



Royal Model United Nations
2026

Council of EU: Justice and Home Affairs Council

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LETTER FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dearest participants of ROYMUN'26,

It is the greatest honor to welcome you to the first edition of Royal Model United Nations 2026 and our Justice and Home Affairs Council committee.

While shaping the ideas from the very beginning, our main goal was to ensure an extensive experience with both academic and organisational perfection.

In this prestigious committee, you will be raising impeccable ideas, debating about the current and the upcoming process, building new structures and turning the non-integrated actions and solutions to a masterpiece. Your board members will be guiding you to reach perfection in any situation.

While preparing, you will be discovering every single step about your topic and you may even find yourself in the middle of this sequence of events. It will be clear that you embrace your role in the committee.

Keep in mind that every speech you deliver, every motion you give, every question that you ask will gain a new perspective for everyone. The key point is to remain active and work confidentially while shaping the decision-making process with your colleagues.

As the Secretary-General, I am impatiently waiting to see your intelligent work and looking forward to sharing this royal experience with you.

Sincerely,

İmge Belgin

Secretary-General of ROYMUN'26



Royal Model United Nations 2026

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRBOARD

Dear Delegates,

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the Justice and Home Affairs Council. As your Board Team, we are excited to guide you throughout this committee and observe your discussions on our agenda item: New Rules on Drug Precursors.

Drug policy is one of the most complex issues facing the European Union today. It involves not only law enforcement, but also public health, organized crime, border security, human rights, judicial cooperation, and rehabilitation. For this reason, the topic requires delegates to approach the issue from both national and European perspectives.

As representatives of EU member states, you are expected to defend your country's position while also seeking realistic and cooperative solutions. Effective drug policy depends on coordination between governments, courts, law enforcement agencies, customs authorities, and health institutions. During the sessions, your task will be to discuss how the European Union can strengthen its legal framework while respecting proportionality, national sovereignty, and fundamental rights.

We encourage all delegates to come prepared, participate actively, and contribute constructively to the debate. Strong research, diplomacy, and practical policy proposals will be essential for a successful committee.

As the Board Team, we hope this committee will be academically enriching, diplomatically engaging, and memorable for all participants. We wish you productive debates and successful negotiations.

Sincerely,

Board Members

Justice and Home Affairs Council



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- 1. Letters**
 - 1.1. Letter From Secretary General**
 - 1.2. Letter From Committee Board**
- 2. Introduction to the Committee**
 - 2.1. Introduction to the European Union**
 - 2.2. Introduction to the Justice and Home Affairs Council**
 - 2.2.1. Structure**
 - 2.2.2. Legislative Powers**
- 3. Introduction to the Agenda Item: New rules on drug precursors**
 - 3.1. Definition and Dual-Use Nature of Precursors**
 - 3.2. Legal Industrial and Pharmaceutical Applications**
 - 3.3. Illicit Diversion Paths and Synthetic Drug Manufacture**
- 4. Key Words and Definition**
- 5. Social and Economic Aspects**
 - 5.1. Economic Impact on Legitimate Industrial Sectors**
 - 5.2. Societal and Public Health Implications**
 - 5.2.1. Reduction of Synthetic Narcotic Supply and Related Health Harms**
 - 5.2.2. Impact Public Safety and Crime Prevention**
 - 5.2.3. Protecting Marginalized Groups from Synthetic Opioids and Stimulants**
 - 5.3. Financial and Market Dimensions of Illicit Trade**
- 6. Legal Framework of the EU**



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- 6.1. Evolution of the EU Drug Policy Framework**
- 6.2. Historical Precursor Regulations (Regulations EC 273/2004 and 111/2005)**
- 6.3. The EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025)**
- 7. Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders**
 - 7.1. EU Legislative Bodies**
 - 7.1.1. European Parliament**
 - 7.1.2. Council of the European Union**
 - 7.1.2.1. Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA)**
 - 7.1.2.2. General Affairs Council (GAC)**
 - 7.1.2.3. Foreign Affairs Council (FAC)**
 - 7.1.2.4. Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN)**
 - 7.1.2.5. Agriculture and Fisheries Council (AGRI)**
 - 7.1.2.6. Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)**
 - 7.1.2.7. Competitiveness Council (COMPET)**
 - 7.1.2.8. Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (TTE)**
 - 7.1.2.9. Environment Council (ENV)**
 - 7.1.2.10. Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS)**
 - 7.2. Specialist Agencies**
 - 7.2.1. European Union Drug Agency (EUDA)**
 - 7.2.2. European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)**
- 8. Bibliography**



2. Introduction to the Committee

2.1 Introduction to the European Union

The European Union (EU), unlike expectations, is not a standard international organization such as the United Nations (UN) which depends on voluntary cooperation and action without having a binding legislative power¹. The EU is not a single-nation state like the United States as well; it is not bound by a centralized federal constitution. Instead, the existence of the EU is an unmatched, supranational entity². This reflects into practice as Member States voluntarily yielding certain parts of their national sovereignties such as trade, monetary policy and environmental regulations³ to a centralized, shared authority⁴.

The European Union was born as a highly complex experiment in governance and administration after the Second World War. The Union was established in the post World War II era in order to prevent possible future conflicts through systematically intertwining the industrial economies of historic rivals⁵ within Europe, France and then-West Germany⁶. However, over

¹ “EUR-Lex - 61964CJ0006 - EN - EUR-Lex,” n.d., <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:61964CJ0006>.

² “EUR-Lex - 61962CJ0026 - EN - EUR-Lex,” n.d., <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:61962CJ0026>.

³ “Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,” *EUR-Lex*, October 26, 2012, accessed May 31, 2026, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF>.

⁴ “Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union,” *EUR-Lex*, October 26, 2012, accessed May 31, 2026, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.

⁵ “Treaty of Paris,” Treaty of Paris, n.d., <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/treaty-of-paris>.

⁶ “Schuman Declaration May 1950,” European Union, n.d., https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59/schuman-declaration-may-1950_en.



Royal Model United Nations 2026

time the Union expanded its scope⁷ into a massive economic and regulatory power, and maintained its global influence through the size and success of its market as well as its legal endeavors.⁸

The current EU consists of 27 Member States which operate under the shared framework of the Union. The EU has a unionship in terms of monetary relations as well. Its official currency is called the Euro. However, it is not mandatory to use this currency, and new Member States do not directly shift their economy under the Euro.⁹ Currently, twenty one nations within the EU use Euro as their currency.¹⁰ This economic collaboration is also implemented in the Union's market. There is a single market system within the EU which operates under a borderless area in order to ensure free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor under the Schengen area¹¹. Success of the EU and its policies can be seen worldwide, especially through the Brussels Effect¹².

⁷ Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957* (Contemporary European Politics, 2004),
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/100books/file/EN-H-BW-0038-The-uniting-of-Europe.pdf>.

⁸ Anu Bradford, "The Brussels Effect," *Northwestern University School of Law Northwestern University Law Review*, 2012,
<https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1081&context=nulr&httpsredir=1&referer=>

⁹ "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union."

¹⁰ "Countries Using the Euro," European Union, January 12, 2026,
https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/euro/countries-using-euro_en.

¹¹ OPOCE, "EUR-Lex - 12008M/PRO/19 - EN," n.d.,
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12008M/PRO/19>.

¹² Bradford, "The Brussels Effect."



Royal Model United Nations 2026

In the year of 1945, Europe as a continent was fundamentally broken.¹³ War had left several cities in ruins, and the economies of countries were bankrupt. With the tension of the Cold War, and the Soviet Union being a threat to Europe¹⁴, European leaders started to find ways to rebuild the economy swiftly¹⁵ while ensuring that aggressive nationalism did not cause a problem¹⁶. Another dilemma was the German question: a mechanism was needed to enable West Germany's economic recovery so that it could be a figure against communism, while also ensuring that it would not cause a military threat to Europe¹⁷.

Since previous traditional peace treaties had continuously failed, French diplomats Robert Schuman (then Foreign Minister) and Jean Monnet (then economic planner) developed a strategy. They realized forcing a treaty would fail due to the recent mistrust.¹⁸ However, a strategy that focuses on integration would be more applicable. The main idea was to start small with manageable economic factors¹⁹, then letting this cooperation to eventually include further areas. Because if the industries of nations were to be tightly bonded together, then their national

¹³ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, 2005, https://www.academia.edu/35857017/POSTWAR_A_History_of_Europe_Since_1945.

¹⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, 2005, <https://ia803100.us.archive.org/33/items/thecoldwaranewhistory/The%20Cold%20War%20%20a%20new%20history.pdf>.

¹⁵ "Marshall Plan (1948)," National Archives, June 29, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/marshall-plan>.

¹⁶ William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945-2002* (Doubleday Books, 2003), <https://archive.org/details/struggleforeurop0000hite/page/n9/mode/1up>.

¹⁷ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton University Press, 1999), <https://dokumen.pub/a-constructed-peace-the-making-of-the-european-settlement-1945-1963-9781400843459.html>.

¹⁸ Jean Monnet, *Memoirs* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978), https://archive.org/details/memoirs0000monn_q5a2/page/7/mode/1up.

¹⁹ "Schuman Declaration May 1950."



Royal Model United Nations 2026

interests would naturally align within each other's. With the Treaty of Paris in 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was created²⁰.

Coal and steel were the essential raw materials needed to produce weapons and fuel military logistics. Since neither France nor Germany hold the exclusive sovereign control over the production of the said materials, neither of the countries could secretly mobilize its factories for war. Robert Schuman stated that this integration made war between historic rivals “not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible.”²¹

The ECSC was established by six nations, often referred to as the “Founding Six:” France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg²². Later in 1957, the Member States signed the Treaty of Rome, which resulted in the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC). The Treaty of Rome thus broadened the scope of European integration from only coal and steel to a wider common market within the borders.²³

The EU functions via a system of checks and balances. Three main institutions work together to create laws while a supreme court enforces them.²⁴ Firstly, the European Commission acts as the executive branch; it represents the interests of the Union as whole, being the only

²⁰ “Treaty of Paris.”

²¹ “Schuman Declaration May 1950.”

²² “The First Treaties,” November 2025, accessed May 31, 2026,
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/1/the-first-treaties..>

²³ “Treaty of Rome,” Treaty of Rome, n.d.,
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/treaty-of-rome>.

²⁴ “Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union.”



body that can propose new legislation. Then, these proposals are to be debated, amended, and approved or declined by two separate groups: the European Parliament (EP) and the Council of the European Union (the Council). Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected to represent citizens while in the Council, national ministers for the related ministry protect their country's interests. Lastly, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) acts as the judicial body of the system. ECJ ensures that these laws that are agreed upon are not only interpreted but also applied exactly the same way across all Member States of the EU.²⁵

2.2 Introduction to the Justice and Home Affairs Council

2.2.1 Structure

The Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council consists of 27 justice and interior (home affairs) ministers of each EU state, and is one of the configurations of the Council. Since their scope is two distinct legal issues, JHA Council's official sessions are mostly held over two consecutive days. On one of these days, interior ministers attend in order to address issues such as internal security, immigration, border management (in the Schengen area), and counter-terrorism. On the other day, justice ministers attend to handle judicial cooperation in civil and criminal topics, fundamental rights, as well as judicial training. Other participants of these sessions are the European Commissioners who are responsible for home affairs, justice, and equality. When they attend, the Commissioners present proposals and guide the debates.²⁶

²⁵ "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union."

²⁶ "Justice and Home Affairs Council," Consilium Europa, accessed May 31, 2026, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/council-meetings-explained/jha/>.



2.2.2. Legislative Powers

For the majority of JHA issues, including asylum policies, immigration rules, and border controls, the JHA Council acts as a co-legislator with the European Parliament.²⁷ A law cannot be passed unless both the EP and the Council agree upon the final document. Under this law-passing procedure, which is called the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP),²⁸ the Council configurations use Qualified Majority Voting (QMV). In order to pass a legislation, the approval of 55% of the Member States (15 states out of 27) is required. Moreover, the combined population of these Member States need to cover at least 65% of the total EU population. This authority was brought upon by the Treaty of Lisbon. Before that, absolute consensus was required. However, in highly sensitive areas that are directly in touch with national sovereignty, such as family law or operational police cooperation, the Treaty demands special legislative procedures which require unanimity within the Council. Under this special procedure, EP is more consulted rather than holding half of the decision power.²⁹

²⁷ “Justice and Home Affairs Council.”

²⁸ “Ordinary Legislative Procedure,” accessed May 31, 2026,
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/olp/en/ordinary-legislative-procedure/overview>.

²⁹ “Qualified majority,” Consilium Europa, February 23, 2025, accessed May 31, 2026,
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/how-does-the-council-vote/qualified-majority/>.

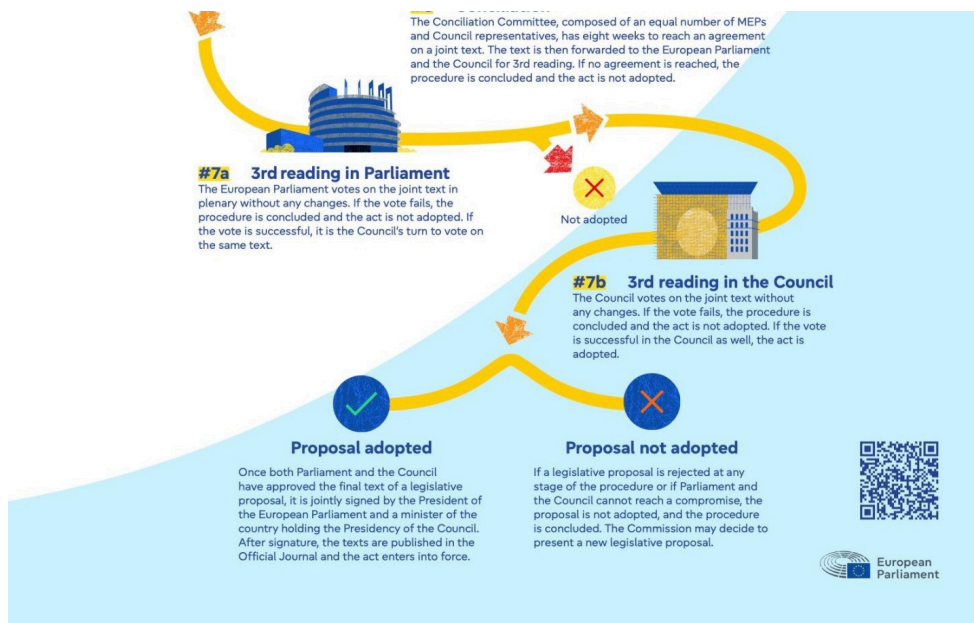


Ordinary legislative procedure

How it works



³⁰ *The Ordinary Legislative Procedure - step by step*, n.d., European Parliament, n.d., https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/306553/FINAL_OLP%20Flowchart_A4_EN.pdf



³⁰ *The Ordinary Legislative Procedure - step by step*, n.d., European Parliament, n.d., https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/306553/FINAL_OLP%20Flowchart_A4_EN.pdf



3. Introduction to the Agenda Item: New rules on drug precursors

Drug control often focuses on seizing the end product. However, recently introduced laws now cover not only the end product but also the intermediate stages such as raw material procurement, production, and distribution. The proliferation of synthetic drugs has also encouraged the increase in such laws. Because the vast majority of synthetic drugs are based on chemical production, not agricultural output.

The possibility of completely banning the use of precursor substances in legal pharmaceuticals is closed off for the EU. The Justice and Home Affairs Council's sole purpose is not only health, but also combating organized crime, ensuring border security, defining private sector responsibilities, and enhancing cooperation and communication between the EU member states³¹.

3.1 Definition and Dual-Use Nature of Precursors

A drug precursor is a chemical substance that can be used in the illicit production of narcotic or psychotropic substances. These substances sometimes appear as starting materials directly in the production process, sometimes as intermediate materials, and sometimes as auxiliary chemicals that make production possible. While not all precursor substances are legal in every country, some are part of everyday trade. The problem here is the diversion of these

³¹Council of the European Union, "Council Approves the EU Drugs Strategy for 2021–2025," *Council of the European Union*, December 18, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/18/council-approves-the-eu-drugs-strategy-for-2021-2025/>.



Royal Model United Nations 2026

substances into drug production. Thus, control focuses not only on the substance itself but also on the supply chain through which it moves³².

INCB's precursor reports address the monitoring of chemicals frequently used in the illicit production of narcotics and psychotropic substances as part of the international control system under Articles 12 and 13 of the 1988 UN Convention. This demonstrates that the precursor issue is a fundamental element not only within the EU but also within the international drug control regime.³³

The use of the same chemical in both legitimate economic/activity areas and in illegal drug production places it in a gray area called "dual-use".³⁴ Therefore, precursors are studied in a different area than the classic illicit substance category. For example, the final drug product sold on the street may not have a legitimate use; but a chemical precursor could be used in pharmaceutical production, laboratory analysis, industrial manufacturing, or in cleaning/solvent applications. The European Commission explicitly states that drug precursors cannot be completely banned from trade because they have a very wide range of legitimate uses. Thus, the aim of EU legislation is to strike a balance between preventing precursors from being diverted to illicit production and avoiding hindering legitimate trade with unnecessary administrative

³²International Narcotics Control Board, "Precursors Report 2025," *International Narcotics Control Board*, accessed June 8, 2026, https://www.incb.org/incb/en/precursors/technical_reports/precursors-technical-reports.html.

³³International Narcotics Control Board, "Precursors Report 2025."

³⁴Physicians for Human Rights, "FAQs: Access to Health Care Supplies and 'Dual Use' Items and Restrictions," *Physicians for Human Rights*, July 9, 2025, <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/faqs-access-to-health-care-supplies-and-dual-use-items-and-restrictions/>.



Royal Model United Nations 2026

burdens.³⁵ So for the EU, the issue is not about completely banning these chemicals, but about determining who can use them, for what purpose, and within which trade chains.

Other reasons for not completely banning precursor substances include the fact that chemical trade is a legitimate economic activity within the EU internal market - The EU system must establish security controls without completely abandoning the principle of free movement of goods-, and that overly strict bans are more likely to drive criminal organizations towards alternative substances or new chemicals known as "designer precursors," rather than stopping them. The EUDA/EMCDDA's study on precursor developments highlights that these chemicals can have legitimate uses and therefore a regulatory regime is needed to prevent their descent into illicit use. The same study shows that precursor and pre-precursor developments linked to the production of synthetic stimulants in Europe create a constantly evolving control problem for the EU³⁶.

In the EU and international systems, many precursor substances are classified because they are monitored or because they can be chemical alternatives to other precursor substances. For example, substances that are legally listed and subject to specific control procedures are called "scheduled chemicals," while chemicals that are not similarly listed but may pose a risk of

³⁵European Commission, "Drug Precursor Control," *Taxation and Customs Union*, accessed June 8, 2026, https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/customs/prohibitions-restrictions/drug-precursor-control_en.

³⁶European Union Drugs Agency, "Drug Precursor Developments in the European Union," *European Union Drugs Agency*, accessed June 8, 2026, https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/emcdda-papers/drug-precursor-developments-eu_en.



being used in illegal production are called "non-scheduled chemicals." Substances that are alternatives to existing precursor substances are called "designer precursors," while chemicals that can be converted back into precursor substances after certain processes are called "pre-precursors". This distinction is important because it directly helps to identify and classify the precursors. If only listed substances are controlled, criminal networks may shift to unlisted chemicals. INCB has also developed specialized tools for non-scheduled chemicals and designer precursors; this shows that the control system cannot be limited to just the existing lists³⁷.

According to the European Commission, drug precursors are controlled in a "scheduled" manner at the EU level under four categories. Furthermore, the EU has two main regulations: Regulation (EC) No 273/2004 focuses on trade in drug precursors within the EU, and Regulation (EC) No 111/2005 focuses on trade between the EU and third countries.³⁸

3.2 Legal Industrial and Pharmaceutical Applications

The presence of precursor materials is not only a security threat but also a bureaucratic challenge and a commercial dilemma. The fact that the pharmaceutical, chemical, and agricultural industries, as well as research institutes, need these precursor materials makes complete prohibition more likely, while also structurally challenging the implementation of restriction and control measures.³⁹

³⁷International Narcotics Control Board, "Precursors," *International Narcotics Control Board*, accessed June 8, 2026, <https://www.incb.org/incb/en/precursors/index.html>.

³⁸European Commission, "Drug Precursor Control."

³⁹European Commission, "Drug Precursor Control."



Royal Model United Nations 2026

The pharmaceutical industry regularly requires rapid and secure access to raw materials. If any oversight is too heavy, slow, or unclear, it can cause numerous problems; drug production may be delayed, research laboratories may be strained, administrative burdens may increase for small and medium-sized firms, and it may become difficult to distinguish between legitimate producers and dubious actors. Thus, the EU's aim is not to shut down the pharmaceutical industry. However, it is necessary to prevent the illegal transfer of chemicals to shell companies using the name of the pharmaceutical industry.⁴⁰

Many precursors or precursor-like chemicals are used in general production processes in the chemical industry. These may be related to: plastics, paints, adhesives, solvents, cleaning products, fertilizers, perfumes, cosmetics, and industrial intermediates. The chemical industry has a very large and complex supply chain. Thus, it is not possible to view every chemical transaction as a criminal activity. However, this complexity can also create opportunities for many criminal organizations; a company that appears perfectly legitimate from the outside may actually be a key player controlling the drug trade. One prime example is Hubei Amavel Biotech Co. Ltd., or “AmavelBio”. From the outside, it appears to be a China-based chemical manufacturer/supplier. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the company was exporting large quantities of precursor chemicals used in the production of fentanyl and its analogs. In 2025, two of the company's executives were convicted of importing fentanyl precursors and

⁴⁰European Commission, “Drug Precursor Control.”



Royal Model United Nations 2026

money laundering⁴¹. Therefore, procedures are required: customer verification, transaction documents, order quantity control, suspicious order notification, licensing/registration obligations.

Some precursor chemicals can be used in areas such as fertilizers, agricultural chemicals, cosmetics, perfumes, or cleaning products. This links the issue of precursors to everyday economic activities. Therefore, the EU's approach cannot be based solely on a policing/customs perspective. It requires the internal market, producer obligations, commercial documentation procedures, and cooperation with the private sector.⁴²

In EU legislation, actors involved in precursor trade are generally referred to as "operators". Regulation EC No 273/2004⁴³ sets out rules for monitoring precursor trade within the EU; Regulation EC No 111/2005⁴⁴ focuses on monitoring trade between the EU and third countries. Legal operators are not criminals. On the contrary, the EU system relies on their cooperation. Companies, importers, exporters, distributors, and laboratory suppliers become part of the process of checking where the chemical came from, to whom it was sold, for what purpose

⁴¹U.S. Department of the Treasury, "U.S. Sanctions Suppliers of Precursor Chemicals for Fentanyl Production," *U.S. Department of the Treasury*, April 14, 2023, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1413>.

⁴²European Commission, "Drug Precursor Control."

⁴³European Parliament and Council of the European Union, "Regulation (EC) No 273/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2004 on Drug Precursors," *Official Journal of the European Union* L 47, February 18, 2004, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2004/273/oj/eng>.

⁴⁴ Council of the European Union, "Council Regulation (EC) No 111/2005 of 22 December 2004 Laying Down Rules for the Monitoring of Trade between the Community and Third Countries in Drug Precursors," *Official Journal of the European Union* L 22, January 26, 2005, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2005/111/oj/eng>.



it will be used, whether the quantity is normal, and whether the transaction is suspicious. This ultimately means Precursor procedures rely on public-private cooperation.

3.3 Illicit Diversion Paths and Synthetic Drug Manufacture

One of the most significant problems necessitating the control of precursors in drugs is their potential to be diverted from legal supply chains into illicit production processes. As explained in previous chapters, precursors are not always directly illicit substances; rather, they are chemicals that can be used in many legitimate sectors such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, cosmetics, fertilizers, plastics, and perfumes. This makes drug control more complex than the classic “catch-and-grab” approach. The problem is not simply the release of the final drug product onto the market; it is also necessary to track the chemical supply chain that makes its production possible⁴⁵.

In this context, precursor diversion refers to the redirection of a chemical, produced, sold, imported, or transported for legitimate purposes, to the production of illicit drugs. This process doesn't always take the form of overt smuggling. Sometimes, it might involve a seemingly legitimate company, a normal commercial order, a regulated invoice, or a legitimate import-export transaction. However, the identity of the recipient, the intended end use, the order quantity, or the shipping route can conceal the actual illicit production. Hence, the key to

⁴⁵ European Commission, “Drug Precursor Control.”



Royal Model United Nations 2026

precursor control is not just tracking the chemical itself, but also who is using it, for what purpose, in what quantity, and within which trade chain.⁴⁶

Illegal diversion can occur in various ways. Criminal networks may establish shell companies, presenting themselves as legitimate actors associated with the chemical, pharmaceutical, laboratory, cleaning product, or agricultural sectors. Similarly, the true intended use of a product can be concealed with forged or incomplete documentation. In some cases, orders are divided into small quantities to avoid attracting attention; while each transaction may appear normal on its own, the overall transaction pattern may indicate preparation for illicit production.⁴⁷ Transit trade, repackaging, intermediary companies, and cross-border shipments can also make it difficult to identify the true recipient or end-use. Therefore, an effective control system should focus not only on individual transactions but also on recurring behaviors, unusual trading patterns, and suspicious ordering patterns.

At this point, the production of synthetic drugs further increases the importance of precursor procedures. While traditional drug production is often dependent on specific plant resources, geographical conditions, and agricultural production processes, the production of synthetic drugs relies heavily on chemical inputs, technical knowledge, equipment, and

⁴⁶ European Commission, “Drug Precursor Control.”

⁴⁷ International Narcotics Control Board, “Overview: Giving More Priority to Combating Money-Laundering,” in *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 1995*, chap. 1, https://www.incb.org/incb/uploads/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/Thematic_chapters/English/AR_1995_E_Chapter_I.pdf.



Royal Model United Nations 2026

clandestine production sites. Thus, access to precursors is a fundamental element of production capacity in the synthetic drug market. When a criminal network gains access to the necessary chemicals, production can be moved to different locations without being tied to a specific agricultural region, carried out in small and clandestine laboratories, or reorganized according to changing control conditions.⁴⁸

This is particularly important for the European Union. Synthetic drugs should not be considered solely as end products originating from outside the EU; some synthetic drugs can also be produced within Europe. Therefore, a security approach based only on drug seizures at the external border is insufficient. The free movement of chemicals within the EU internal market, the size of legal supply chains, and the extensive trade between member states make the tracking of precursors more complex but also more necessary. If production can take place within Europe, control should be directed to the chemical supply stage before production.⁴⁹

The most important advantage of precursor control is that it allows for intervention in drug production at an early stage. Seizing the final drug product is often a reactive method because by this stage, production may be complete, the product may have entered the distribution chain, or it may be close to market. In contrast, monitoring precursors, reporting suspicious

⁴⁸ European Union Drugs Agency, “Drug Supply, Production and Precursors – the Current Situation in Europe (European Drug Report 2025),” *European Union Drugs Agency*, last updated June 5, 2025, https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/european-drug-report/2025/drug-supply-production-and-precursors_en

⁴⁹ European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, *Drug Precursor Developments in the European Union*, EMCDDA Papers, Lisbon, November 26, 2019, https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/emcdda-papers/drug-precursor-developments-eu_en



Royal Model United Nations 2026

transactions, verifying buyers, licensing and registration procedures, and import-export controls can enable the detection of risky activities before production even begins. Therefore, drug procedures should be seen not only as punitive but also as a preventive security tool.⁵⁰

However, criminal networks do not operate with fixed methods; they can adapt to existing control systems. When certain precursors are listed under legislation and subjected to stricter controls, illicit producers may turn to alternative chemicals, substances not yet listed, or new chemical routes referred to as “designer precursors” and “pre-precursors”. This shows that precursor control cannot be based solely on fixed substance lists. An effective system should be able to monitor emerging chemical risks, facilitate rapid information exchange between member states, evaluate suspicious transaction reports from the private sector, and update legislation to reflect changing production methods.⁵¹

In short, the problem in modern drug control is not just the final drug product; the legal or semi-legal chemical supply process that makes that product possible must also be controlled. The dependence of synthetic drug production on chemical inputs transforms precursor procedures into a preventive safety mechanism for the EU. Tools such as monitoring, licensing, documentation, suspicious transaction reporting, customs cooperation, and data-sharing are necessary to bridge the grey area between legal trade and illegal production. This framework

⁵⁰ European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, *Drug Precursor Developments in the European Union*.

⁵¹ European Union Drugs Agency, “Methamphetamine and Criminal Networks in Europe — Flexible, Adaptable and Resilient,” *European Union Drugs Agency*, accessed June 8, 2026, https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/methamphetamine/criminal-networks-europe_en.



explains why the EU must regulate not only the drugs themselves, but also the supply chains that enable their production.⁵²

4. Key Words and Definition

Legislative power: Refers to the power to make and alter laws.⁵³

Supranational: Means involving more than one country, or having power or authority that is greater than that of single countries.⁵⁴

Schengen area: The Schengen area consists of a group of European countries which have abolished border controls at their shared borders.⁵⁵

Brussels effect: Refers to the EU's unilateral ability to regulate global markets by setting the standards in competition policy, environmental protection, food safety, the protection of privacy, or the regulation of hate speech in social media.⁵⁶

Delegate: A person who is chosen or elected to vote or act as others.⁵⁷

⁵²European Union Drugs Agency, “Drug Supply, Production and Precursors – the Current Situation in Europe (European Drug Report 2025),” *European Union Drugs Agency*, last updated June 5, 2025, https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/european-drug-report/2025/drug-supply-production-and-precursors_en

⁵³ “Legislative Power,” LII / Legal Information Institute, n.d., https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/legislative_power.

⁵⁴ “Supranational,” May 27, 2026, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/supranational>.

⁵⁵ Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, “The Schengen Area,” Ministerie Van Buitenlandse Zaken, January 20, 2026, <https://www.government.nl/themes/international-cooperation/european-union/schengen-countries>.

⁵⁶ “The European Union in a Globalised World: The ‘Brussels Effect’ - Groupe D’études Géopolitiques,” Groupe D’études Géopolitiques, n.d., <https://geopolitique.eu/en/articles/the-european-union-in-a-globalised-world-the-brussels-effect/>.

⁵⁷ “Delegate.” Merriam-Webster.com Simple Definition, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/simple/delegate>. Accessed on 9 Jun. 2026.



Royal Model United Nations 2026

Checks and balances: The mechanisms which distribute power throughout a political system, preventing any one institution or individual from exercising total control.⁵⁸

Council configurations: The Council is a single legal entity, but it meets in 10 different 'configurations', depending on the subject being discussed. There is no hierarchy among the Council configurations. Any of the Council's 10 configurations can adopt an act that falls under the remit of another configuration. Therefore, with any legislative act the Council adopts, no mention is made of the configuration.⁵⁹

Ordinary Legislative Procedure: The main characteristic of the ordinary legislative procedure is the adoption of legislation jointly and on an equal footing by Parliament and the Council. It starts with a legislative proposal from the Commission (normally for a regulation, directive or decision) and consists of up to three readings, with the possibility for the co-legislators to agree on a joint text - and thereby conclude the procedure - at any reading.⁶⁰

Dual-use chemicals: Dual-use products are goods designed for civilian use that in the wrong hands could be used to suppress human rights or launch terrorist attacks. They can be anything from drones to chemicals. Although these goods can improve people's lives, they can be misused. Authoritarian regimes might use them to keep the population under control, while terrorist groups could use them to stage attacks.⁶¹

⁵⁸ "What Are Checks and Balances?," UCL Faculty of Social & Historical Sciences, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/social-historical-sciences/constitution-unit/constitution-unit-publications/constitution-unit-explainers/what-are-checks-and-balances>.

⁵⁹ "Council Configurations," Presidency of the Council of the European Union / Luxembourg 2015, n.d., <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/la-presidence/formations-conseil/index.html>.

⁶⁰ "Ordinary Legislative Procedure," European Parliament, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/olp/en/ordinary-legislative-procedure/overview>.

⁶¹ "Dual-use Goods: What Are They and Why Are New Rules Needed?," European Parliament, accessed June 2, 2026,



5. Social and Economic Aspects

5.1 Economic Impact on Legitimate Industrial Sectors

The illicit diversion of precursor chemicals that are necessary for creating the drugs illegally, and the proliferation of synthetic narcotics cause several serious issues such as disrupting legitimate business environments, imposing heavy regulatory obligations and jeopardizing the integrity of the supply chain.^{62 63}

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) do not operate perfectly aligned with the legal trade conditions. Instead, they exploit and weaponize legitimate logistics networks. The tactics used include mislabeling, bribing the port personnel, and even utilizing front companies.⁶⁴ TCOs inject illicit precursors and synthetic compounds into container shipping, commercial air cargo, and global e-commerce flows. This creates a contamination of externality which jeopardizes the security of the entire global supply chain.⁶⁵ When a legitimate logistics network is hijacked for smuggling, the immediate consequences vary. Different ways include prolonged

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20210319STO00424/dual-use-goods-what-are-they-and-why-are-new-rules-needed>

⁶² “Action taken by Governments and the International Narcotics Control Board,” *INCB*, 2023, accessed June 2, 2026,

https://www.incb.org/incb/uploads/documents/PRECURSORS/TECHNICAL_REPORTS/2023/E/07_Action_Taken_by_Governments_and_the_International_Narcotics_Control_Board.pdf

⁶³ “Illicit Trade Report 2024,” *World Customs Organization*, 2024, accessed June 2, 2026,

https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/enforcement-and-compliance/activities-and-programmes/illicit-trade-report/itr_2024_en.pdf?db=web

⁶⁴ Europol, “Criminal Networks in EU Ports: Risks and Challenges for Law Enforcement,” *Europol*, March 30, 2023, accessed June 2, 2026,

https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Europol_Joint-report_Criminal%20networks%20in%20EU%20ports_Public_version.pdf

⁶⁵ “Illicit Trade Report 2024.”



Royal Model United Nations 2026

customs congestion, cargo seizures, and increased scrutiny for legitimate shippers operating on high-risk routes.⁶⁶

In order to prevent the diversion of dual-use chemicals; different sectors such as pharmaceutical, chemical, and manufacturing sectors must bear significant compliance costs. Under the supranational regulatory frameworks, private corporations are mandated to act as frontline gatekeepers⁶⁷. For instance, legal enterprises must have a strict “know your customer” protocol. This protocol includes verifying the legal standing of end-users before finalizing the sales of chemicals. They must maintain what is called an end-user declaration which is a legally binding documentation auditing the exact intended application of monitored substances⁶⁸. Implementing blockchain verified, or serialized tracking systems to monitor chemical shipments from production to consumption is also a crucial step for legal enterprises.^{69 70}

⁶⁶ OECD, *E-Commerce Challenges in Illicit Trade in Fakes, Illicit Trade*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1787/40522de9-en>.

⁶⁷ United Nations, World Health Organization, and International Narcotics Control Board, “Guide on Estimating Requirements for Substances under International Control,” *INCB*, 2012, accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.incb.org/incb/uploads/documents/Narcotic-Drugs/Guidelines/estimating_requirements/NAR_Guide_on_Estimating_EN_Ebook.pdf.

⁶⁸ “Know Your Customer (KYC),” Swift, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.swift.com/risk-and-compliance/know-your-customer-kyc>.

⁶⁹ “Drug Precursor Control,” Taxation and Customs Union, accessed June 2, 2026, https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/customs/prohibitions-restrictions/drug-precursor-control_en.

⁷⁰ Naveen Rajora, “Pharmaceutical Drug Traceability by Blockchain and IoT in Enterprise Systems,” *Universal Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology* 2, no. 1 (August 16, 2023): 11–18, <https://doi.org/10.31586/ujpp.2023.749>.



Royal Model United Nations 2026

Market distortion and unfair competition are also one of the results created by this issue. TCOs frequently channel illicit capital through intense cash, legitimate front companies in the real estate, hospitality, construction, and retail sectors. Since these front companies do not rely on market-driven profitability to survive, they engage in tricky pricing and can handle losses that would originally bankrupt a legitimate competitor. This distorts local asset pricing, leads to artificial inflation in commercial real estate, and excludes law-abiding entrepreneurs who do not have access to unlimited, tax-free cash reserves. In other words, billions of dollars in liquid capital obtained from synthetic drug trafficking cause serious disruptions when they are laundered back into local economies.^{71 72}

The level of increase in fake prescription drugs, particularly illegally produced pressed pills that resemble genuine medications such as Adderall, Xanax, or oxycodone, directly jeopardizes not only the financial but also the legal foundations of the pharmaceutical industry. Aside from the immediate loss of revenue, this issue puts genuine pharmaceutical producers at risk of significant brand damage and complicates legal responsibilities. When fake pills contaminated with deadly synthetic opioids or nitazenes lead to mass fatalities, genuine manufacturers encounter expensive intellectual property lawsuits, higher costs for

⁷¹ "A CORRUPTING INFLUENCE: THE INFILTRATION AND UNDERMINING OF EUROPE'S ECONOMY AND SOCIETY BY ORGANISED CRIME," *Europol*, accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/socta2021_1.pdf.

⁷² OECD, "GUIDANCE FOR A RISK-BASED APPROACH TO THE REAL ESTATE SECTOR," *Financial Action Task Force*, 2022, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/content/dam/fatf-gafi/guidance/RBA-Real-Estate-Sector.pdf>.



anti-counterfeiting strategies (like holographic packaging and forensic chemical markers), and a gradual decline in public confidence in real prescription supply chains.^{73 74 75}

5.2 Societal and Public Health Implications

5.2.1 Reduction of Synthetic Narcotic Supply and Related Health Harms

The recent transformation in the current illegal market from natural drugs such as heroin to extremely powerful synthetic opioids (including fentanyl analogs and nitazenes), and highly pure stimulants has significantly changed the economic dynamics in terms of the quantity supplied and the resulting societal damage.⁷⁶ Due to the activity of these synthetic substances at the microgram level; the difference between a psychoactive dosage and a lethal limit is extremely slim. This shows that even slight changes in the purity of illegal supplies can lead to rapid, significant increases in deadly overdoses.^{77 78} This lethal potency curve imposes significant operational and financial pressure on public health systems and taxpayers.⁷⁹ On a

⁷³ Ranjana Pathak et al., “Tackling Counterfeit Drugs: The Challenges and Possibilities,” *Pharmaceutical Medicine* 37, no. 4 (May 15, 2023): 281–90, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40290-023-00468-w>.

⁷⁴ Aonghus J. Feeney, Jeffery A. Goad, and Gerard T. Flaherty, “Global Perspective of the Risks of Falsified and Counterfeit Medicines: A Critical Review of the Literature,” *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease* 61 (August 30, 2024): 102758, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmaid.2024.102758>.

⁷⁵ Iffath U. Syed and Travis W. Milburn, “Rethinking Counterfeit Medical Supply Chains: A Critical Review of the Current Literature,” *Health Care Science* 3, no. 3 (June 1, 2024): 203–10, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hcs2.97>.

⁷⁶ “World Drug Report 2023,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2023.html>.

⁷⁷ “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Drug-induced Deaths in Europe,” European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA), August 29, 2025, accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/topic-overviews/drug-induced-deaths-faq_en.

⁷⁸ Kyung-Kil Kwak et al., “Measurement of the Radiolysis Gases Generated in Several Waste Forms by External Irradiation,” *Journal of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle and Waste Technology (JNFCWT)* 4, no. 4 (January 1, 2006): 345–52, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.858234>.

⁷⁹ “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Drug-Induced Deaths in Europe.”



macroeconomic scale, this crisis creates a significant economic strain by leading to major labor market disruptions caused by early mortality and health issues within the prime-working-age group.⁸⁰ With costs even further intensified by rising public spending on specialized substance use disorder treatment, mental health services, and social safety nets, including state foster care systems responsible for accommodating children affected by parental addiction or deadly overdoses.⁸¹

5.2.2 Impact Public Safety and Crime Prevention

The concentrated distribution of synthetic drugs truly undermines public safety and crime prevention efforts. This results in inflicting significant social and economic burdens on communities. The creation of localized outdoor drug markets and illegal distribution centers produces geographic negative consequences that lead to fastening commercial divestment, lowering property values, and weakening social unity by turning public areas into regions of institutional abandonment⁸². This environmental decline is exacerbated by two separate levels of criminal activity: systemic crime and secondary crime. Systemic crime is characterized by the structural violence of the illegal trade, like armed conflicts between trafficking groups, debt collection, and strategic revenge against government agents⁸³. On the other hand, secondary crime includes property crimes such as theft, retail fraud, and burglary perpetrated by individuals

⁸⁰ “World Drug Report 2023.”

⁸¹ Alex Stevens, “Opioids in Europe: Preparing for a Third Wave,” *Brookings*, December 4, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/opioids-in-europe-preparing-for-a-third-wave/>.

⁸² “World Drug Report 2023.”

⁸³ Marieke Liem and Kim Moeller, “Revisiting Goldstein’s Drugs-Violence Nexus: Expanding the Framework for the Globalized Era,” *Springer Nature* 5 (March 4, 2025), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43576-025-00160-w>.



to support their addiction. Ultimately, the weight of these offenses fall mostly on the shoulders of local inhabitants and entrepreneurs. They end up having to urge municipal and federal law enforcement agencies to implement significant budgetary shifts.⁸⁴

5.2.3 Protecting Marginalized Groups from Synthetic Opioids and Stimulants

The consequences of the synthetic drug issue not only follow but also worsen the pre-existing socio-economic inequalities. Since the issue disproportionately affects marginalized groups such as the homeless, low-income communities, indigenous peoples, and individuals with unaddressed mental health issues who frequently resort to these substances for self-medication, and lacking the structural support afforded to wealthier populations⁸⁵. This vulnerability is greatly worsened by what is called the contamination trap, a supply-side issue where trafficking syndicates mix non-opioid substances such as cocaine, street stimulants, and fake prescription pills with cheap, highly potent synthetic opioids. This brings deadly risks to casual or non-tolerant users, which later leads to increased mortality rates in marginalized communities due to their restricted access to diagnostic tools like fentanyl test strips; greater rates of individual use, and slow emergency medical responses. Exacerbating these elevated overdose rates are significant structural barriers that consistently hinder marginalized populations from obtaining evidence-based healthcare solutions⁸⁶. These obstacles consist of the uneven

⁸⁴ Liem and Moeller, "Revisiting Goldstein's Drugs-Violence Nexus: Expanding the Framework for the Globalized Era."

⁸⁵ "World Drug Report 2023."

⁸⁶ "The Evolving Overdose Epidemic: Synthetic Opioids and Rising Stimulant-Related Harms," National Library of Medicine, January 31, 2020, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9200066/>.



distribution of licensed clinics across regions, restrictive local zoning regulations, bureaucratic and financial challenges in public healthcare enrollment, and insufficient integrated care models that tackle both housing instability and substance dependence simultaneously. As a result, in this context of systemic healthcare inequality, supply-side interdiction functions as a vital, short-term structural measure. By limiting the availability of extremely dangerous synthetic analogues at the border or regional scale, the state puts efforts to reduce death rates among groups largely excluded from fair healthcare access.⁸⁷

5.3 Financial and Market Dimensions of Illicit Trade

A proper assessment of synthetic drug trafficking requires analyzing syndicates as highly agile, vertically integrated multinational corporations operating in an unregulated global market; and their economic resilience is based on an asymmetrical cost-profit structure.⁸⁸ Unlike plant-based narcotics that require vast agricultural land and vulnerable transit corridors, synthetic narcotics are synthesized from low-cost, widely available industrial precursors. Yielding production costs of a fraction of a dollar per pill against destination market markups of several thousand percent; this extraordinary profit margin generates immense financial cushions that enables transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) to handle high rates of law enforcement product seizure without jeopardizing their structural business model⁸⁹. In order to integrate this

⁸⁷ “The Evolving Overdose Epidemic: Synthetic Opioids and Rising Stimulant-Related Harms.”

⁸⁸ “Global Synthetic Drugs Assessment 2020,” *UNODC*, 2020, accessed June 2, 2026, https://www.unodc.org/documents/scientific/Global_Synthetic_Drugs_Assessment_2020.pdf.

⁸⁹ “The Deadly Proliferation of Synthetic Drugs Is a Major Threat to Public Health and Is Reshaping Illicit Drugs Markets, Says the International Narcotics Control Board,” *INCB*, March 4, 2025, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.incb.org/incb/en/news/press-releases/2025/the-deadly-proliferation-of-synthetic-drugs-is-a-major-threat-to-public-health-and-is-reshaping-illicit-drugs-markets--says-the-international-narcotics-control-board.html>.



massive liquid capital into the regulated financial system while bypassing traditional anti-money laundering controls, syndicates employ sophisticated trade layering mechanisms in which they leverage privacy-focused crypto assets and decentralized mixing services. The aim is to anonymize cross-border precursor purchases, utilize Trade-Based Money Laundering by misinvoicing legitimate commodities such as textiles or electronics to mask value transfers within ordinary commerce, and rely on informal value transfer systems that operate via domestic ledgers. This financial agility is mirrored in the market's economic model: International regulatory bans on specific precursors do not halt production but instead trigger immediate shifts toward legal pre-precursors or novel chemical analogs. The systemic regulatory lag between the emergence of a new designer drug and its formal scheduling creates a highly profitable gray zone that TCOs exploit to maximize revenue. This proves that one-sided domestic scheduling is structurally insufficient against these adaptive, transnational supply chains that weaponize global economic asymmetries.⁹⁰

6. Legal Framework of the EU

The European Union's Drug Precursor Regime attempts to strike a balance between two key issues: preventing illicit drug production and protecting legitimate trade in pharmaceuticals, chemicals, agricultural products, and industries. According to the European Commission, there are two main regulations in the EU regarding drug precursors: Regulation (EC) No. 273/2004⁹¹

⁹⁰ Fabio Antonio Cajamarca Suquila, Andrés Fernando Lancheros Sánchez, and Julie Gesselle Benavides Meloc, "Rapid detection of psychoactive and new psychoactive substances using qualitative color tests: chemistry, techniques, and applications," *Analytical Methods*, May 5, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1039/D6AY00085A>.

⁹¹ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, "Regulation (EC) No 273/2004."



regulates trade in precursors within the EU; and Council Regulation (EC) No. 111/2005⁹² regulates trade in precursors between the EU and third countries. This shows that the EU system has both internal market and external trade dimensions. The EU's approach is not outright prohibition; rather, it aims to distinguish between legal trade and illegal production through procedures such as monitoring, registration, licensing, document control, import-export inspection, and reporting of suspicious transactions.

6.1 Evolution of the EU Drug Policy Framework

While for a long time law enforcement involved seizing the final product of drugs and directly linking criminal organizations to them, the way these organizations play this game has changed and evolved over the years. One important reason, and also an example, is the change in drugs. While drug production and distribution used to be based on agriculture, synthetic drugs have become more widespread in the present day. The most important difference with synthetic drugs is that they have reduced dependence on agriculture – or, if considered in a European context, on imported agriculture. This has rendered one of the most important fronts in the fight against illegal drugs insignificant: border control. This is because these new types of drugs are no longer dependent on foreign sources for raw materials. Additionally, the fact that these new drugs share common raw materials with drugs used across Europe and the world makes it more difficult for law enforcement to track them. For these reasons, the European Union has decided to change its bureaucratic strategy. EU drug policy has evolved from a reactive model that intervenes only after drugs are introduced to the market, to a preventive model that targets production, supply, distribution, and financing processes at an earlier stage.

⁹² Council of the European Union, “Council Regulation (EC) No 111/2005.”



6.2 Historical Precursor Regulations (Regulations EC 273/2004 and 111/2005)

The European Union's legal framework regarding drug precursors is based on the logic of monitoring, documenting, and detecting suspicious transactions at an early stage, rather than completely halting the legal chemical trade. The fundamental reason for this approach is that drug precursors are often dual-use substances that can be used in legitimate industrial, pharmaceutical, agricultural, cosmetic, or chemical sectors. Therefore, the aim of EU law is not merely to establish a prohibitive system; it is to ensure the continuation of legal trade while preventing these substances from being diverted to illicit drug production. The European Commission also defines drug precursor policy as an important part of the EU's drug supply reduction policy and states that it focuses on preventing the diversion of legally traded precursors to illicit production.

In this context, the EU's historical precursor regime is based on two main regulations: Regulation (EC) No. 273/2004 and Council Regulation (EC) No. 111/2005. These two regulations address different aspects of the same problem. Regulation 273/2004⁹³ focuses on the trade of drug precursors within the European Union; Regulation 111/2005⁹⁴ regulates trade in drug precursors between the EU and third countries. Thus, the EU has created a two-tiered system addressing precursor control at both the internal market and external trade levels. Regulation 273/2004 is directly titled “on drug precursors”; Regulation 111/2005 sets out the rules for monitoring trade in drug precursors between “Community and third countries”.

⁹³ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, “Regulation (EC) No 273/2004.”

⁹⁴ Council of the European Union, “Council Regulation (EC) No 111/2005.”



Royal Model United Nations 2026

Regulation (EC) No. 273/2004 is the fundamental regulation for monitoring the placing on the market and movement of drug precursors in the EU internal market. This regulation aims to enable the tracking of risky precursors within legal trade without completely blocking the free movement of chemical products between member states. The relatively open borders in the EU internal market make it impossible to conduct precursor control solely through physical border controls. Therefore, 273/2004 relies on procedural tools such as subjecting operators operating in the internal market to specific obligations, documenting transactions, verifying the customer and intended use, and reporting suspicious transactions to the competent authorities. According to the EUR-Lex⁹⁵ Summary, Regulation 273/2004 defines the measures to be taken for monitoring the placing on the market of drug precursors.

The rationale behind this regulation is important because it does not reduce precursor control to criminal law. With 273/2004, the EU, instead of viewing legal actors as potential criminals, makes them part of the control system. Chemical companies, importers, distributors, laboratory suppliers, and other legitimate operators; They are involved in the process through obligations such as record keeping, document preparation, verification of customer information, and reporting unusual orders. In this way, an attempt is made to strike a balance between security and economic activity in the EU internal market. In this respect, 273/2004 shows that the EU establishes precursor control through a "controlled access and monitoring" model rather than a "total ban".⁹⁶

⁹⁵ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, "Regulation (EC) No 273/2004."

⁹⁶ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, "Regulation (EC) No 273/2004."



Royal Model United Nations 2026

Council Regulation (EC) No. 111/2005⁹⁷ regulates the external trade aspect of precursor control. This regulation sets out the rules for monitoring drug precursor trade between the EU and third countries. Since precursors do not only move within the EU, internal market controls alone are insufficient. These substances can be imported from outside the EU, exported outside the EU, or transit through EU territory. Therefore, the EU precursor regime must also include customs controls, import-export authorizations, transit surveillance, and information sharing with third countries. The official title of Regulation 111/2005 clearly indicates that it sets out rules for monitoring drug precursor trade between "Community and third countries".

The importance of 111/2005⁹⁸ lies in making the precursor issue a matter not only of the EU internal market but also of international trade. Chemicals used in the production of synthetic drugs can be produced in different countries, transported via different trade routes, and the actual end-user can be concealed. Hence, foreign trade procedures aim to identify risky shipments, especially during import, export, and transit. This system allows customs authorities and competent national authorities to monitor not only the final narcotic substances but also the chemicals that may be used in their production.

When considered together, these two regulations divide the EU's precursor control system into two main areas: internal market monitoring and external trade control. Regulation

⁹⁷ Council of the European Union, "Council Regulation (EC) No 111/2005."

⁹⁸ Council of the European Union, "Council Regulation (EC) No 111/2005."



Royal Model United Nations 2026

273/2004⁹⁹ ensures the monitoring of legitimate chemical movements within the EU; 111/2005¹⁰⁰ controls the EU's trade in precursors with third countries. This distinction is the legal basis for the need for "process monitoring" discussed in Section 3. If the risk is not only the final drug product entering the market, but also the chemical supply chain that makes that product possible, the EU needs to establish a procedural system covering both internal and external trade.

This historical framework also explains why the EU needs new rules. Although 273/2004¹⁰¹ and 111/2005¹⁰² have long formed the basis of the EU precursor regime, the changing nature of the synthetic drug market, developments such as designer precursors and new chemical routes, have created a need for more flexible and up-to-date control. Indeed, the new EU regulatory proposal for 2025 aims to establish a more integrated framework by abolishing the two existing regulations on the monitoring and control of drug precursors. This demonstrates that the EU's precursor policy cannot be limited to a fixed list of prohibitions; it needs to be updated according to changing criminal methods, legal trade needs, and new chemical risks.

Consequently, Regulation 273/2004 and Regulation 111/2005 form the legal backbone of the EU's drug precursor procedures system. The former aims to monitor precursor trade within the EU, while the latter controls trade between the EU and third countries. Through these two

⁹⁹ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, "Regulation (EC) No 273/2004."

¹⁰⁰ Council of the European Union, "Council Regulation (EC) No 111/2005."

¹⁰¹ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, "Regulation (EC) No 273/2004."

¹⁰² Council of the European Union, "Council Regulation (EC) No 111/2005."



regulations, the EU attempts to identify chemical flows leading to illicit drug production without completely blocking legal trade.

6.3 The EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025)

The EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021–2025 establishes the overall strategic framework for addressing the EU's drug policy not solely as a matter of criminal law or border security, but also encompassing security, public health, harm reduction, and coordination. While regulations such as Regulation 273/2004 and 111/2005 establish the technical and legal basis for combating precursor trade, the 2021–2025 Strategy demonstrates the broader policy objectives served by these regulations. According to the Council, the aim of the strategy is to improve health, social stability, and security levels, and to contribute to drug awareness.¹⁰³

The strategy is built on three main policy areas: drug supply reduction, drug demand reduction, and addressing drug-related harm. Drug precursor procedures are most directly linked to drug supply reduction. This is because the monitoring, licensing, documentation, and reporting of suspicious transactions of precursors are preventive tools aimed at reducing the supply of drugs before the final product reaches the market. The Council of the EU strategy document links drug supply reduction to the prevention, deterrence, and disruption of drug-related crime, particularly organized crime.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Council of the European Union, *EU Drugs Strategy 2021–2025*, 14178/20, Brussels, December 18, 2020, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14178-2020-INIT/en/pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ Council of the European Union, *EU Drugs Strategy 2021–2025*.



Royal Model United Nations 2026

However, the EU's approach is not solely based on suppressing supply. Demand reduction encompasses health and social policy tools such as prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration. Harm reduction focuses on reducing health risks arising from overdoses, new psychoactive substances, and synthetic drugs. Therefore, although precursor procedures are primarily related to safety and supply reduction, they can also indirectly contribute to public health goals by making illicit synthetic production more difficult.

The EU Drugs Action Plan 2021–2025 translates the objectives set out in the strategy into concrete actions. According to the EUDA, the Action Plan includes the necessary actions, timelines, responsible actors, and indicators for measuring effectiveness to implement the strategy's priorities. In this respect, the Action Plan is an implementation tool that strengthens coordination among member states, EU institutions, law enforcement agencies, customs authorities, and health authorities.¹⁰⁵

Consequently, the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021–2025 integrates drug precursor procedures into the broader EU drug policy. These procedures should be understood not only as chemical substance control but also as part of combating organized crime, border security, public health, harm reduction, and cooperation between member states.

¹⁰⁵ European Union Drugs Agency, "EU Drugs Action Plan 2021–2025."



7. Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Lawmaking in the European Union is legislated by two bodies working simultaneously. One being the European Parliament, and the other being the Council of the EU¹⁰⁶. Both the European Parliament and the Council of the EU accept, amend and veto incoming law proposals.¹⁰⁷

7.1 EU Legislative Bodies

7.1.1 European Parliament

The European Parliament is the first of two legislating bodies of the European Union. It represents the important democratic principle that people should take part in their own governing.¹⁰⁸ Delegates in the European Parliament are elected annually during European Elections held throughout the Union member states. This means that the delegates of the European Parliament are chosen directly by the European people. When a proposal is submitted to the European Parliament by the European Commission, the European Parliament has their first reading and communicates their decision to adopt, amend or veto to the Council. Depending on the Council's decision, the Parliament can possibly have their second or third reading.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. (n.d.). *Official Journey of the European Union*, Article 289.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF>

¹⁰⁷ *Legislative powers*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/parliaments-powers/legislative-powers>

¹⁰⁸ *European Parliament*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/european_parliament-en-ad6a0d57-08ef-427d-a715-%0A6e3bfaf775a.html

¹⁰⁹ Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. (n.d.). *Official Journey of the European Union*, Article 294.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF>



7.1.2 Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union is the second of the two legislative bodies. It has a total of 10 configurations. These configurations are built around the principles of the EU¹¹⁰. Depending on the law proposal, one of the 10 configurations are called to a meeting. Each configuration is delegated by a relevant government official from each member state. After the European Parliament has had their hearing, the Council of the European Union has one of their own. It is not until both bodies agree upon the law proposal that it gets past.

7.1.2.1 Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA)

This configuration deals with the EU's policies on crime; judicial, police and immigration cooperation and asylum command. It aims to build EU-wide freedom, security and justice. JHA also fights against terrorism. Denmark, UK and Ireland do not fully participate in the implementation of certain measures as agreed in the EU treaties.¹¹¹ Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs meet under this configuration.

¹¹⁰ Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. (n.d.). *Official Journey of the European Union*, Article 4. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF>

¹¹¹ *Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA)*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/la-presidence/formations-conseil/justice-affaires-interieures/index.html>



7.1.2.2 General Affairs Council (GAC)

This configuration administrates and ensures consistency throughout the other 9 configurations. It has a wide range of working areas. It can also communicate directly with the European Parliament and the Commission. Generally, GAC handles the way that the EU operates.¹¹²

7.1.2.3 Foreign Affairs Council (FAC)

This configuration deals with the Union's external policy. It meets once a month and implements the EU's foreign and security policy. FAC is composed of the foreign affairs, sometimes defence, development and trade ministers of EU states.¹¹³

7.1.2.4 Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Ecofin)

This configuration discusses issues related to the EU budget. It meets once a month. It is composed of Economics and Finance ministers from EU states. The most important task for this configuration is to prepare and adopt the annual budget of the EU together with the European Parliament.

¹¹² *Council General Affairs*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/la-presidence/formations-conseil/affaires-generales/index.html>

¹¹³ *Foreign Affairs Council*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/la-presidence/formations-conseil/affaires-etrangeres/index.html>



7.1.2.5 Agriculture and Fisheries Council (AGRI)

This configuration is the main decision body of the Council of the EU regarding agriculture and fisheries. It helps the Union enforce their common agricultural and fisheries policy.¹¹⁴

7.1.2.6 Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)

This configuration tries to increase employment rates and guarantee better working conditions. It meets four times per year.¹¹⁵

7.1.2.7 Competitiveness Council (COMPET)

This configuration works to enhance the competitiveness in EU trade. It deals with the internal market, industry, research and innovation. Meetings host ministers responsible for trade, economy, industry, research and innovation, and space depending on the agenda from EU states.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. (n.d.). *Official Journal of the European Union*, Article 38.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF>

¹¹⁵ *Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/la-presidence/formations-conseil/emploi-politique-sociale-sante-consommateurs/index.html>

¹¹⁶ *Competitiveness Council (COMPET)*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/la-presidence/formations-conseil/competitivite/index.html>



7.1.2.8 Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (TTE)

This configuration looks at the transportation, telecommunication and energy usage/production of the Union. It tries to establish sustainable sectors for each of these matters. It also works on the aviation legislation of the Union. With power production becoming more important than ever, this configuration gets more important.¹¹⁷

7.1.2.9 Environment Council (ENV)

This configuration is responsible for the EU environment policy. It also tries to protect natural habitats, keep the air and water clean, and ensure proper waste disposal.¹¹⁸

7.1.2.10 Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS)

This configuration deals with teaching, improving the knowledge on EU culture, vocational training and literary education. Erasmus projects are also managed by the EYCS.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ *Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (TTE)*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/la-presidence/formations-conseil/transports-telecommunications-energie/index.html>

¹¹⁸ *Environment Council (ENV)*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/la-presidence/formations-conseil/environnement/index.html>

¹¹⁹ *Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS)*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from <https://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/la-presidence/formations-conseil/education-jeunesse-culture-sport/index.html>



7.2 Specialist Agencies

Outside of the legislative bodies, the Union has many agencies that specialize on different matters.

7.2.1 European Union Drug Agency (EUDA)

EUDA, located in Lisbon, tries to contribute to the EU's preparedness against drugs. It works under four categories: anticipate, alert, respond and learn. It is responsible for the monitoring of the drug problem in the EU, it can issue alerts and provides research and support against drug usage in the Union.¹²⁰

7.2.2 European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)

OLAF is an agency that investigates fraud of all kinds including tax fraud, improper use of EU funds, and suspicious misconducts by the EU staff and institutions. It acts to ensure the money of the taxpayer goes to where it should. OLAF's actions also strengthen the trust in EU institutions.¹²¹

¹²⁰ *European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA)*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-union-drugs-agency-euda_en

¹²¹ *What we do*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2026, from https://anti-fraud.ec.europa.eu/about-us/what-we-do_en



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Royal Model United Nations
2026