



## EU EARLY WARNING SYSTEM INTENSIVE MONITORING

### Etomethazene under intensive monitoring as of 19 January 2023

ID:	EU-EWS-IM-2023-0003	Issued by:	EMCDDA
Date issued:	02/03/2023	Transmitted by:	Action on New Drugs Sector, EMCDDA
Recipients:	Early Warning System Network		
Read with:	EU-EWS-RCS-FN-2023-0004		

#### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this notification is to inform the EWS Network that the EMCDDA has added the synthetic opioid etomethazene [1] to the list of new psychoactive substances under intensive monitoring [2]. Based on an assessment of the available information on 2 March 2021, the EMCDDA decided that any substance from the benzimidazole group of opioids should be added to the list of new psychoactive substances under intensive monitoring at the point of formal notification. This decision was based on an increase in the number of new benzimidazole opioids identified in Europe during 2020-2021, the available information suggesting that these substances are potent opioids, a need to improve our understanding of potential risks.

As of 19 January 2023, the EMCDDA has formally notified 11 benzimidazole opioids that appeared on the European drug market since 2019. Benzimidazole opioids may be sold as replacements to established controlled opioids, mis-sold as or used to adulterate heroin and other opioids [3-5], and used to make fake medicines [6]. Importantly in 2022 there was an increase in deaths involving benzimidazole opioids, particularly metonitazene and protonitazene, in Estonia [7].

Any event linked to a substance under intensive monitoring is classed as an event of potential high impact on public health. As such, please expedite reporting of any event involving etomethazene to the EMCDDA until further notice.

Further information on the procedures and specific types of information that should be reported is available in the operating guidelines and guidance notes for the European Union Early Warning System [8].

- Further information on intensive monitoring is provided in [Guidance note 6](#)
- Further information on events of potential high impact on public health is provided in [Guidance Note 4](#)

#### 2. References

1. Etomethazene substance profile at the European Database on New Drugs (EDND): <https://ednd2.emcdda.europa.eu/ednd/substanceProfiles/1376>



2. Intensive monitoring list at the European Database on New Drugs (EDND):  
<https://ednd2.emcdda.europa.eu/ednd/additionalResources/20002>
3. De Baerdemaeker KSC, et al. Isotonitazene, a novel psychoactive substance opioid, detected in two cases following a local surge in opioid overdoses. QJM. 2022;hcac039.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/qjmed/hcac039>
4. CCENDU Drug Alert. Nitazenes. [https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2022-03/CCSA-CCENDU-Drug-Alert-Nitazenes-2022-en\\_0.pdf](https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2022-03/CCSA-CCENDU-Drug-Alert-Nitazenes-2022-en_0.pdf)
5. US DEA. Schedules of Controlled Substances: Temporary Placement of Butonitazene, Etodesnitazene, Flunitazene, Metodesnitazene, Metonitazene, N-pyrrolidino etonitazene, and Protonitazene in Schedule I. Proposed Rule. December 2021. <https://www.regulations.gov/document/DEA-2021-0031-0001>
6. EMCDDA. New psychoactive substances: 25 years of early warning and response in Europe — an update from the EU Early Warning System. [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/rapid-communication/update-eu-early-warning-system-2022\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/rapid-communication/update-eu-early-warning-system-2022_en)
7. EMCDDA. EU Early Warning System Advisory. Overview of the situation with new opioids — Europe, 2021–ongoing. EU-EWS-RCS-AD-2023-0001. 2 February 2023.
8. EMCDDA operating guidelines for the European Union Early Warning System on new psychoactive substances: [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/guidelines/operating-guidelines-for-the-european-union-early-warning-system-on-new-psychoactive-substances\\_en](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/guidelines/operating-guidelines-for-the-european-union-early-warning-system-on-new-psychoactive-substances_en)