


EDCS-NC 2024**Panel on Effective Drug Control Strategies in Northern Cyprus:
Challenges and Opportunities in 2024****TÜRKİYE'S ROLE IN THE INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL
SYSTEM**

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Abstract

Anatolia being both a fertile region for poppy cultivation and strategically important for drug trafficking routes, Türkiye has played an important role in the development of the International Drug Control System since the latter years of the Ottoman Empire. By the end of the 1990s, Türkiye was frequently the subject of international criticism, but it has since taken crucial steps, especially with the structural reforms it has implemented since the early 2000s. Its approach has been to “regard all the world’s children as its own”. Within this framework, drug trafficking is perceived as a crime against humanity and efforts to address it are not limited by the national borders. Today, Türkiye is making significant contributions to the functioning and development of the system through its focus on the implementation of the United Nations Drug Control Conventions, considered to be the pillars of the International Drug Control System, and through its best practices in every aspect of the fight against drugs. This article aims to overview Türkiye’s national counter drugs experiences in a historical perspective and to recommend future activities to be conducted in Northern Cyprus.

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1. Introduction

Today, there are a greater number and variety of drugs throughout the world than at any time in history, confronting humanity with a highly complicated challenge. As a global problem, the drug issue is both a health issue and a serious security problem. It requires national and international cooperation and multi-dimensional effort to overcome this threat (Turkish National Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction [TUBİM], 2020, p. 9)

The drug problem is as old as history and today one of the many issues that needs to be addressed by international community. The struggle is currently being waged in the framework of conventions under the umbrella of the United Nations (UN) – namely, the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, which are the main pillars of the International Drug Control System (IDCS) (Sarigüzel, 2020, p. 1075).

The fact that 186 countries are now party to the Single Convention, 184 to the Convention of 1971 and 191 to the Convention of 1988 is a concrete indication of the global identity of the IDCS (International Narcotics Control Board [INCB], 2020, p. 13).

The IDCS has developed over rather a long period in parallel with global trends and transformations. The Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 and the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15 led to the adoption of many international norms such as the sovereignty of states over their own territories. Further advances in international law and diplomacy resulted in the establishment of the League of Nations and finally the UN (INCB, 2008, p. 1).

Within this overall framework, the IDCS is the product of a dynamic process that has evolved in stages over the past 110 years in particular, with each step all but triggering the next and contributing to its preparation and development (Sarigüzel, 2021, p. 121).

The birth of the system at the beginning of the twentieth century is an unaccustomed convergence of the interests of the three main actors, the United States of America (USA), China and Britain concerning the threat posed by opium (INCB, 2008, p. 1).

According to DEA sources (Drug Enforcement Administration [DEA], n.d.), the production of opium goes back to 3400 BCE. In those times, the poppy was known as the “joy plant” among the Sumerians of Lower Mesopotamia. It was cultivated and used as far away as Egypt, and production was common in the countries on the Silk Road from the Mediterranean to China.

In medicine, opium was used for many years as a pain-reliever and a sedative. Besides its use for medical purposes, the use of opium spread due to its narcotic and addictive properties. Widespread use also triggered trade in the substance.

Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, opium was a commercial commodity offering substantial returns for colonial countries such as Britain and the Netherlands. For China, however, it had become a very problematic narcotic which resulted in the decision to ban the import of opium from India. China’s actions had a negative effect on the British merchants who controlled the opium trade in India. Two opium wars were fought between Britain and China in 1839-1842 and 1857-1860 (Sarigüzel, 2021, p. 121).

Victorious in these wars, Britain forced China to a series of accords which allowed the trade in opium and products, and the use thereof, started to increase rapidly. Together with this increase in the level of use, the foundations of the world opium problem were laid (Dillon, 2016, p. 57).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the growing consumption of addictive psychoactive substances and the unregulated global market were causing concerns in the USA. The US government sought to introduce laws both to limit the use of opium on its own territory and to prevent it from being trafficked from the Philippines, which it occupied in 1898 and where it noticed that opium was being used by Chinese people living among the local population (Yaşar, 2012, p. 76).

Britain had supported the opium trade in the past, and had even entered into opium wars with China. However, the newly-elected liberal government at the beginning of the twentieth century with the support of the church, which was opposed to opium, started to reverse the pro-opium trade policies of previous governments (INCB, 2008, p. 1).

The upshot of these developments was the meeting of the Opium Commission in Shanghai in February 1909. This event was to be followed by further steps to prevent the abuse of narcotic substances.

From the latter years of the Ottoman Empire onwards, Türkiye was to play an important role in the development of the IDCS as Anatolia is both a fertile region for poppy cultivation and of strategic significance in terms of drug trafficking routes (Sarigüzel, 2021, p. 121).

As a producer of opium, Türkiye was frequently criticized during the establishment and development of the IDCS. The current paper aims to reveal the point which the country has now reached, particularly through the reforms it has introduced and its activity on the international area in the years since 2000. In this way, it is believed that it will contribute to the counter drugs efforts made in the Northern Cyprus.

The gradual development of the IDCS system and the involvement of Türkiye in this process have been investigated, as shown in Table 1, in three historical periods; the first stretching from the meeting of the Opium Commission in Shanghai to World War I (1909-1914), the second coinciding with the League of Nations (1920-1945) and the third comprising the period since the foundation of the UN.

For each period, Türkiye's approaches and practices have been dwelt upon against the backdrop of international events. The developments which have taken place between 2000 and the present in line with the criteria that are underlined in all the conventions, and which can provide a sense of the effectiveness of the fight against drugs, have been addressed in detail. International data has also been presented to facilitate an objective assessment. This is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. International Drugs Control Conventions

No	Name	Period	Date	Place
1	Shanghai Opium Commission	BEFORE WWI	5-26 February 1909	Shanghai/China
2	The Hague International Opium Convention		23 January 1912	The Hague/The Netherlands
3	Geneva Convention	LEAGUE OF NATIONS	11 February 1925	Geneva/Switzerland
4	Geneva Convention		13 July 1931	Geneva/Switzerland
5	Geneva Convention		26 June 1936	Geneva/Switzerland

6	Paris Protocol on Synthetic Narcotics	THE UNITED NATIONS	29 November 1948	Paris/France
7	New York Opium Protocol		23 June 1953	New York/USA
8	Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs		30 March 1961	New York/USA
9	The Convention on Psychotropic Substances		21 February 1971	Vienna/Austria
10	Protocol Amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs		25 March 1972	Geneva/Switzerland
11	Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances		20 December 1988	Vienna/Austria

(Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2010, p. 10-11)

2. Conventions Prior to WWI and the Ottoman Empire

The Shanghai Commission met on 5-26 February 1909 in Shanghai at the instigation of the administration of US President Theodore Roosevelt (UNODC, 1959). China was the host nation and a total of 13 states took part including Austria-Hungary, Britain, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, Persia, Portugal, Russia, Siam and the USA. As the representatives of the participating countries were not authorised to sign an international agreement, the commission was only able to adopt non-binding decisions that determined the current situation and set out recommendations in this connection (Sinha, 2001, p. 5).

In the following years, as a result of a US initiative, twelve states agreed to meet in The Hague on 1 December 1911 to prepare the text of a draft agreement. At this conference, the USA insisted that strict measures should be taken concerning the production of opium, while other countries, particularly Britain, stressed that morphine and heroin, which are produced from opium, and cocaine, which comes from the coca plant, should be taken into consideration. The meeting and the discussions that followed it led to the signing of the International Opium Convention in The Hague on 23 January 1912.

The Convention was signed by 12 states – namely, Britain, China, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Siam and the USA.

Consisting of six sections and 25 articles, the Convention encompassed both opium and two other narcotics; heroin and cocaine.

The Convention introduced measures for the prevention of the non-medical abuse of narcotic substances and obliged the state parties to make legislative arrangements in their domestic law. It thus emerged as a genuine international instrument in the rapidly globalising world of the early twentieth century (UNODC, 2019, p. 9).

Two further conferences were held in The Hague in 1913 and 1914. The aim of these conferences was to remove the reservations of those participant states who had annotated the 1912 Convention and to include other countries producing opium and coca – such as Ottoman Empire, the Balkan states and Peru – among the signatories (Yaşar, 2012, p. 77). Efforts went ahead successfully at first but were halted by the outbreak of WWI until the Peace Treaty of Versailles.

When the Turks started to settle in Anatolia in the eleventh century, they learned how to produce poppies from the local people, for whom this was an importance source of income. For hundreds of years,

they continued to cultivate the plant. The cultivation of the poppy in Anatolia was not solely for the purpose of producing opium (Erhan, 1996, p. 29). It was a product with a wide range of uses and economic benefits from the production of food to stockbreeding.

In 1907, the Ottoman Empire was the world's fourth largest opium producer after China and India with a production capacity of 2,300 crates or 150 tons. In view of this high level of production, the Empire was invited to take part in the Shanghai Commission of 1909 and the conference in The Hague in 1912, and to sign the additional protocols to the Hague Convention in 1913 and 1914.

However, the Empire did not participate in any of these events due to its revenues from opium, one of its most important agricultural products, at a time when it had long been in financial difficulties and was trying to keep its economy afloat through external borrowing (Çolak, 2013, p. 523). The Balkan War that began in 1912, which weakened the Ottoman Empire politically and economically, can also be cited as a reason for its failure to participate in the conferences in The Hague.

3. The International Conventions of the League of Nations Era and the Republic of Türkiye

Following WWI, the Ottoman state was obliged under Article 230 of the Treaty of Sèvres to become a party to the Hague International Opium Convention of 1912 and to its additional protocol, which had been signed in 1914, and to ratify them within 12 months. Similarly, the Republic of Türkiye accepted the arrangements made at The Hague under Article 100, Clause 9 of the Treaty of Lausanne of 24 July 1923 (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2016).

However, the 12-month rule was not mentioned in the Treaty of Lausanne. In view of the said obligation, the USA invited Türkiye to the Geneva Conferences that began in 1924, but Türkiye participated in none of them.

The common aim of the Geneva Conferences held under the aegis of the League of Nations was to limit the production of all narcotic substances, headed by opium, to the amounts required for medical and scientific purposes, to prevent trafficking and abuse, and to expand international cooperation, particularly by having producer countries become party to the conventions.

The young Republic of Türkiye, having just emerged from war, found itself under a heavy economic burden, having both to repair the damage done by the war and to pay off the Ottoman debts. As in Ottoman times, the cultivation of opium remained an important source of revenue for the state.

Although poppy cultivation was widespread in the country, it has been claimed that there were hardly any opium addicts. Moreover, the export of opium was conducted through legal channels, and there were no complaints. Consequently, the Government of Türkiye did not feel the need to impose strict regulations to control the planting and export of the poppy plant (Tekin, 2005, p. 58).

By the 1930s, however, criticisms of Türkiye were being published in the western press. This was due partly to international developments and Türkiye's position regarding poppy cultivation. This situation led Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to take a personal interest in the matter.

On 25 December 1932, the Council of Ministers met and decided to adopt the basic principles of The Hague Convention of 1912 and the Geneva Conventions of 1925 and 1931 (Sarigüzel, 2021, p. 123).

At the same meeting, it was decided that the production of opium would be restricted, that its planting would be subject to permission and inspection, that the foreign trade in raw opium would be conducted centrally by a commercial association, that the planting of cannabis would be strictly banned in Türkiye, and that those engaged in the secret production of narcotic substances or the trafficking of such substances would be sent to court and subject to penal provisions (Sarigüzel, 2021, p. 124). Law No. 2313 on the Supervision of Narcotic Substances was adopted on 12 June 1933.

Later, on 24 June 1938, the General Directorate of the Soil Products Office (TMO) was established. Under a new law, the TMO was to be responsible for supervising the domestic sale and purchase of opium derived from poppies. The opium produced would be sold to the Office, and the Office, acting on behalf of the state, would carry out the necessary inspections of the processing, sale and purchase of all medicinal drugs obtained from opium (Köknel, 1998, p. 293).

The decisions of 25 December 1932 were perceived as a “Christmas present” in the West, especially by USA. Likewise, a report submitted to the meeting of the General Assembly of the League of Nations held on 15-31 May 1933 underlined that “The Government of Türkiye and President Mustafa Kemal have earned appreciation and gratitude for the positive effort they have shown” (Erarpat, 2016).

4. The International Conventions of the UN Era and the Republic of Türkiye

Since 1946, the UN has been conducting international efforts to control drugs which it inherited from the League of Nations. Two conventions were signed before 1961 under the umbrella of the UN: the Paris Protocol on Synthetic Narcotics of 1948 and the New York Opium Protocol of 1953. However, although their provisions complemented one another, the growing number of international conventions posed problems both in terms of their content and in technical terms. As a result, many countries failed to sign and ratify these conventions. This situation led to the idea of gathering all the texts into one convention (Sarigüzel, 2021, p. 124).

On 30 March 1961, after 13 years of discussions, the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs was signed. The Convention took effect on 13 December 1964. Since it replaced the conventions and protocols which preceded it, it was given the name “Single Convention” (UN, 1992, p. 66).

The Single Convention consists of 51 articles. These articles encompass definitions of the narcotics to be controlled, the operating frameworks of the international drugs control bodies, the reporting obligations of the state parties and the rules for the control of production, processing, commerce and consumption. Article 4 of the Convention, which is of key importance, states that: “The parties shall take such legislative and administrative measures as may be necessary... to limit exclusively to medical and scientific purposes the production, manufacture, export, import, distribution of, trade in, use and possession of drugs” (United Nations Treaty Collection, 1961).

In the mid-1960s, synthetic drugs such as amphetamines, barbiturates, and sedatives became a serious global issue. INCB, the UN Office of Legal Affairs and the World Health Organization (WHO) expressed the opinion that a new convention should be put into effect to control psychotropic substances in 1967.

Positive developments in this direction resulted in the foundation of the control system for psychotropic substances in force today.

The Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, known as the Vienna Convention, entered into effect on 16 August 1976 (United Nations, 1971, p. 1). Through this convention, numerous amphetamine-like stimulants, hallucinogens, sedatives, benzodiazepines, barbiturates, analgesics and depressants were brought under international control. In subsequent years, many more synthetics would be added to this list and made subject to the terms of the Convention.

As of the end of the 1980s, measures for the control of legal drugs were producing good results. However, the diversion of legal drugs into smuggling had not been prevented entirely. The tendency for these drugs to be diverted into smuggling was observed to be particularly significant in the case of the synthetics listed in the third and fourth schedules annexed to the 1971 Convention. Meanwhile, the trafficking and abuse of opium, heroin, cocaine, and cannabis were seen to be increasing globally. Moreover, amphetamine-type stimulants were being produced in clandestine laboratories and spreading rapidly, particularly in North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia (UN, 1998, p. 1).

Another trend in the 1980s was the rise of organised criminal groups dealing with the production, processing and selling of drugs. By forming cartels and engaging in international cooperation, these groups had become not only a threat within national borders but an emerging global problem (UNODC, 2010, p. 67).

In the face of these developments, it was decided to hold an international conference. The conference took place between 25 November and 20 December 1988 with the participation of 106 countries. The concrete outcome was the signing of the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

The Convention signed on 20 December 1988 went into effect on 11 November 1990. It consists of 34 articles.

The section of the preamble to the Convention which sets out its aims are of considerable interest because it provides a glimpse of the period during which it was signed. The passage in question dwells on the use of children in many parts of the world at all stages of the drugs trade, the large financial profits obtained from this criminal activity, which weaken the informal economy and support the activities of organised criminal activities that threaten the security of states, and the fact that the problem had reached a point at which the efforts of individual states would be insufficient and international cooperation had become essential. The preamble also expressed the desire to reinforce the implementation of the measures contained in the earlier UN conventions (UNODC, 2010, p. 68).

The Convention, in general, sets out the definitions of narcotic and psychotropic substances, addresses terms such as “confiscation”, “controlled delivery”, “transit state”, “brokerage” and “precursors” in order to set out the related sanctions (UN, 1998, p. 26).

The Convention also contains provisions concerning judicial cooperation among the parties and the extradition of offenders with a view to preventing trafficking in the substances in question.

While these developments were taking place, the post-1945 era in Türkiye was marked by the adoption of Law No.7638 on the control of poppy cultivation. Since all the opium produced within the scope of this law was exported, and the legal demand for opium could not be fully met, the number of provinces in which poppy cultivation was permitted was increased to 42 through a decree of the Council of Ministers of 1960. Subsequently, this number was gradually reduced, and in 1970, it was lowered to seven.

The planning of opium was banned between 1971 and 1974 (Toprak Mahsülleri Ofisi Genel Müdürlüğü [TMO], 2020).

Until 1971, opium was produced from poppies in Türkiye. Meanwhile, the increase in the number of heroin addicts in the USA, from about 50,000 in the 1960s to half a million in the 1970s, became an important issue in US domestic politics and led President Nixon to declare a “War on Drugs”. It was alleged that 80% of the opium in the USA came from the diversion of legal production in Türkiye (UNODC, 2010, p. 62). This and the use of other similar rhetoric in the international area caused the Government of Türkiye to take action. To prove that the allegations were false, the cultivation of poppies was completely banned under Council of Ministers Decree No.7/2654 of 26 June 1971 (TMO, 2020).

The ban was to remain in force until 1974. During this period, there was an increase in the output of other opium-producing countries, and new producer countries emerged. The ban also had negative social and economic consequences for farmers in Türkiye who were deprived of an important source of income. Approximately 1.5 million people were adversely affected by the ban (TMO, 2020).

Considering all these factors, and bearing Türkiye’s international responsibilities in mind, Decree No.7/8522 of the Council of Ministers of 01 July 1974 once again permitted the cultivation of the poppy plant in seven provinces as of the autumn of 1974 to meet the need for raw materials for pharmaceuticals and to improve the living conditions of farmers largely dependent on the poppy cultivation. Subsequently, Decree No.7/9204 of 06 December 1974 banned the production of opium, which is obtained by scratching the poppy capsule, due to the high risk of diversion for trafficking, and introduced the production of poppy capsules instead (TMO, 2020). This new control system proved very effective in preventing the diversion of legal production into trafficking (UNODC, 2010, p. 63).

4.1. The Reform Process Starting in the Year 2000

All the conventions for “A Drug Free World” held as part of the IDCS under the aegis of the UN, have been drawn up make clear that the state parties are generally expected to:

- i. prioritise their international commitments and be open to cooperation;
- ii. adopt legal measures to prevent illegal production and manufacture, supply, sale, distribution, purchase, delivery, brokerage, transport, export and import of narcotics, and establish responsible institutions;
- iii. employ their methods of intervention in harmony with international standards, in accordance with strategies and action plans and in a manner respectful of human rights.

The result-oriented policies and strategies of which a country that is party to the drug control conventions can be taken as a strong indicator of the contribution to the system.

Türkiye came to feature in the literature on the fight against drugs in the twentieth century due to its poppy cultivation and the smuggling of opium. However in the twenty-first century, it has emerged, with its geographical location and young population, as a country that is directly affected both as a **transit** and **target** country (TUBİM, 2018, p. 9).

Today, none of the respected international reports indicate Türkiye as a major area of production of any illegal drugs. The leading factors that have prevented Türkiye from being considered a source of any

drugs can be said to be the national perspective which regards drugs as a “crime against humanity” (TUBİM, 2020, p. 34).

As a party to all international conventions, when evaluating the situation in Türkiye in terms of the international expectations set out above, the legislative arrangements have been made to combat drugs on the basis of the provision of Article 58 of the Constitution which obliges the state to take the necessary measures “to protect youth from addiction to alcohol and drugs, crime, gambling, and similar vices, and ignorance”.

The Turkish Penal Code (Law No.5237 of 26 September 2004) lays down the penalties to apply both to the manufacture, trading or procurement of narcotic and stimulant substances and to offences like the purchase, acceptance or possession of such substances for the purpose of use and the facilitation or incitement of their use by others (TUBİM, 2020, p. 21).

For the offences of using narcotics or stimulants or possessing them for the purpose of use, Türkiye’s legislation provides for the suspension of the sentence as an alternative to punishment and for the implementation of treatment and/or probation orders during the period of suspension. In addition, Article 192 of the Penal Code makes it possible for effective repentance procedures to be implemented in the case of drugs offences (TUBİM, 2019, p. 27).

The Turkish National Police (TNP), the Gendarmerie General Command, the Coast Guard Command and the Customs are actively involved in the struggle. Important responsibilities are also undertaken by institutions like the TMO, the Forensic Medicine Board, the Financial Crimes Investigation Board and the Turkish Medicines and Medical Devices Agency of the Ministry of Health (TUBİM, 2018, p. 9).

As for holistic and strategic fight against drugs, the first institutional arrangements for ensuring coordination among the institutions came into effect in 1997. An Upper Board and a Lower Board for Monitoring and Steering the Fight against Drugs were established within the Family Research Institution (AAK) (TUBİM, 2019, p. 13).

In 2000, the issue arose of extending this institutional structure to the European Union (EU) level. At the 50th meeting of the Lower Board, held on 26 June 2001, a decision was taken for Türkiye to join the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), and the AAK was identified as the national focal point for the EMCDDA. However, EMCDDA pointed out that the AAK was not an institution established by law and to recommend another institution should be named as the focal point (TUBİM, 2019, p. 13).

Meanwhile, another significant development should be mentioned here that is reformation of Department of Anti-Smuggling and Organised Crime (KOM) in 1995.

The Narcotic Crimes Division was formed as part of KOM. Over and above the operational perspective centring on the capture of suspects, the division was organised in such a way as to combat the trafficking of drugs by identifying the national and international connections of criminal organisations and bringing about their complete collapse. This structure contributed to the conduct of a large number of successful operations and the collapse of many crime rings, reflecting the belief that lasting success in the struggle against drugs could not be achieved solely through national efforts, and that international cooperation needed to be increased. These operational successes earned the appreciation of the outside

world and it was proposed that Türkiye should share its knowledge and experience in the struggle against drugs with other regional countries.

On 26 June 2000, an international training centre known as the Turkish International Academy Against Drugs and Organized Crime (TADOC) was established within KOM in cooperation with the UN.

TADOC began providing training to regional countries. Before long it reached significant achievements. On 16 May 2002, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye identified TADOC as the national focal point for the EMCDDA, in recognition of its progress on the international area (TUBİM, 2019, p. 13). TUBİM was established as an office within the TADOC. This basic structure was reinforced through twinning projects with the EU and TUBİM was converted into a division within KOM, separate from TADOC. Since the entry into force on 01 June 2014 of the international agreement signed between Türkiye and the EU in 2007, TUBİM has been acting as the national focal point for the EMCDDA and taking part in its work as a full member (EMCDDA, 2012).

In this period, the first National Policy and Strategy Document for Combating Addictive Substances and Addiction for 2006-2012 was signed and put into effect on 20 November 2006 (TUBİM, 2019, p. 14). TUBİM was identified as the secretariat for the preparation of document for 2006-2012 and as the institution responsible for its implementation and monitoring (TUBİM, 2020, p. 15). Ever since 2006, the developments in Türkiye related to the struggle against drugs have been shared with the rest of the world through the Turkish National Drug Report, which is published in Turkish and English by TUBİM. In addition, TUBİM contributes to the World and European Drug Reports by fulfilling the requests of leading international bodies like the INCB, UNODC and EMCDDA. Now, TUBİM runs as a division under the NDB, which was converted into a department in 2015, separate from KOM.

As of 2014, a new era got under way in the struggle against drugs in Türkiye (TUBİM, 2019, p. 14). Under the Prime Ministry Circular No. 2014/9, a High Board for Combating Drugs was formed consisting of eight ministers and chaired by a deputy prime minister. The aim was to create a stronger coordinating framework (Uyuşturuvcu ile Mücadele ile İlgili 2014/19 Sayılı Başbakanlık Genelgesi, 2014).

Responsibility for the coordination and secretariat of these boards was vested in the Ministry of Health at the central level. In 2015, the one-year National Strategy Document for Combating Drugs and the 2015 Emergency Action Plan for Combating Drugs were put into effect (TUBİM, 2018, p. 6).

On 16 April 2016, the National Strategy Document for Combating Drugs for 2016-2018 and the National Action Plan for Combating Drugs for 2016-2018 were published and went into effect (TUBİM, 2019, p. 12).

During the period when the National Action Plan for 2016-2018 was in force, particularly in 2017, attention was drawn to the interaction among addictive substances like drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and discussions took place about whether the scope of the boards should be expanded, and even about institutionalising the struggle against behavioural addictions such as gambling and technology addiction. In other words, the idea of replicating the systematic and planned approach taken in the struggle against drugs in other areas of addiction came into being (TUBİM, 2020, p. 16).

In accordance with this view and upon the introduction of Presidential System on 09 July 2018, new legislative arrangements were therefore made to ensure that the efforts to combat addiction could continue without interruption (TUBİM, 2020, p. 17). In this context, Presidential Circular No. 2019/2 determined that the meetings of the High Board for Combating Addiction should be chaired by the Deputy

President. The Board consisted of eleven ministers together with the deputy president of the Presidential Health and Food Policies Board (Bağımlılık ile Mücadele ile İlgili 2019/2 Sayılı Cumhurbaşkanlığı Genelgesi, 2019).

As any examination of this general summary of the process will show, the ongoing fight against drugs in Türkiye based on the participation and contributions of the highest level representatives of all the relevant institutions, and conducted in the framework of national strategies and action plans structured around periodically measurable concrete outputs, encompasses all the stages of prevention, supply reduction, treatment and rehabilitation, in accordance with international obligations.

4.2. Evaluation of the Reform Process

When it comes to indicators of the stage the struggle has reached, there is no country or international organisation that can give a definite figure for the numbers of drug addicts. The complex nature of the drug problem makes it difficult to obtain definitive results of this kind.

Nevertheless, a number of indicators make it possible to estimate the effectiveness of the national struggle being waged in any given country, based on the contents of international reports. The following can be considered the most prominent:

- i. Variety and scale of the prevention programmes,
- ii. Progress which the country has achieved in the fields of treatment and rehabilitation,
- iii. Drug seizures by the law enforcement agencies,
- iv. Results of general population surveys on drug use, and
- v. Number of drug related deaths (DRD).

When Türkiye is evaluated according to these indicators, a rather rich variety of prevention activities can be seen. The Türkiye Counter-Addiction (TBM) Module developed by the Green Crescent Association (Yeşilay) is recognised as the largest prevention programme in the world in terms both of the number of people it reaches and the comprehensiveness of its content. It has won the admiration of international organisations like WHO, UNODC and EMCDDA and been presented as a model of good practice on many platforms (TUBİM, 2020, p. 79). The prevention programmes by the TUBİM, such as NARCO-GUIDE, NARCO-LOG, NARCO-TRUCK, NARCO-STAND, NARCO-COMPETITION, NARCO-191 and UYUMA also stand out as important activities.

Treatment of drug addiction in Türkiye is conducted by the Ministry of Health in cooperation with other institutions and in accordance with the National Strategy Document and Action Plan for 2018-2023.

Treatment for drug addiction in Türkiye is free of charge and is provided both as an outpatient service and in residential facilities. As of the end of 2022, there were 135 drug addiction treatment centres, of which 59 were providing both inpatient and outpatient treatment, and 76 outpatient treatment only. The total bed capacity of these centres was 1388. There is at least one drug addiction treatment centre in 79 of Türkiye's 81 provinces) (TUBİM, 2023, p. 77). Individuals can reach all services free of charge on a 24-hour basis by calling the ALO191 hotline and the Yeşilay Advice Centres (YEDAM: ALO 115). Post-

treatment rehabilitation and social services are provided by institutions set up within the ministries of Health and of Family, Labour and Social Services, and within Yeşilay.

The drug seizures by the national law enforcement agencies, the findings of general population surveys and the DRD can be considered to provide some indication of the effectiveness of the national struggle.

Regarding drug seizures, the strong capacity of and the high performance carried out by the Turkish National Law Enforcement Agencies is highlighted in respected international reports such as The UN World Report (WDR), EMCDDA European Drug Report (EDR) and Türkiye is indicated as “Key Partner” in preventing drug trafficking.

The results of surveys on the prevalence of drug use in the world, the EU and Türkiye are useful to give an idea of Türkiye’s situation.

Around the world, the prevalence of the use of drugs is assessed by general population surveys which seek to determine the numbers of persons aged 15-64 who have used any substance at any time of their lives. The results of these surveys should not be considered to indicate the numbers of drug addicts.

In 2018, according to the 2020 WDR, 5.4% of persons in the 15-64 age group had tried one drug or another at least once at some time in their lives (UNODC, 2020, p. 10). For the same year, the ratio in the EU was 29% (EMCDDA, 2020, p. 13).

The first survey of the prevalence of drug use in Türkiye was conducted by TUBİM in 2012 and the ratio of drug use was found to be 2.7%. The second survey, also conducted by TUBİM in 2018, indicated a ratio of 3.1% (TUBİM, 2019, p. 83).

With regard to DRD, the 2020 UN WDR put the number of DRD in 2017 at 558,000 (UNODC, 2020, p. 36). In the EU, this figure was 8,238 (EMCDDA, 2019, p. 79) and in Türkiye it was 941 (TUBİM, 2019, p. 75). The proportion of people who died due to taking drugs in 2017 was 35 per million worldwide, 22.5 per million in the EU and 17 per million in Türkiye (Sarigüzel, 2021, p. 133).

In 2018, the number of DRD in Türkiye started to decline, falling by 30.2% to 657. This trend continued in following years and the number of DRD was down 47.9% at 342 in 2019, 314 in 2020, 270 in 2021 and 246 in 2022 (TUBİM, 2023, p. 93).

In 2018, the number of DRD in the EU worked out at 8,300 – almost unchanged from the previous year (EMCDDA, 2020, p. 65). The 2020 EDR draws attention to the decline in DRD in Türkiye and indicates that this was probably due, among numerous other factors, to the scale and effectiveness of the existing prevention and intervention programmes (EMCDDA, 2020, p. 66).

5. Conclusion

The number and variety of drugs encountered today are greater than at any time in history and the fight against drugs has become a multi-dimensional problem. No drug is restricted by the borders of the country in which it is produced, and international crime rings regard the world as a single drugs market. In these circumstances, drugs are no longer a health problem that threatens nations within their own borders, but have become a global security issue requiring national and international stakeholders to engage in a coordinated and multidimensional struggle.

Today, the fight against drugs is one of the many issues addressed by international community. The struggle is currently being waged in the framework of conventions put into effect under the umbrella of the UN – namely, the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

The conventions form the main pillars of the IDCS. All states party to them have committed themselves to abide by their provision to reach the goal of “A Drug Free World”. The number of the state parties to the conventions is a concrete indication of the global identity of the system (INCB, 2020, p. 13).

As things now stand, Europe stands out among the main regions where synthetic drugs are produced, and the countries of Asia and America as the main producers of traditional drugs, whereas none of the reports published about the fight against drugs by respected international organisations like the UN, INCB, EUROPOL and EMCDDA treat Türkiye as a major area of production of any illegal drug. On the contrary, these documents underline Türkiye’s achievements.

In line with the terms of international agreements, the ongoing fight against drugs in Türkiye is being conducted with the participation of the highest-level representatives of all the relevant institutions in the framework of national strategies and action plans structured around periodically measurable concrete outputs, and encompasses all the stages of prevention, supply reduction, treatment and rehabilitation.

In conclusion, Türkiye is today fulfilling its international obligations meticulously and making significant contributions to the functioning and development of the IDCS through its best practices in every aspect of the fight against drugs, in a spirit which regards “all the world’s children as its own”, and in line with the projection made by its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk when he declared in 1932 that “The Republic of Türkiye will continue its efforts to save humanity from narcotic substances, which are more terrible than all the natural disasters of the past, and will derive great joy and happiness from doing so”.

6. Recommendations for the Northern Cyprus

When the development of the global drug control system, the experiences gained by Türkiye and the strong point reached in this system are evaluated simultaneously, the following recommendations can be made to further efforts against drugs in the Northern Cyprus.

- 1) Institutionalization has a very important place in the fight against drugs. It is of key importance that all efforts made by the country in the fight against drugs are implemented by a professional institution structured for this purpose. Such an institutional framework can be drawn for the Northern Cyprus Prime Ministry Anti-Drug Commission, which was established in 2014 and has continued its work with great dedication until today. For greater effectiveness, a national anti-drug agency can be established in this direction. Such an institutional structuring will enable efficient results to be achieved in many areas, from the more accurate collection and processing of national data to the progress of similar activities carried out by different institutions in line with the same goals and objectives.
- 2) As indicated in International Conventions, all countries are expected to carry out their fight against drugs in harmony with international standards, in accordance with strategies and action plans and

in a manner respectful of human rights. In the process that started with the establishment of the Anti-Drug Commission in 2014, it is seen that a national strategy document has not been implemented in the Northern Cyprus so far. It would be beneficial to implement a national plan that responds to the needs of the society, has the support of the political authority, is budgeted, can be evaluated periodically through solid indicators, and covers all the stages of prevention, supply reduction, treatment and rehabilitation, which are seen as the pillars on which the fight against drugs is built.

- 3) Within the framework of global best practices, the plan in question should include studies and projects that will eliminate the difference between the current situation in the country and the desired achievement point in each of the stages of prevention, supply reduction, treatment and rehabilitation for a three-year period, and should include all institutions responsible for anti-drug activities, as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations and business world.

Annual drug reports are one of the most important instruments in the fight against drugs, as they preserve the country's efforts in the fight against drugs in the national memory, enable comparative analysis over the years, and clearly announce the activities at both national and international levels. It is recommended that national reports prepared and published annually in Turkish and English in the Northern Cyprus which will strengthen the efforts to eradicate the drug menace.

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