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Drugnet Europe

Newsletter of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

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Record number of new drugs in 2009

A record number of new drugs were officially reported in 2009 to the EMCDDA and Europol via the EU early-warning system (EWS) on new psychoactive substances. This is according to the 2009 EMCDDA–Europol annual report on the implementation of the three-step legal instrument through which Europe monitors and acts on new substances (1).

According to the report, released in April, 24 new psychoactive substances were officially notified for the first time to the two agencies in 2009. This represents the largest number of substances ever reported in a single year and almost double the number notified in 2008 (13). All of the new compounds were synthetic, including two substances with medicinal properties (2).

Highlighted as significant new developments in 2009 were the emergence of new, smokable herbal products laced with synthetic cannabinoids (the so-called 'Spice' phenomenon) and the growing popularity of synthetic cathinones. A total of nine synthetic cannabinoids, from four distinct chemical groups, were reported via the EWS in 2009, as well as four synthetic cathinones. The latter are derivatives of the parent compound cathinone, which is structurally related to amphetamine.

Towards the end of 2009, increased evidence of the use and availability of one synthetic cathinone, mephedrone (4-methylmethcathinone), prompted the EMCDDA and Europol to embark on a formal data-collection exercise on the substance (Step I of the legal process). This led to a joint report on mephedrone in March 2010, paving the way for a possible risk assessment of the drug (Step II, see p. 8).

The appearance of a large number of new unregulated synthetic compounds, marketed on the Internet as 'legal highs' or 'not for human consumption', states the report, presents a growing challenge for monitoring, responding to, and controlling the use of new psychoactive substances.

The piperazine *mCPP*, extensively covered in previous years, is also given attention in this year's report. Data from various sources highlight a marked increase in the percentage of 'ecstasy' tablets containing this substance, while the availability of MDMA on the market appears to be decreasing.

Continued on page 8



Photo: istockphoto

Mephedrone is one of over 110 substances reported since 1997.

EMCDDA and Europol Directors review new drugs entering market

Monitoring new substances entering Europe's illicit drug market was the focus of talks on 25 March in Lisbon between the Directors of the EMCDDA and the European law enforcement agency (Europol). The two EU agencies collaborate actively in detecting and monitoring new and potentially threatening psychoactive substances entering the European market and in assessing the involvement of organised crime in their manufacture and trafficking.

EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz and Europol Director Rob Wainwright endorsed two joint reports providing the latest update on new substances in Europe. The first of these is the 2009 EMCDDA–Europol annual report on the implementation of the 'Council Decision on the information exchange, risk assessment and control of new psychoactive substances' (see opposite). This report presents the key findings of how the mechanism was implemented in 2009, detailing the appearance of new unregulated synthetic compounds designed to circumvent controls.

The second report focuses on the new drug mephedrone and results from a recent information collection exercise on the substance by the two agencies and their respective networks in the EU Member States (see p. 8). This report completes Step I of the legal process established by the Council Decision (information exchange and early-warning).

Also discussed was the EMCDDA–Europol joint publication series covering key aspects of European drug markets. The second title in this series *Cocaine: A European Union perspective in the global context* was subsequently released in April (see p. 4).

April–June

2010

Drug situation

EMCDDA and ECDC assess anthrax outbreak among heroin users

The EMCDDA and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) released on 12 February a joint threat assessment report on a recent anthrax outbreak among drug users in the UK and Germany (1). This updated an earlier joint assessment relating to the outbreak released by the agencies in January.

Anthrax is an acute infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. It most commonly occurs in wild and domestic animals and is endemic in a number of mainly agricultural countries. It is very rare in Europe.

An alert reporting an outbreak of anthrax among injecting drug users in Scotland was issued by the United Kingdom in December 2009. By early February 2010, 19 Scottish cases (9 fatal) had been confirmed, as well as one fatal case in Germany and two cases in England (one fatal). A new update, released by the ECDC on 16 April, reported 33 Scottish cases (11 fatal), two German cases (one fatal) and three cases in England (one fatal).

The anthrax strain found in the German and English cases was indistinguishable from that found in Scotland, strongly suggesting a common source of infection. As all reported cases occurred among heroin users, it is likely that the source is a contaminated batch of heroin.

The ECDC is coordinating this issue at EU level, in cooperation with the European Commission, while the EMCDDA is playing an advisory role. The EMCDDA is also contributing to a high level of alertness in the EU Member States by disseminating information on the outbreak through its expert networks on drug-related deaths and infectious diseases and emerging psychoactive substances (early-warning system).

Lucas Wiessing, Roumen Sedefov, Isabelle Giraudon, Ana Gallegos

(1) The threat assessment report and regular updates on this outbreak are available on the ECDC website at: <http://ecdc.europa.eu>

Global audit of HIV services for IDUs reveals low levels of provision



Absence of HIV interventions: 'a serious missed opportunity'

Worldwide provision of HIV prevention, treatment and care services for injecting drug users (IDUs) is very low and probably insufficient to prevent, halt or reverse HIV epidemics in this at-risk population. This is according to a recent review, published in *The Lancet*, quantifying the global, regional and national coverage of these services (1).

The review shows that, although the number of countries with core HIV services is growing, the level of coverage among IDUs remains poor in many countries. In 2009, for example, 82 countries had implemented needle and syringe programmes (NSPs) and 70 countries had implemented opium substitution therapy (OST), an increase of five and eight countries respectively since the global audit of 2008. However, worldwide, the midpoint estimates of coverage of NSPs, OST and antiretroviral therapy (ART) services in IDUs were found to be low. To prevent HIV spreading among IDUs and into the wider community, says the article, these interventions need to be delivered to scale.

In western Europe — where, compared with other regions, there is a relatively stable HIV epidemic — coverage of HIV services in IDU populations appeared high. And the situation was similar in Australasia. By contrast, there are many countries in eastern Europe and south-east Asia where coverage is poor, despite evidence of substantial HIV epidemics. 'The absence of these interventions can only increase the risk of HIV transmission and make the task of HIV prevention harder', says the article. 'This is a serious missed opportunity', it concludes, 'which will have long-term effects on overall public health in these countries'.

(1) Mathers, B.M., Degenhardt, L., Ali, H., Wiessing, L., Hickman, M., Mattick, R., Myers, B., Ambekar, A., Strathdee, S.A. (2010), 'HIV prevention, treatment, and care services for people who inject drugs: a systematic review of global, regional and national coverage', *The Lancet*, March 2010. <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2810%2960232-2/abstract>

Sharing information on drug treatment demand in the Mediterranean

Sharing information on drug treatment demand was the focus of a seminar organised in Cairo from 24–25 March by the Pompidou Group for its MedNET network (1). This network fosters cooperation and knowledge exchange on drugs and addiction between Mediterranean countries and European members of the Pompidou Group (North–South), as well as cooperation between countries within the Mediterranean region (South–South).

Focusing on treatment demand indicators, the seminar discussed the relevance of establishing national systems for monitoring demand for treatment. It also provided a forum for countries to showcase national treatment approaches and current data-collection methods. The EMCDDA was

invited to present the European system for collecting drug treatment demand data (2).

The event brought together some 50 participants from a wide variety of institutions (ministries, public and private clinics, NGOs) and professions (psychiatrists, social workers). In a follow-up phase, experts will now explore the optimal methodology to be used for collecting treatment demand data in the countries concerned, taking into account the different national contexts.

Linda Montanari and Florence Mabileau-Whomsley

(1) http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/pompidou/Activities/medNet_en.asp

(2) <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/key-indicators/idi>

Responses

Drug use and pregnancy: challenges for public health

Every year, some 30 000 pregnant women are estimated to be using opioids in Europe. In an article published in *Eurosurveillance*, EMCDDA authors explore the public health challenges related to problem drug use and pregnancy in Europe today as well as the intervention strategies likely to alleviate them (1). The article reviews four challenges in particular: treatment of drug dependence; infectious disease transmission; dual diagnosis (co-morbidity of substance use and mental illness); and poor social and personal welfare (e.g. homelessness, intimate partner violence).

For pregnant women using drugs, treatment for drug dependence involves not only a stabilisation in their health and social situation, but also offers an opportunity for contact with standard antenatal and other health care services. Pregnant drug users are at a higher risk than other pregnant women of contracting blood-borne and sexually transmitted infections. While policies vary across countries, standard antenatal care programmes in most European countries today include voluntary screening for infections (e.g. HBV, HCV, HIV, syphilis). Such screening can provide the mother with early diagnosis and appropriate treatment and help



Photo: istockphoto

Around 30 000 pregnant women are estimated to be using opioids in Europe

reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission. However, many pregnant drug users still receive suboptimal antenatal care due to poor access to regular services. According to the article, antenatal services geared to the general population need also to cater to the needs of pregnant drug users.

Dual diagnosis is common among drug using populations, with around three-quarters of clients enrolled in drug treatment in Europe reporting a mental health problem. Pregnancy is seen as a unique opportunity to help female

drug users enrol in special treatment and support programmes addressing co-morbidity. Finally, the article describes how one in 10 drug users entering treatment in Europe lives in unstable conditions or is homeless. Homeless pregnant drug users are less likely to seek drug treatment than those who are domiciled, and, when in treatment, are less likely to maintain abstinence.

The article proposes that treatment and care for pregnant drug users should offer multidisciplinary interventions encompassing: prevention, screening and treatment of infectious diseases; mental health; personal and social welfare; gynaecological/obstetric care; and drug use. It concludes that risks to mother and child can be reduced via a coordinated and integrated approach involving obstetricians, addiction counsellors, social workers, general practitioners and other health care specialists.

(1) Gyarmathy, V.A., Giraudon, I., Hedrich, D., Montanari, L., Guarita, B., Wiessing, L. (2009), 'Drug use and pregnancy — challenges for public health', *Eurosurveillance*, Volume 14, Issue 9.

<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=19142>

Enhancing the quality and effectiveness of services for drug users

Enhancing the quality and effectiveness of drug prevention, treatment, harm reduction and rehabilitation interventions is one of the key objectives of the current EU drugs action plan (2009–12). In order to translate this goal into concrete action, the plan foresees developing, implementing and exchanging quality standards and guidelines for services and interventions in these areas. The European Commission (DG-JLS) is supporting an EU-funded research project to develop 'minimum quality standards and benchmarks' in the four fields. The project will take stock of standards already existing in Europe and develop a mechanism of consensus-building between the EU Member States.

The EMCDDA has been working in this domain for over a decade. In 2008, it launched its Best practice portal, designed to help those working in these fields take evidence-based decisions when planning interventions. More recently it has conducted a review of national treatment guidelines (1) and is currently collaborating in another EU-funded research project to produce evidence-based drug prevention standards for use in the EU (2). In the light of its experience, the EMCDDA will work closely with the Commission on this initiative, participating in the project steering group and offering technical support as required.

Roland Simon

(1) A Selected issue publication on the implementation of the treatment guidelines will be published in 2011. See p. 6.

(2) <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/drugnet/online/2010/69/article8>

Experts debate drug policy

Drug policy experts from over 20 countries met in Santa Monica (USA) from 15–16 March for the 4th annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy (ISSDP). Focusing on the future of drug policy, the event explored current policy trends and identified practices requiring further research.

The EMCDDA was represented on the conference programme committee and contributed to sessions on the: 'Impact of economic recession on drug phenomena' and 'Liberalisation and the enforcement of drug laws'. EMCDDA presentations explored 'Economic cycles and drug treatment' and 'Drug offences: sentencing and other outcomes'. Selected papers from the conference are scheduled to be published in an upcoming edition of *Statistics, politics and policy* (Berkeley Electronic Press).

For more, see <http://www.issdp.org/conferences.htm>

Bookshelf

2009 INCB Annual report



Highly organised and powerful criminal networks are using new processes, routes and substances to keep drug manufacturing operations alive. So states the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), in its 2009 *Annual report* launched in Vienna on 24 February. In the face of stricter controls of chemicals, traffickers are finding new ways to fuel their illegal exploits and are still able to obtain the chemicals they need from legal trade channels, says the INCB.

One example given is that of methamphetamine chemical precursors. Following a ban on ephedrine and pseudoephedrine in Mexico, traffickers in that country have changed their drug manufacturing techniques and are now adopting different processes using phenylacetic acid. Traffickers have also shifted their focus from obtaining ephedrine and pseudoephedrine as raw materials, to trafficking in pharmaceutical preparations of these, usually in the form of tablets or capsules. In 2009, transactions involving 31 million tablets of the two precursors were suspended, stopped or seized around the world.

The report provides a comprehensive account of the global drug situation, analyses trends in drug use and trafficking and suggests necessary remedial action. Other topics covered include: primary prevention, the use of drugs to commit sex crimes and the growing problem of prescription drug misuse.

Publisher: United Nations (INCB)

Languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish

Date: 24 February 2010 • **Price:** USD 30

ISBN: 978-92-1-148249-2

Press pack:

http://www.incb.org/incb/press_releases.html

The EMCDDA is responsible for the selection of materials for the Bookshelf and for the text presented. However, responsibility for the content of these materials and the opinions expressed therein lies with the authors themselves.

Feature

Latest analysis of cocaine market highlights 'secondary extraction' laboratories in Europe



Europe has become an important destination for cocaine manufactured in South America

Sophisticated techniques to conceal and smuggle cocaine into Europe are reviewed in a new EMCDDA–Europol market analysis *Cocaine: A European Union perspective in the global context* (1). Published in April, the review examines how cocaine is produced and trafficked into the EU, and provides insight into the people involved, routes taken and the scale of the problem in Europe. Also described are some of the supply reduction initiatives already developed at European level.

One innovative technique highlighted in the report involves incorporating cocaine base or hydrochloride (HCl) into other materials (e.g. beeswax, plastic, clothing), then extracting it in special laboratories set up inside EU borders. Around 40 of these cocaine so-called 'secondary extraction' laboratories were seized in the EU in 2008, says the report. These differ from laboratories found in South America which manufacture cocaine base or HCl from coca leaves or coca paste.

Europe has become an important destination for cocaine manufactured in South America. In 2007, an estimated 73 800 seizures in EU Member States, Croatia, Turkey and Norway resulted in the interception of almost 77 tonnes of cocaine. With these figures, Europe ranked third in the world for the amount of cocaine confiscated, after South and North America.

With a significant proportion of the global cocaine output now destined for Europe, new cross-Atlantic trafficking routes have emerged. The report describes the three main Europe-bound cocaine smuggling routes (Northern, Central, West African). It also shows how law enforcement data point to shifting landing points within Europe's main gateway regions — the Iberian Peninsula and the Low Countries (Belgium, the Netherlands) — as well as to the spread of trafficking networks eastwards. According to the report, this increases the risk of cocaine use diffusing into central and eastern European countries which, to date, have been comparatively little affected.

In 2007, worldwide seizures of illicit shipments of potassium permanganate — the chemical precursor used in the manufacture of cocaine — reached a total of 153 tonnes (101 tonnes in 2006). Colombia accounted for 94 % of the 2007 seizures (144 tonnes). The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) monitors the international trade in (and diversion of) this chemical, with South America being subject to special scrutiny. With close examination at home, illicit potassium permanganate importers from South America may now be using Africa as a transit territory, says the report. It is also likely that countries of West Africa are being used to carry out the final stages of the cocaine manufacturing process, transforming the base to cocaine HCl.

Most of the cocaine available in the world today is produced from coca grown in Colombia, where the plant contributes significantly to the local economy. Various measures to prevent coca cultivation and offer alternative livelihoods to the growers have been developed and supported by the EU and its Member States. However, the concentration of land ownership along with the ongoing armed conflict make effective and long-term action difficult. While underlining the need to boost cocaine interception efforts, the report also presents arguments for complementary initiatives to address the underlying causes that encourage cocaine production and trafficking.

Laurent Laniel

(1) The report is available in English and Spanish at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-publications>

United Nations

EMCDDA active at annual CND meeting

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), the central UN policy-making body in drug-related matters, held its 53rd session in Vienna from 8–12 March. During the meeting, which it attended as observer, the EMCDDA provided technical support to the European Commission and EU Member States, facilitating discussions around resolutions on ‘poppers’, sexual assault, ‘Spice’, drug prevention and universal access to treatment (1).

A key theme at this year’s session was the revision of the UNODC data-collection tools (annual and biennial report questionnaires: ARQ and BRQ). The EMCDDA has actively supported EU Member States since 2009 in contributing to this revision process and has participated in associated expert groups. These revised tools will be concluded at a UNODC meeting scheduled for later this year and adopted at the 2011 CND session.

The CND and its side events offer the EMCDDA an ideal opportunity to present its work to an international audience and to hold informal meetings with its partners in Europe and worldwide. Held in the margins of this year’s session were meetings with the: Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD); Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CSSA); Federal Drug Control Services of the Russian Federation and national drug coordinators from several EU Member States and candidate countries.

Klaudia Palczak

(1) The report on the 53rd CND will be available at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/index.html>

Partners

New pact against drug trafficking

Senior law enforcement and justice and home affairs officials from the 27 EU Member States met in Brussels on 11 March and pledged to work swiftly towards a European pact to tackle international drug trafficking. Gathering at the inaugural meeting of the EU Standing Committee on Internal Security (COSI), they also examined joint measures for tackling terrorism, human trafficking and cyber crime.

The pact, which is scheduled to be approved by the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 3–4 June, will provide political impetus to EU action in the field of drug trafficking and complement the EU drug strategy and action plan (2009–12). It will focus in particular on cocaine trafficking via Africa and heroin trafficking via eastern Europe and on countering the proceeds of crime.

COSI was set up on 25 February under the Spanish Presidency of the EU, in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 71 of the TFEU). It exists to boost coordination between EU Member States on internal security operations in areas such as police and customs cooperation, external border protection and judicial cooperation. In order to avoid duplication of activities, the committee is also tasked with coordinating the action of European agencies with responsibilities in the areas of justice and home affairs (Cepol, Eurojust, Europol, Frontex). An EMCDDA representative attended this first COSI meeting as observer.

Danilo Ballotta

Drugs-Lex

Topic overview on threshold quantities for drug offences

European countries use legal or judicial means to grade the severity of a drug-related offence. Frequently this is determined by the quantity of drugs involved in the case, which can set the threshold between different levels of offence or punishment. Yet these thresholds vary greatly between EU Member States.

To summarise this information and facilitate comparison between national legal limits, the EMCDDA has recently published these quantities in a new ‘Topic overview’ in its European Legal Database on Drugs (ELDD) (1). Released in February, the overview relates to the four most common illicit drugs: cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and heroin.

Earlier reports, also available in the ELDD, considered how countries measured such quantities (e.g. in grammes, number of doses, monetary value, purity levels or even by undefined terms such as ‘small’ or ‘minor’). The new overview, where possible, converts these measures to grammes and also identifies the significance of each threshold amount to assist accurate comparison.

The ‘Topic overview’ reveals how countries may opt for different quantities for similar offences, as may be expected. For example, criminal prosecution for the possession of cannabis resin will start with 0.25 g in Lithuania but with 6 g in many German Länder. Noteworthy, however, is how these threshold amounts

can differ greatly according to the drug. For example, an established weight threshold for possession of cannabis herb or resin may be three times (Cyprus) or 10 times (Netherlands) the threshold for possession of heroin. And a weight threshold for possession of cocaine may be equal to that of heroin (Norway), or 10 times greater (Lithuania).

Finally, the overview illustrates how countries choose to establish quantity thresholds in laws, ministerial decrees, prosecutor guidelines or sentencing guidelines. It also shows how they may be established for over 100 controlled substances or merely for the most common few.

Brendan Hughes

(1) ‘Topic overview’, available at <http://eldd.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index99321EN.html>

Spotlight

New EMCDDA technical assistance project kicks off in Zagreb



Photo: istockphoto

A new EMCDDA technical assistance project, involving eight candidate and potential candidate countries to the EU, kicked off at a meeting in Zagreb (Croatia) from 29–30 April (1). The EUR 900 000 project, financed by the European Commission's Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) programme, is designed to help the eight partners establish national drug information systems in line with EU standards (2). The project will run until November 2011.

Participants at the meeting discussed the practicalities of achieving the project's goals and defined national activities and capacity-building exercises to this end. Important partners in the latter will be so-called 'Reitox coaches', representatives from EU national focal points (NFP) assigned to assist the partners in running national activities according to EU norms. Reitox Academies, involving EU experts, will also offer capacity-building training in areas such as new drug use trends and the evaluation of national strategies.

Under this project, each of the eight partners is expected to produce a set of minimum outputs. These include: an updated and extended Country overview; an updated 'information map' of national data-collection sources; a national action plan on drug information systems; and activity reports.

The meeting was hosted by the Croatian Office for Combating Narcotic Drug Abuse and the national focal point.

Frédéric Denecker

(1) The eight partners are: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/99), Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

(2) http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/how-does-it-work/financial-assistance/instrument-pre-accession_en.htm

Reitox

Reitox Academy focuses on national treatment guidelines

History, methods and implementation of national treatment guidelines will be the topic of an EMCDDA Selected issue publication to be released in 2011. To prepare the Reitox focal points for drafting contributions to this publication, the EMCDDA organised a Reitox Academy on the topic from 25–26 February in Lisbon. Around 40 experts from 30 countries attended the two-day training session, including delegates from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro.

The information to be provided by the focal points for the Selected issue will complement the results of an external study coordinated by the University of Hamburg (December 2009) and an EMCDDA data-collection exercise on treatment quality assurance.

During the academy, experts from Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, the UK and Norway delivered presentations, and shared best practice, on implementing national treatment guidelines. Also presented were procedures developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to produce its first guidelines on psychologically assisted opioid substitution treatment.

National treatment guidelines were found to be very diverse in Europe. It was agreed that identifying and applying a sound and transparent methodology for classifying treatment interventions according to effectiveness would advance consensus-building on treatment quality issues in Europe.

Marica Ferri and Sandrine Sleiman

International

Forging ties with North-African neighbours

High-level diplomats from two of Europe's North-African neighbours visited the EMCDDA in February to discuss forging closer ties with the agency. Both countries — Algeria and Morocco — participate in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (1).

The Ambassador of Morocco to Portugal held talks with EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz on 3 February during which a number of concrete measures were identified to enhance cooperation. These included potential study visits by Moroccan experts to the EMCDDA and a possible visit by the Director to Rabat to meet key stakeholders working in the drugs field. Morocco was awarded so-called 'advanced status' in its relationship with the EU in October 2008 (2). This special partnership status identifies the EMCDDA as one of the European agencies called on to develop deeper cooperation with the country.

The Ambassador of Algeria to Portugal met the Director on 25 February. These talks focused on current cooperation between the agency and Algeria and possible steps forward.

Both ambassadors were informed during their visit of an upcoming EMCDDA seminar to focus on the EU drug monitoring system and the role of the EMCDDA in establishing and/or strengthening cooperation with interested ENP partners. The seminar, to be held this autumn in Brussels, will be organised in cooperation with the European Commission and financed by the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX) (3).

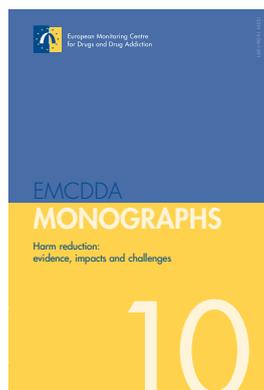
Cécile Martel and Ignacio Vázquez Molini

(1) http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm

(2) http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/113247.pdf

(3) http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/taieux/index_en.htm

Products and services



New EMCDDA monograph focuses on harm reduction

EMCDDA Monograph No 10, entitled *Harm reduction: evidence, impacts and challenges*, was released in April ahead of a major international conference on the issue (<http://www.ihra.net/Liverpool/Home>). Through 16 chapters, authored by over 50 European and international experts, the monograph provides a comprehensive overview of the harm reduction field. Part I of the monograph looks back at the emergence of harm reduction approaches and their diffusion as part of the new public health movement of the mid-

1980s. It explores the concept from several perspectives (e.g. international organisations, academic researchers and drug users). Part II is dedicated to current evidence and impacts of harm reduction and illustrates how the concept has broadened to cover a wide range of behaviours and harms, including those related to alcohol, tobacco and recreational drug use. Part III addresses challenges and innovations and the requirement to integrate and match interventions to individual and social needs.

See next edition of *Drugnet Europe* for full coverage.

Available in English at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/monographs/harm-reduction>

EMCDDA website survey results

The EMCDDA has recently analysed responses received via a three-month user survey of its website. Through this survey, launched in December 2009, the agency invited visitors to the website to fill in a short questionnaire providing information about themselves and their opinion of the site.

Of the respondents, 78 % said they were satisfied with the website. Regarding visitor profiles, the most popular replies were researcher (20 %), government employee (15 %), partner organisation (15 %) and job seeker (15 %). Later this year, the agency will address the issues highlighted through the survey, by reorganising and redesigning certain aspects of the site.

Follow us on Twitter



It is now easier than ever to keep up-to-date with EMCDDA activities by following us on the social networking and microblogging service Twitter. Our regular 'tweets' will keep you informed of our latest news as well as other developments on drugs in Europe.

See <http://www.twitter.com/EMCDDA>

New edition of risk assessment operating guidelines

The EMCDDA published in March a revised version of its operating guidelines for the risk assessment of new psychoactive substances. The guidelines establish a sound methodological and procedural basis for carrying out risk assessments of new drugs entering Europe's illicit drug market.

Available in English at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/risk-assessments>

Resources

Useful materials or events on the drugs issue



Masters in drug and alcohol studies

Prospective students interested in the area of substance use can now apply for a European Masters programme in drug and alcohol studies. Starting this autumn, the programme is currently offered by four universities: Århus (Denmark), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Middlesex (UK) and Piemonte Orientale 'A. Avogardo' (Italy).

The programme, which was three years in the making, was developed with funding from the EU Lifelong Learning Programme and with input from the EMCDDA and the Vienna-based European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research. The Masters is designed to be relevant to the needs of policymakers and practitioners and students and researchers working in, associated with, or preparing to enter, the field of substance use and addiction.

For more, see <http://emdass.eu>

ISAM annual conference

'Bridging the gap between science and clinical practice in the addiction field' will be the focus of the 12th annual conference of the International Society of Addiction Medicine (ISAM). Taking place from 4-7 October at the University of Milano-Bicocca, the event will explore the latest scientific developments in addiction medicine and addiction psychiatry.

The conference will provide physicians and health professionals who treat patients with substance use, with a high-quality and comprehensive overview of the latest evidence-based findings in this field. The meeting will be structured to encourage international interaction between clinicians from multiple disciplines, schools of thought and settings. Deadline for abstracts: 15 August.

For more, see <http://www.isam2010.medicina.unimib.it>

Organisations wishing to publicise their newsletters, magazines, websites, CD-ROMs or any other resources are invited to contact Kathryn.Robertson@emcdda.europa.eu

Calendar 2010

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

EMCDDA meetings

- 26–28 May: Reitox Heads of focal point meeting, Lisbon.
- 3–4 June: 10th annual meeting of the early-warning system network, Lisbon.
- 21 June: 11th meeting of the legal correspondents of the European Legal Database on Drugs (ELDD), Lisbon.
- 22–23 June: EMCDDA expert meeting on general population surveys, Lisbon.
- 24 June: EMCDDA celebration of International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking, Lisbon.
- 1–2 July: EMCDDA Management Board meeting, Lisbon.

External meetings

- 31 May–4 June: Kettil Bruun Society Conference, Lausanne (<http://www.kbs2010.ch>).
- 7–9 June: Club health conference, Zurich (<http://www.clubhealthconference.com/>).
- 12–16 June: ESPAD meeting, Akureyri, Iceland.
- 24–25 June: Connections conference 2010: London (<http://www.connectionsproject.eu/conference2010>).
- 26 June: International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking.
- 18–23 July: XVIII International AIDS Conference, Vienna (<http://www.aids2010.org>).

EU meetings

- 28 April: National drug coordinators' meeting, Madrid.
- 19–20 May: Horizontal working party on drugs, EU-Western Balkan troika, EU-Morocco troika, Brussels.
- 8–9 June: Horizontal working party on drugs and EU-USA troika, Brussels.

Mephedrone update

Joint report on mephedrone presents case for formal risk assessment

On 25 March, the EMCDDA and Europol submitted a joint report on mephedrone to the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the European Medicines Agency (EMA), presenting a case for a formal risk assessment of the drug (1). Submission of this report concludes the first phase of Europe's three-step process to monitor new drugs: (i) information exchange/early-warning; (ii) risk assessment; and (iii) decision-making/control (2). On the basis of this report, the Council and the Commission will decide in the coming weeks whether or not to launch a formal risk assessment of the substance.

Mephedrone was first notified to the agencies via the EU early-warning system in March 2008, triggering an EMCDDA–Europol information exchange on the substance. Towards the end of 2009, increased evidence of mephedrone use and availability in some European countries prompted the agencies in January 2010 to embark on a formal data-collection exercise on the drug, resulting in this report. The report features: the chemical and physical description of the drug; first indications of health and social risks; evidence of intoxications and fatalities; data on seizures; and available information on international trafficking and the involvement of organised crime.

Mephedrone is a central nervous system stimulant belonging to the group of synthetic cathinone derivatives, which includes substances such as methylone, methedrone and flephedrone. Over the last two years, mephedrone and mephedrone-containing products have been aggressively marketed by online suppliers as a legal alternative to ecstasy, amphetamines or cocaine.

(1) 'Europol–EMCDDA joint report on a new psychoactive substance: 4-methylmethcathinone (mephedrone)' <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/drug-situation/new-drugs>

(2) See brochure at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index40105EN.html>

Record number of new drugs in 2009

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It is noteworthy that no new piperazines or psychoactive plants were reported in 2009. The report concludes that the EWS has high reporting capabilities and the capacity to triangulate information from different sources. Over 110 substances have been reported by Member States to the EMCDDA and Europol since the EWS was created in 1997.

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(1) 'Council Decision on the information exchange, risk assessment and control of new psychoactive substances' <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/drug-situation/new-drugs>

(2) The full list of substances is annexed to the report.