATE_REUNION=&dd_FT_DATE=&fc=REGAISEN&srm=25&md=100&ssf=

"I/A" item note — http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st06/st06603.en08.pdf

Document number 6573/08: Council Decision on defining 1-benzylpiperazine (BZP) as a new psychoactive substance which is to be made subject to control measures and criminal provisions.

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([2]) Council Decision 2005/387/JHA of 10 May 2005 on the information exchange, risk assessment and control of new psychoactive substances [*Official Journal* L 127, 20.5.2005]. See two-page leaflet explaining the three-step procedure at http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/?nnodeID=17869

([3]) See EMCDDA news release No 3/2007 at http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/?nnodeID=875 and risk-assessment report at http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/?nnodeid=1346

([4]) Products containing BZP have been sold under various brand names including: Pep pills (Pep original, Pep X, Pep twisted, Pep love); Funk pills (Flying Angel, Twisted), JAX; Red Eye Frog (Californian Sunrise, Strawberry Fields) Triple X (XXX), Efx.