

**EDCS-NC 2024****Panel on Effective Drug Control Strategies in Northern Cyprus:  
Challenges and Opportunities in 2024****ANTI-DRUG SUPPLY POLICIES: INTER-INSTITUTIONAL  
COORDINATION AND ACTION PLANS**Gazi Levent Kurtođlu (a)\* 

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**Abstract**

Türkiye has been developing strategic plans and related action plans to fight addictions including drugs since 2006. The responsibility for nationwide coordination is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Combating Tobacco and Substance Addiction in the Ministry of Health. This paper focuses on four research objectives: firstly, the inter-institutional coordination mechanisms in place for combating drug supply in Türkiye; secondly, the National Strategy Documents and Action Plans in the fight against drugs developed and implemented so far in Türkiye; and thirdly, the contents of the Action Plans the fight against drugs in Türkiye between 2006-2023 are presented. The fourth research objective covers noteworthy literature review on strategies to ensure the fight against drug supplies in Türkiye's Action Plan are compatible with those of the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan. The paper concludes with recommendations for the coordination of the fight against drug supply in the Strategy and Action Plan for Northern Cyprus.

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## 1. Introduction

Türkiye has a strategic geographical position in drug trafficking. With its location on the Balkan Route, which is an extremely important route in the context of drug trafficking (Europol, 2021), Türkiye is a transit and target country both in the trafficking of opium derivatives, especially heroin, produced in Asia and transferred to Europe, methamphetamine, the production and trafficking of which has continued to increase in recent years in the same region, and in the trafficking of synthetic drugs and chemicals used in the production of these substances produced in Europe and shipped to Asia.

A systemic, holistic, interdisciplinary approach that prioritizes coordination, the fight against supply, demand reduction (prevention, treatment, social rehabilitation), international relations, monitoring and evaluation, and communication should be implemented to determine an effective policy in the fight against drugs. This approach should also take into account the national and international requirements of the countries involved.

Türkiye considers crimes related to the supply of illegal substances as crimes against humanity and adopts an approach that considers substance addiction as a disease and an important public health problem. Furthermore, Türkiye considers the fight against the supply of drugs as an organized crime that crosses borders and thus, implements the principle of zero tolerance.

The Department of Smuggling Intelligence, Operation and Data Collection (SIODC) within the Ministry of Interior is responsible for the overall coordination of the fight against smuggling crimes, particularly drug trafficking. The Ministry fulfils this responsibility through the Smuggling Intelligence Coordination Board (SIC) which also directs the efforts of the law enforcement agencies to combat the supply of drugs, which is a part of organized crime.

In Türkiye, efforts to combat the supply of drugs are carried out by the Ministry of Interior (Turkish National Police, Gendarmerie General Command, and the Coast Guard Command) and the Ministry of Trade (General Directorate of Customs Enforcement). These efforts have been well documented in the literature.

By advancing the decisive and effective struggle, these institutions are compelled, on the one hand, to conduct research on scientific facts pertinent to their respective domains of expertise and, on the other, to disseminate the acquired knowledge and experience to stakeholder institutions.

This paper highlights critical points that will contribute to the fight against the supply and addiction dimension of the Anti-Drug Strategy and Action Plan planned to be developed for the Northern Cyprus in the light of Türkiye's experiences in combating drug supplies as part of anti-drug strategies. The following questions were used to guide the search for and sequence of the relevant data.

- i. Which inter-institutional coordination mechanisms are in place to combat drug supplies in Türkiye?
- ii. Which National Strategy Documents and Action Plans in the fight against drugs were developed and implemented in Türkiye?
- iii. What are the contents of Action Plans of Türkiye in the fight against drugs between 2006-2023?
- iv. Are strategies to fight against drugs supply in the Action Plan of Türkiye compatible with those of the EU Drugs Strategy?

- v. What recommendations can be made to contribute to effective coordination mechanisms for fight with drug supply in Northern Cyprus?

## **2. Strategies Used in Türkiye in the Fight Against Drugs**

### **2.1. Strategies on Fighting Against Drugs and Coordination**

The coordination task between institutions and organizations working in the field of combating drugs in Türkiye is carried out by the following institutions:

- Presidency of the Family Research Council between 1997 and 2002,
- Ministry of Interior-Turkish National Police (TNP) - Department of Anti-Smuggling and Organised Crime-TUBIM between 2002-2015,
- Since 2015, Ministry of Health, Department of Combating Tobacco and Substance Addiction.

Compared to other countries, the coordination mechanism established within the Ministry of Health has a systematic and holistic structure operate at a higher level which include:

- The Higher Council for Combating Addiction (BMYK): this council which convenes twice a year is chaired by the Vice President and comprises the Ministers of Justice, Family, Labor and Social Services, Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Youth and Sports, Treasury and Finance, Interior, National Education, Health, Agriculture, Trade, Transport and Infrastructure, and the Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Health and Food Policies Board.
- Board for Combating Addiction (BMK): This Board which convenes at least four times a year is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Health and comprises the Deputy Ministers of Justice, Family, Labor and Social Services, Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Youth and Sports, Treasury and Finance, Interior, National Education, Health, Agriculture, Trade, Transport and Infrastructure; the Deputy Chairmen of the Forensic Medicine Institute and Religious Affairs; the Chairman of the Financial Crimes Investigation Board; the Deputy Chairmen of the Radio and Television Supreme Council, the Communication Authority of the Republic of Turkey, the Turkish Statistical Institute, the Council of Higher Education; and Directors General of Public Health of the Ministry of Health, and the Turkish Green Crescent Society.
- Technical Committee for Combating Addiction (BMTK): this committee which convenes six times a year is chaired by the Director General of Public Health of the Ministry of Health with the participation of representatives of the UNCTB Member Institutions at the level of at least Head of Department.
- The duties of the above-mentioned boards are to prepare and approve the Strategy Documents and Action Plans which are on Türkiye's road map in the fight against drugs, and to plan, monitor and evaluate the work to be done in this field.
- Provincial Coordination Committees for Combating Addiction have been established under the chairmanship of the Governor in the provinces.

- Provincial Coordination Committees for Combating Addiction have been established have been established in districts under the chairmanship of District Governors.

The secretariats of all committees are coordinated by the central and provincial organizations of the Ministry of Health.

### **3. National Strategies and Action Plans on the Fight Against Drugs**

The Government of the Republic of Türkiye published its first Strategy Document and Action Plan on the fight against drugs in 2006. These strategy documents and action plans are listed below.

- 2006-2012 National Policy and Strategy Document on Addictive Substances and Combating Addiction
  - 2007-2009 Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Policy and Strategy Document on Combating Addictive Substances and Addiction
  - 2010-2012 Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Policy and Strategy Document on Combating Addictive Substances and Addiction
- 2013-2018 National Strategy Document on the fight against drugs
  - 2013-2015 National Action Plan on the fight against drugs
- 2015 National Anti-Drug Strategy Document and Urgent Action Plan
- 2016-2018 National Anti-Drug Strategy Document
  - 2016-2018 National Action Plan on the fight against drugs
  - 2018-2023 National Strategy Document on the fight against drugs
  - 2018-2023 National Action Plan on the fight against drugs
  - 2024-2029 National Strategy Document on Fight against drugs (In preparation)
  - 2018-2023 National Action Plan on the fight against drugs
  - Five anti-drug strategy documents and action plans for the implementation of these strategies were developed between 2006-2023. The 2024-2029 National Strategy Document on Fight against drugs and the Action Plan developed for the implementation of this document will be approved and will enter into force in 2024.

In addition, Provincial Coordination Committees for Combating Addiction in provinces develop Provincial Anti-Drug Action Plans in line with the National Strategy and Action Plan, taking into account local needs.

The activities included in the national Action Plans are reported to the Ministry of Health, which is the operational secretariat, by the institutions on an interim and annual basis.

**Table 1.** Strategy papers issued by the government of the Republic of Türkiye in 2006-2023 and their contents

| STRATEGY DOCUMENTS AND PERIODS        |  |  |  |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
|                                       | National Policy and Strategy Document on Addictive Substances and Combating Addiction (2006-2012)  | National Drug Policy and Strategy Document (2013-2018)   | National Strategy Document on Fight against drugs (2015)   | National Strategy Document on Fight against drugs (2016-2018)  | National Strategy Document on Fight against drugs (2018-2023)   |
| <b>CONTENTS OF STRATEGY DOCUMENTS</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supply Reduction</li> <li>2. Demand Reduction</li> <li>3. International Cooperation</li> <li>4. Information Collecting, Research</li> <li>5. Evaluation</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supply Reduction</li> <li>2. Demand Reduction</li> <li>3. International Cooperation</li> <li>4. Information Collection, Research</li> <li>5. Evaluation</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preventing Accessibility to Drugs</li> <li>2. Taking Measures for Educational Institutions</li> <li>3. Taking Measures for Identified Target Groups</li> <li>4. Advisory Units in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>5. Strengthening Drug Addiction Treatment Mechanisms</li> <li>6. Ensuring Social Integration of Drug Addicts</li> <li>7. Establishment of a Scientific Advisory Board on Combating Drugs</li> <li>8. Establishment of Anti-Drug Decision Support System (UKDS)</li> <li>9. Legislative Activities in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>10. Coordination and Cooperation in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>11. Communication and Informing the Public in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>12. Diagnostic and Laboratory Services</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preventing Access to Drugs</li> <li>2. Community Involvement in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>3. Treatment to Combat Demand</li> <li>4. Social Cohesion in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>5. Communication in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>6. Execution and Coordination of the Process</li> <li>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</li> <li>5. Financial Dimension of the Fight against drugs</li> <li>6. Cooperation with Local Authorities and NGOs in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>7. Advisory Units in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>8. International Experiences and Successful Country Models in the Fight against drugs</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prevention of Drug Supply</li> <li>2. Preventing the Demand for Drugs</li> <li>3. Protective and Preventive Services</li> <li>4. Counselling, Decontamination, Treatment and Rehabilitation Services</li> <li>5. Social Cohesion Services</li> <li>6. Communication in the Fight against drugs</li> <li>7. Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Process of Combating Drugs</li> </ol> |

An analysis of the main subject headings of the strategy documents reveals that coordination, combating supply, demand reduction, international relations, data collection, and evaluation are included in the strategy documents of each period, while communication is included as a subject heading in the Strategy Plans of the last period.

Even though the strategy documents published in Türkiye between 2006 and 2023 and their contents have changed periodically, they are aligned with the headings in the Anti-Drug Strategy Documents published by the EU since 2000. A periodical analysis of the main headings of the EU Strategy Documents reveals that;

- 1) 2000-2004 EU Strategy Document; Coordination, Information and Evaluation, Reduction of Demand, Prevention of Drug use and of Drug Related Crime, Supply Reduction, International relations (EMCDDA, 1999a);
- 2) 2005-2012 Strategy Document: Coordination, Policy field- demand reduction, Policy field- supply reduction, Cross-cutting theme- international cooperation, Cross-cutting theme- information, research and evaluation (EMCDDA, 1999b);
- 3) 2013-2020 Strategy Document: Policy field- drug demand reduction, Policy field- drug supply reduction, Cross-cutting theme- international cooperation, Cross-cutting theme- information, research, monitoring and evaluation (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012);
- 4) 2021-2025 Strategy Document: Drug supply reduction, Drug demand reduction, Addressing drug-related harm, International Cooperation, Research, Innovation and foresight, Coordination, governance and implementation (Council of the European Union, 2021a).

A comparison of the main headings of the Strategy Papers issued by Türkiye and those of the EU reveals that even though some periods are named differently, the headings for coordination, combating supply, demand reduction (prevention, treatment, social rehabilitation), international relations, information gathering, monitoring and evaluation are common across the documents.

These documents developed by Türkiye have been prepared with a systemic, holistic, multidisciplinary perspective with the participation of public institutions, local administrations, non-governmental organizations, universities, etc.

### **3.1. Strategies and Coordination to Fight Against the Supply of Drugs**

According to the 2021 Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment Report developed by EUROPOL; 38% of the criminal organizations operating in the EU are involved in the drug trade (Europol, 2021).

According to the 2023 Turkey Drug Report, security forces intervened in 215,771 incidents in 2021 and 246,237 incidents in 2022 with an increase of 14.1%. In these incidents, 313,786 suspects were apprehended with an increase of 6.5% compared to the previous year. In addition, 37,085 incidents (15.1%) in 2022 were related to the offense of manufacturing and trafficking of narcotic substances (Article 188 of the Turkish Criminal Law).

According to the same report, 35.4% (114,924) of the 291,546 convicts and detainees in Penal Execution Institutions in Türkiye are incarcerated for drug-related offenses.

A data analysis of the Penal Execution Institutions reveals that drug-related crimes in Türkiye are at the forefront compared to other crimes.

Both national and international reports praise the work carried out by law enforcement units in the field of combating drug supplies in Türkiye.

According to the 2023 European Drugs Report (EMCDDA, 2023), Turkey seized the following in 2021;

- 5.5 tons of methamphetamine seizures in 2021 (4.2 tons in 2020)- 4.5 times more methamphetamine than in the EU as a whole,
- 7.6 million MDMA tablets seized- more than twice as many as in the whole EU,
- More than 22.2 tons of heroin seized (13.4 tons in 2020) - 2.3 times more heroin than in the EU as a whole

Efforts to fight against drug in Türkiye is carried out by 4 units;

- Within the Ministry of Interior: Turkish National Police, Gendarmerie General Command, and the Coast Guard Command,
- Within the Ministry of Trade: General Directorate of Customs Enforcement.

The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Treasury and Finance are also part of the fight against drug supplies.

An examination of the organization of the law enforcement agencies working in the field of combating supply reveals that the counter-narcotic crime units in the law enforcement agencies operate at these levels;

- Directorate under Turkish National Police;
- Department within the Gendarmerie General Command; and
- Section Commander within the Coast Guard Command.

Departments within the General Directorate of Customs Enforcement include the following as shown in Figure 1 below:



Source: (The General Directorate of Security, 2024; Turkish Gendarmerie General Command, 2024; Turkish Coast Guard Command, 2024; Directorate General of Customs Enforcement, 2024)

**Figure 1.** Units Working in the Field of Fighting Against Supply and Anti-Drug Structures

Drug crimes constitute a very important part of organized crime in Türkiye.

Among the duties of the Department of SIODC, established within the Ministry of Interior in 1982, and which plays a critical role in the fight against organized crime is "to collect and evaluate intelligence on all kinds of smuggling activities across the state, to inform the institutions in charge of preventing, pursuing and investigating smuggling, to direct the prevention and apprehension activities of affiliated institutions and to take the necessary measures for coordination and cooperation between the relevant institutions" (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Teşkilatı Hakkında Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararnamesi No.1. art. 262).

In 1987, the Smuggling Intelligence Coordination (SIB-KİK) Board was established within the Presidency to ensure coordination among relevant ministries, institutions and organizations and to carry out services in evaluating and combating all kinds of smuggling activities, both domestically and abroad, and to assist in the determination of target tactics and procedures (Kaçakçılık İstihbarat Koordinasyon Kurulunun Toplanma, Çalışma Esas Ve Usulleri Hakkında Yönetmelik, 1987).

The SIB meets every four months where important decisions are made in the fight against smuggling and organized crime, including the fight against drugs, and where the road maps of the related institutions are determined. The SIB consists of representatives of the National Intelligence Organization, Turkish General Staff, Land Forces Command, Gendarmerie General Command, Turkish National Police, Coast Guard Command, General Directorate of Customs Enforcement and the General Directorate of Customs, and the Head of the SIODC Department.

The committee, which deals with the supply side of drug crimes in Türkiye, was established prior to the strategy and action plans issued in Türkiye. In this committee, which was initially established with the aim of combating other organized crimes, the issues of combating drug crimes are also discussed.

### **3.2. Strategies (Action Plans) on Fighting Against Supply**

A summary of the key components from the Action Plans spanning 2007 to 2023 is provided in Table 2.

In particular, the following main issues have been included in the action plans in almost every period: preventing the entry of drugs and precursor chemicals into Türkiye, border security, prevention of drug cultivation, institutional capacity increase, trainings, inter-institutional cooperation, international relations, data sharing, risk analysis, legislation, finance and terrorism dimension, abandoned buildings, reporting mechanisms, criminal laboratories, and early warning system (EWS).

The EU Drug Strategy Document, covering 2021-2025, comprises 6 main sections and 11 Strategic Priorities; 4 of which are under the headline of fighting against drug supplies. These strategic priorities comprise a total of 11 items.

Strategic Priorities were determined as follows:

- 1) Dismantling organized crime groups linked to high-risk drug crimes operating in, originating from, or targeting EU countries: addressing other security threat links and improving crime prevention;
- 2) Increasing the detection of illegal wholesale drugs and precursor chemical smuggling at the entrance and exit of the EU;



- 3) Fighting against the misuse of logistics and digital channels for the distribution of medium and small volumes of illicit drugs and increasing the seizure of illegal substances trafficked through these channels, in close cooperation with the private sector; and
- 4) Eliminating illicit drug manufacturing and combating illicit cultivation (Council of the European Union, 2021b)

It can be seen that the above activities are determined in parallel with the strategic priorities of the EU.

**Table 2.** Activities highlighted in the action plans for combating supply from 2007 to 2023

| No | Activities  | Action Plans |           |           |      |           |           |
|----|---|--------------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|-----------|
|    |   | 2007-2009    | 2010-2012 | 2013-2015 | 2015 | 2016-2018 | 2018-2023 |
| 1  | Preventing the entry and exit of narcotics and precursors (precursor chemicals) into and out of Türkiye through borders and customs gates via land, air, sea and mail/cargo.  | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |
| 2  | Increasing institutional capacity   | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |
| 3  | Increasing personnel and technical capacity   | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |
| 4  | Increasing the number of dogs, dog transport vehicles and capacity of service dog training centers  | X            | X         |           |      |           | X         |
| 5  | Capacity increasing capacities of the criminal laboratory   | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |
| 6  | Increasing cooperation and information sharing between law enforcement units (operations, training, etc.)   | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |
| 7  | Organizing training for counter-supply units (branch, informant management, undercover investigator, narcoguide, MASAK, etc.)   | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |
| 8  | Carrying out studies to increase the awareness level of citizens (narcoguide, narcotruck, best narcotics police: mother, etc.)  | -            | -         | -         | X    | X         | X         |
| 9  | Increasing crime intelligence analysis studies  | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |
| 10 | Focusing on controlled delivery and bilateral cooperation between countries   | -            | X         | X         | -    | X         | X         |
| 11 | Holding meetings that allow mutual information sharing with foreign liaison officers (customs/police) in Türkiye  | X            | X         | X         | -    | X         | -         |
| 12 | Ensuring participation in international activities aimed at the fight against drugs carried out by international and regional organizations   | X            | X         | X         | -    | X         | X         |
| 13 | Increasing planned and projected operations against domestic drug networks that ensure the availability of drugs at street level (Establishment and dissemination of Narcoteams for combating at street level after 2015) | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |
| 14 | Preventing illegal cultivation  | X            | X         | X         | X    | -         | X         |
| 15 | Preventing drug trafficking through informatics   | X            | -         | X         | -    | X         | X         |
| 16 | Prevention of illegal drug shipment via cargo   | -            | X         | X         | -    | X         | X         |
| 17 | Conducting risk analysis studies and establishing a drug decision support system  | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |
| 18 | Ensuring inter-institutional data sharing (Protocols)   | X            | X         | X         | X    | X         | X         |

|    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19 | Fighting against new psychoactive substances that are seen in Türkiye and have a high risk of being seen (EWS) | - | - | - | X | X | X |
| 20 | Conducting legislative updates on the fight against drugs  | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 21 | Demolition or restoration of abandoned buildings   | - | - | - | - | X | X |
| 22 | Strengthening denunciation mechanisms  | X | X | - | X | X | X |
| 23 | Conducting studies on the financial aspect of drugs and the resources they provide to terrorist organizations  | X | X | X | - | X | X |

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The National Strategy Documents on Fighting Against Drugs and the Action Plans covering the relevant period, which have been developed by Türkiye since 2006, enable effective inter-institutional coordination in the fight against drug supplies. In the National Strategy Document developed by Türkiye, it is seen that activities are determined in line with the strategic priorities of the EU.

#### 5. Recommendations for the Northern Cyprus

In the light of Türkiye's experiences in fighting against drug supply in its anti-drugs strategies, the following recommendation can be offered for Northern Cyprus.

With special regard to the supply dimension of the Strategy Document and Action Plan in the fight against drugs, policies can be developed in the light of the Strategy Documents and Action Plans of the EU and Türkiye between 2006-2023 considering the priority areas of Northern Cyprus in the fight against drugs with the participation of law enforcement units, justice units and financial units of public institutions.

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