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Drugnet Europe

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Newsletter of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

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In this issue...

January–March

2008

EMCDDA 'performing well'

'How effective is the EMCDDA?', 'Is it achieving its tasks and goals?', 'What benefits is it providing for the EU and its Member States?' and 'Are its activities coherent with those launched by the EU institutions in the drugs field?' These were among the questions addressed in an independent evaluation of the agency, undertaken at the initiative of the European Commission in 2007. The results of the year-long exercise, carried out by the UK-based Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services (CSES), were presented to the EMCDDA Management Board in December 2007 and published on the agency's website in January ([1]).

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the agency and examine ways of enhancing its operations. The exercise covered the period of two EMCDDA three-year work programmes (2001–2003 and 2004–2006).

According to the evaluators, the EMCDDA is 'performing well' in its core mission to provide 'factual, objective, reliable and comparable information at European level concerning drugs and drug addiction' — information that is needed as an evidence-base by policy-makers at both national and European level. The agency's priority-setting was also found to be 'closely aligned with wider EU policy aims', such as those set by EU drugs strategies and action plans. And the agency was found to be 'almost certainly providing a more cost-effective way of monitoring the drugs situation in Europe than could be undertaken by the Commission itself'.

'The EMCDDA's work has also had a direct impact on EU Member States' drugs policies and practices', found the research, by 'encouraging a higher degree of coordination between them and the adoption of comparable structures'. The development across the Member States of harmonised data-collection mechanisms 'would not have taken place, at least in the same timeframe, without the EMCDDA', says the report.

'External evaluations of this kind are among a variety of routine controls carried out on the EU agencies to ensure optimal transparency, efficiency and accountability', said EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz. 'Exercised by

Continued on page 8

Photo: istockphoto

The Scientific Committee plays a major role in the agency's efforts to attain scientific excellence.

New Scientific Committee

On 5 December, the EMCDDA Management Board selected 15 high-level scientists from the EU Member States, plus one from Norway, to be members of the agency's Scientific Committee. The selection followed a call for expressions of interest in the *Official Journal of the European Union* last September which yielded over 100 eligible applications. The new Committee, which will serve a three-year mandate, is composed of scientists from seven areas of expertise linked to the EMCDDA's work programme ([1]).

The Scientific Committee plays a major role in the agency's efforts to attain scientific excellence. The new EMCDDA regulation, which entered into force in January 2007, stipulated that the Committee be slimmed down and its members chosen through a public selection process based on scientific merit and independence.

The EMCDDA consults its Scientific Committee on the quality of its work programmes and on any scientific matter concerning the agency's activity, which the Management Board or the Director may submit to it. The Committee also plays a pivotal role in the agency's risk assessment of new psychoactive substances. As members are appointed in a personal capacity, they are required to give their opinions independently of their country and of the Community institutions.

The Scientific Committee will meet in Portugal from 14–15 February during which it will elect its new Chair and Vice-chair. The EMCDDA would like to thank the members of the former Committee for their commitment, knowledge and support.

Margareta Nilson

([1]) http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/?nnodeID=35030

Drug situation

New E-POD case study on GHB and GBL

GHB and its precursor GBL: an emerging trend case study, is the title of a new report published by the EMCDDA in the context of its European Perspectives On Drugs project (E-POD). Through E-POD, the agency uses a bottom-up or case-study approach to explore, detect, track and understand emerging drug trends in Europe. This is the second in the series of E-POD case studies launched in 2007.


Photo: istockphoto

Use of GHB and GBL is generally low in the EU yet the associated health costs are relatively high

GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyric acid) has been controlled in all EU Member States since March 2001 ([1]) under their legislation addressing psychotropic substances. These new controls rapidly curtailed the previously open sale of GHB. Now, however, there are concerns about the emergent use of its precursor GBL (gamma-butyrolactone), which is not embraced by the international drug control conventions.

The decision to embark on this case study was sparked by the:
- lack of routine data on the prevalence of GHB use in the EU;
- potentially severe health risks associated with consumption of GHB and the apparent potential for spread; and
- anecdotal reports about a recent increase in hospital emergency admissions related to the illicit use of GBL.

Information on the substances was drawn from a wide range of data sources including published and grey literature, websites, online discussion groups and information provided by the Reitox national focal points and the early-warning system on new psychoactive substances. The case study reports that the use of GHB and GBL is generally low in the EU, although there is evidence of it being more common in some sub-populations, settings and geographical areas (e.g. gay night clubs). Nevertheless, the associated health costs are relatively high. Accidental overdoses occurring in recreational nightlife settings account for a substantial proportion of the overall drug-related emergencies reported by ambulance or hospital services in some European cities.

Jennifer Hillebrand, Deborah Olszewski and Roumen Sedefov

([1]) The date when GHB was added to Schedule IV of the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, after which all EU Member States were bound to control it.

Improving data collection on retail drug prices in Europe

The way in which information on retail drug prices is collected and reported in the EU Member States was the subject of an expert meeting held in Lisbon from 18–19 October. Drug prices are an important element in assessing the availability of illicit drugs, but also, and mainly, in understanding drug markets and supply or distribution mechanisms. They have also been used extensively in some countries to estimate the value of drug seizures, which may assist in confiscation hearings and the prosecution of offenders.

At the meeting, the experts — including representatives of Europol and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) — examined the experiences of 10 countries in monitoring retail drug prices and differences in national monitoring practices. They also discussed key issues related to data collection in this area, including factors that can affect drug prices and on which systematic data collection is practically non-existent (e.g. drug quality, transaction size, setting, buyer's experience).

The meeting resulted in an agreement to draw up guidelines for those collecting data on retail drug prices at national level. These would not only address the issues discussed at the meeting, but also provide examples of national practices and review the different data-collection models currently applied in Europe. The guidelines will be drafted in 2008 with a view to publishing in 2009.

Chloé Carpentier

Exploiting data from hospital and ambulance emergency services

Information collected by hospital and ambulance emergency services has the potential to provide useful insight into the acute health risks of new and emerging drug trends in Europe. In the framework of the EMCDDA's E-POD project (see above), a group of experts met in Lisbon from 27–28 November to discuss issues related to the data collected by these services, which are currently under-exploited in Europe.

The experts — representing clinical staff and drug information systems from Amsterdam, Barcelona, London and Madrid — presented their practical experience of collecting data on drug use from hospital emergency units and ambulance services in the four cities. In particular, they described the methods and tools they use; the value of the information collected; and the problems, obstacles and challenges they face in ensuring that recorded information is comparable.

The meeting followed on from earlier work commissioned by the EMCDDA in 1997 that reviewed the scientific literature on drug-related non-fatal hospital emergencies and identified the potential contribution of hospital and ambulance emergency data for work on emerging trends. A small feasibility study will be conducted in 2008 to assess how to exploit such data to better understand the health risks associated with new and emerging drug use patterns in Europe.

Deborah Olszewski, Jennifer Hillebrand and Roumen Sedefov

Responses

International conference on drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau

Assisting Guinea-Bissau in tackling the threat of drug trafficking, was at the heart of a pledging conference organised in Lisbon under the Portuguese Presidency of the EU on 19 December ([1]). Attended by the Prime Minister and Minister for Justice and Home Affairs of Guinea-Bissau and the Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the event welcomed representatives of the European Commission, ECOWAS, the EMCDDA, Interpol and the World Bank as well as EU and African countries.

Photo: ©Alessandro Scotti

Guinea-Bissau has become an important transit point for cocaine trafficking from South America via West Africa to Europe

The Lisbon conference followed the signature in August 2007 of a Memorandum of Understanding to fight drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau, in which Portugal and Guinea-Bissau recommended 'the adoption of the appropriate institutional and operational means' to fight drug trafficking, and the mobilisation of actions from the international community. (One of the priorities of the Portuguese Presidency was cooperation with West Africa, specifically tackling the cocaine flow into Europe from that region.)

In recent years, Guinea-Bissau has become an important transit point for cocaine trafficking from South America via West Africa to Europe. Reasons for this shift include the convenient location of West Africa between Andean cocaine suppliers and European consumers and the vulnerability of West African countries to organised crime. Poverty and destruction to the national infrastructure and legal system through decades of war exacerbate the problem.

The conference sought to obtain the necessary financing to put in practice an 'Operational plan to support the government of Guinea-Bissau in the fight against drugs', set up with the technical support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) ([2]). The conference was organised in two sessions: 'Drugs in Guinea-Bissau as a state weakening factor' and 'Perspectives for international cooperation'. In the first session the EMCDDA presented information on cocaine demand in Europe, based on the findings of its *2007 Annual report*. As EMCDDA data show, there has been a strong increase in cocaine prevalence in Europe in recent years and demand may continue to grow, increasing the attractiveness of the European market for traffickers.

The total funding commitment made at the conference for the Operational Plan was $ 7 million, mainly to finance Phase II (2008). Contributions were announced by the European Commission and UNODC as well as by Germany, Italy, Portugal, the UK and the US. Other donors were encouraged to join this common effort.

Roland Simon

([1]) http://www.mne.gov.pt/mne/en/noticias/20071217Guine.htm

([2]) See UNODC report on *Cocaine trafficking in West Africa: the threat to stability and development* at http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/assisting-guinea-bissau.html#related_information

Standardising the monitoring of drug-related public expenditure

Photo: istockphoto

Producing estimates of drug-related public expenditure is one of the many targets set by the current EU drugs action plan (2005–2008). In this light, the EMCDDA is working to identify and test suitable monitoring tools with the aim of developing a common EU methodology for data-collection in this area. The ultimate goal is to quantify how much countries are spending on addressing the drug problem (e.g. healthcare, law enforcement, social services, drug policies). This will in turn provide policy-makers with the evidence-base they need when allocating resources to drug-related programmes and services.

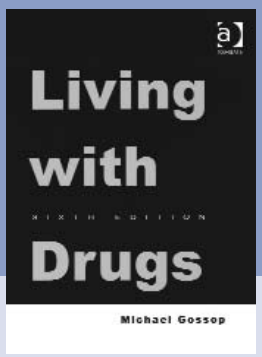
The EMCDDA's strategy for developing such a common methodology received the support of an expert meeting held in Lisbon from 13–14 December, attended by 14 consultants from the areas of drug policy and economics. This methodology is based on a classification of expenditure divided into two types: 'labelled' and 'unlabelled'.

'Labelled expenditure' refers to planned spending, reflecting the voluntary commitment of the state in the drugs field, and can be traced by exhaustively reviewing official accountancy documents over a given period. However, estimates are often complicated when expenditure is embedded in programmes with broader goals (e.g. overall police operations budget). In such cases, 'unlabelled expenditure' is estimated through modelling techniques. It is hoped that this new, twofold approach will not only provide more comprehensive and accurate estimates of public spending in tackling drugs and drug addiction Europe-wide but also strengthen governments' commitment to budgetary transparency and accountability.

Luis Prieto

Bookshelf

Living with drugs



Living with drugs, now in its sixth edition, is a well-respected and indispensable reference tool suitable for both non-specialists in training (e.g. student nurses, social workers) or for anyone with an interest in this complex and emotive issue. 'It is easy to look at the drug problem through today's eyes only', says author Professor Michael Gossop. 'But this gives at best, a partial, and at worst, a seriously distorted view of drugs and drug-taking. The use of drugs like everything else, has a context and a history. And it is both dynamic and constantly changing'. Gossop has released this updated edition to take account of new laws and practices introduced since the previous edition was published in 2000.

In 12 chapters the book explores the reasons why people take drugs and some of the difficulties and risks associated with drug-taking today. It also covers drug control issues and the social context of drug-taking and looks at the substances themselves: alcohol and tobacco, cannabis, the hallucinogens and the 'archetypal drugs of abuse'.

Author: Prof. Michael Gossop, National Addiction Centre, Kings College, London.
Publisher: Ashgate Publishing Ltd
Language: English
Date: 2007
ISBN: 978-0-7546-4919-9 (paperback)
Price: $ 29.95. £ 16.99. € 23.
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ashgate@bookpoint.co.uk
http://www.ashgate.com

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Feature

UNGASS review gets under way


Photo: istockphoto

The UNGASS review will allow UN Member States to take stock of progress made over the last 10 years in the development of responses to the world drug problem

2008 is likely to become an important juncture in the history of international drug control policy, being the year in which the United Nations' Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) launches the review of the implementation of goals set at the 20th UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs in 1998 ([1]).

This review will allow UN Member States to take stock of progress made over the last 10 years in the development of responses to the world drug problem and, possibly, to adopt recommendations for the future.

The review will kick off at the 51st session of the CND in Vienna in March with the presentation of a report by UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa ([2]). This presentation will be followed by debates among delegations attending the CND, which may continue throughout the year in preparation for an envisaged 'high-level segment' at the CND session in 2009. The latter, specifically devoted to the UNGASS review, should be open to all UN Member States.

The European Union has already played an active role in the preparation of this review. Two resolutions tabled by the EU were adopted at the 2006 (49/1) and 2007 (50/12) CND sessions, both of which stress the need, and requirements, for an objective, scientific, balanced and transparent review process ([3]). The EU has also given financial support to UNODC to conduct expert consultations designed to collect complementary expertise and data to support the review.

The EMCDDA has been involved in these expert consultations, participating in two meetings held in Vienna in February and September 2007. At UNODC's request, the EMCDDA has also provided a short report on the 'Development of national drug strategies and drug demand reduction interventions in Europe since 1998' in order to allow UNODC to review and complement its own data on Europe collected through the biennial reports questionnaire (BRQ) ([4]).

The EMCDDA is committed to collaborating with UNODC to improve global data collection on drugs and enhance understanding of the world drug problem through robust and methodologically sound information.

Frank Zobel

([1]) For more on UNGASS, see:
http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/09-resolutions-90s.html#1998
http://www.un.org/ga/20special/poldecla.htm
http://www.unodc.org/pdf/resolution_1998-09-08_1.pdf

([2]) 10–14 March: http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/51.html

([3]) See *Drugnet Europe* No 58, page 4.

([4]) BRQ monitoring instrument: http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/10-GlobalData.html

Drugs-Lex

New ELDD 'Topic overviews'

The EMCDDA has recently published in its European Legal Database on Drugs (ELDD) two 'Topic overviews' on the issues of controlled deliveries and penalties for the trafficking of precursor chemicals. The two overviews, published in December 2007, are the result of the EMCDDA legal correspondents' meeting held in Lisbon last October. They also represent the latest steps in the EMCDDA's efforts to enhance understanding of European drug supply issues and were undertaken in consultation with Eurojust and Europol.

Legal aspects of controlled deliveries

'Controlled delivery' is an investigative technique that allows specific consignments of illicit substances to pass into, through, or out of, one or more countries, with the full knowledge of the competent legal authorities of the countries concerned. The logic behind the technique is that, by following an illegal consignment across borders, law-enforcement officials have a better chance of exposing criminal networks and 'kingpins' as opposed to individual small-time offenders.

At international level, controlled deliveries are foreseen by the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Article 11). Two EU conventions ([1]) also exist encouraging Member States to allow controlled deliveries in their territories.

The new ELDD 'Topic overview' looks at this issue and presents an overview of the legal, or other, frameworks employed for controlled deliveries in 14 EU countries plus Norway ([2]). It also includes details on the authorities competent to undertake controlled deliveries, the legal requirements for authorisation and whether the law applies uniquely to drugs or also other types of goods.

Cécile Martel

([1]) Convention on mutual assistance and cooperation between customs administrations (1997)
Convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters between the Member States of the EU (1999)
http://eur-lex.europa.eu

([2]) http://eldd.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index44352EN.html

Precursor trafficking penalties

Controls on chemical precursors ([1]) are an important aspect of drug supply reduction as these substances are indispensable in the production of illicit drugs. The trade in such precursors is regulated at international level by the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Article 12).

Two EU regulations came into force in 2005 in order to control intra-Community trade in precursors on the one hand, and their trade between the EU and third countries on the other ([2]). These are the latest in a variety of legal instruments passed by the EC since 1990 to harmonise laws on precursor trade. However, there is still much variation across Europe when it comes to criminal offences and penalties for selling precursors with a view to manufacturing illicit drugs.

The new ELDD 'Topic overview' examines this issue and briefly outlines the different offences and penalties in force today in 21 countries plus Norway ([3]). For example, in some countries precursors have the same status as illicit drugs, and are subject to the same drug trafficking laws and penalties, while in others penalties are significantly lower. And penalties applied for breach of EU regulations regarding record-keeping or labelling may be administrative or criminal or both.

Brendan Hughes

([1]) Substances frequently used in the illicit manufacture of drugs/psychotropic substances.

([2]) Regulation (EC) No 273/2004 and Regulation No 111/2005.

([3]) See http://eldd.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index44396EN.html

Partners

EMCDDA and ESPAD agree cooperation framework

The EMCDDA and the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) will be working more closely together in future thanks to a cooperation framework recently agreed by the two bodies. The cooperation framework, established through a formal exchange of letters at the end of 2007 between the EMCDDA Director and the ESPAD Coordinator, sets out an eight-point list of areas for collaboration.

Included in the list are: integration of the ESPAD approach into the broader data-collection system at EU level; encouragement of countries' participation in ESPAD surveys; and analytical exploitation of ESPAD data, by placing them in the context of EMCDDA data. The above will be facilitated through contact between ESPAD experts and those working with the EMCDDA.

Cooperation has existed on an ad hoc basis between the EMCDDA and ESPAD since the mid-1990s and ESPAD data have been regularly included in the EMCDDA's annual reporting on the drug situation in Europe. These data have provided crucial information on substance use among 15–16 year-old students, allowing trends over time to be assessed.

In the exchange of letters, the EMCDDA and ESPAD agree that it is in their mutual interest to facilitate the exchange of information and expertise; improve the availability, quality and comparability of school survey data; and gain maximum analytical insight from data available in this area.

The new agreement enables the organisations to carry out joint projects in line with priorities set out in their respective work programmes.

Further details on ESPAD at http://www.espad.org

Björn Hibell and Deborah Olszewski

Spotlight

EU drug prevention and information programme: call for grant applications


Photo: istockphoto

In 2007, the EU adopted a 'Drug prevention and information programme' for the period 2007–2013 with a budget of € 21.35 million ([1]). The programme offers financial assistance to projects and activities that target all those affected by drug use, such as young people, vulnerable groups and residents of socially disadvantaged areas.

The programme builds on the EU drug strategy (2005–2012) and action plan (2005–2008), which aim to significantly reduce the social harm and health damage caused by the use of, and trade in, illicit drugs. The general objectives of the programme are to:

- prevent and reduce drug use, dependence and drug-related harms;
- contribute to the improvement of information on the effects of drug use; and
- support the implementation of the EU drugs strategy.

In the coming weeks, the European Commission will be launching a 'Call for proposals for action grants' to support transnational projects at EU level, and a 'Call for proposals for operating grants' to support the annual activities of non-governmental organisations with a European dimension.

For full details on applications and corresponding deadlines see: http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/drugs/funding_drugs_en.htm

([1]) On 25 September 2007, the European Parliament and Council adopted Decision No 1150/2007/EC establishing this programme. See EC *Official Journal* L 257 of 3 October 2007.

Reitox

Technical assistance project with the Western Balkans kicks off

The EMCDDA's technical assistance project with five Western Balkan countries officially kicked off at a meeting in Lisbon from 30–31 January ([1]). Financed by the CARDS ([2]) regional fund, with a budget of € 550 000, the project will assess the capacity of these countries to establish an EMCDDA-compatible drug information system.

The meeting allowed for in-depth discussions on the project's objectives and expected outputs and for preparations of EMCDDA assessment missions to each of the five countries (March–May). These are expected to result in individual country 'information maps', plotting available data-collection sources in each country, which will form the basis of five EMCDDA 'Country situation summaries' later in the year.

An important aspect of the project is the participation of the five countries in the 2008 ESPAD school survey (see p. 5). ESPAD experts have therefore been appointed in each country with a view to coordinating this activity.

A regional ESPAD seminar took place in Podgorica (Montenegro) from 25–26 January, where the EMCDDA presented the financial and administrative procedures in place for financing the 2008 ESPAD data-collection exercise through the CARDS programme. Although a regional report of the ESPAD survey results in the Western Balkan region is not expected before 2009, some of the countries expressed an interest in making the preliminary results available at national level before the end of this year.

Frédéric Denecker

([1]) Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro and Serbia (including Kosovo). See *Drugnet Europe* No 60 for more details.

([2]) Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS), see http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/financial_assistance/cards/index_en.htm

EU agencies

EMCDDA takes up coordination

A new brochure on the activities of the EU agencies is available at http://www.emcdda.europa.eu

From Stockholm to Crete and Lisbon to Warsaw 29 EU regulatory agencies have been established over the last two decades in Europe to provide service, information and know-how to the Member States and their citizens. With more than 2 500 staff and significant budgetary resources, the agencies and their activities have become central to the operations of the EU and play a key role in the implementation of EU policies.

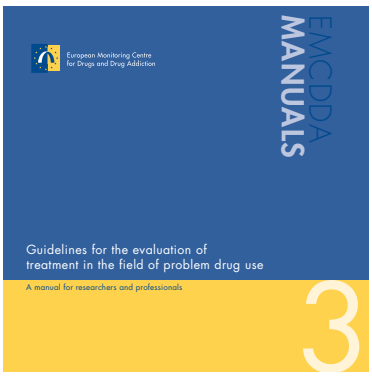
The Directors of agencies have established a network to provide them with a forum for the exchange of views on issues of common interest and for discussion on new policy proposals and developments. In January 2007, the Directors of agencies unanimously elected the EMCDDA Director as coordinator of the agencies' network from 1 March 2008 to 28 February 2009. This role entails chairing meetings of the network, coordinating activities between meetings and heading a 'troika' of the previous, current and future chairpersons (Directors of EASA, EMCDDA, EFSA). The network meets routinely three times year.

For more on the agencies see http://europa.eu/agencies/index_en.htm

Monika Blum

Products and services

New EMCDDA Manual



Guidelines for the evaluation of treatment in the field of problem drug use is the title of the recently published third edition in the EMCDDA's Manuals series. Following on from two earlier manuals on the evaluation of prevention and outreach work, it completes a trilogy of EMCDDA guidelines for evaluating interventions against problem drug use.

Targeted at drug treatment professionals, researchers and officials in social and health authorities, the guidelines provide basic information on the options, elements and procedures available for evaluating drug-related treatment in Europe. It is hoped that they will also help promote a shift in policy towards a more widespread and systematic evaluation of treatment programmes and services in the EU Member States.

Ulrik Solberg and Ambros Uchtenhagen

A cannabis reader: global issues and local experiences

Smoked, eaten, imbibed — or just talked about — the world has an insatiable appetite for cannabis. 1 in 5 European adults have tried it; 13 million Europeans have consumed it in the past month. Nearly 50,000 tonnes of cannabis herb or resin are produced each year. Little wonder, then, that cannabis has become a controversial cultural and commercial phenomenon.

This Spring, the EMCDDA publishes the latest in its edition of scientific monographs: *A cannabis reader: global issues and local experiences — Perspectives on cannabis controversies, treatment and regulation in Europe*. Published in two volumes totalling over 700 pages, the publication covers the history, pharmacology, trafficking, treatment, consumption and legal status of cannabis. It also illustrates that cannabis is not just a static, unchanging plant, but a dynamic product that is subject to gradual evolution in potency, prevalence, cultivation, legislative and public health concerns. See next edition of *Drugnet Europe* for more details. EMCDDA monographs in print and downloadable in English at http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/?nnodeid=428

Peter Thomas

Drugs in focus looks at ageing drug users

'Substance use among older adults: a neglected problem' is the topic of the next in the EMCDDA's policy briefing series to be published in March. 'Substance use is generally associated with young people, but such problems have no age limits', says the briefing. 'Forecasts for the coming years are troubling, and substance use by older adults is likely to become a neglected problem among our neglected citizens'. See next edition of *Drugnet Europe* for more details. *Drugs in focus* in print and downloadable in 25 languages at http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/?nnodeid=439

General report of activities 2007

This annual publication presenting the EMCDDA's achievements under its 2007 work programme will be released on the website in April at http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/?nnodeID=426

Resources

Upcoming events

2nd ISSDP annual conference

The 2nd annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy (ISSDP) will take place in Lisbon from 3–4 April with the support of the EMCDDA and the *Instituto da Droga e da Toxicodependência* (IDT). The conference will focus primarily on four themes: developing drug policy evaluation; defining drug policy models/types; the rise of security and public nuisance concerns; and an integrated approach to both licit and illicit drugs from theory to practice. Deadline for registration: 29 February 2008.
See http://www.issdplisbon2008.com

Call for papers: CES-Ifo Venice Summer Institute 2008

The International Platform of the Ifo Institute of Economic Research and the Centre for Economic Studies of the Ludwig-Maximilians University are hosting a workshop on 'Illicit trade and globalisation' from 14–15 July in Venice. Held in cooperation with the Venice International University, the event aims to bring together researchers interested in the study of the determinants of illicit trade. The main focus of the encounter will be drug trade, counterfeiting and arms smuggling. Deadline for submissions: 31 March 2008.
See http://www.cesifo.org

Frankfurt conference

A four-pillar drug policy of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and repression became the backbone of a pragmatic response to drug use, adopted by many European cities in the early 1990s. Today however, there are signs that the development of policies at urban level has stalled. The drug coordination department of the city of Frankfurt am Main and the Association of Swiss Addiction Professionals (*Fachverband Sucht*) will hold a conference from 28–29 February in Frankfurt to take a fresh look at urban drug policies and their integration with practice.
See http://www.drogenkonferenz.de

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

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Calendar 2008

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

4 February:	Treatment demand indicator working group meeting on data quality, Lisbon.
5–6 February:	Expert meeting on HIV modelling, Amsterdam.
14–15 February:	28th Scientific Committee meeting, Palmela, Portugal.
27–29 February:	Reitox academy on relations with the media, Bucharest.
3–4 March:	Expert meeting on indicated prevention, Lisbon.
27 March:	Meeting on scales on problematic/dependent cannabis use (joint project DGPNSD–EMCDDA), Madrid.

External meetings

10–14 March:	51st session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), Vienna.
13–14 March:	Steering Group meeting on prison and health, HiPP, Lisbon.
3–4 April:	2nd annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy, Lisbon.
4 April:	'Cannabis e problemi sanitari', Osservatorio epidemiologico metropolitano dipendenze patologiche, University of Bologna, Bologna.

EU meetings

4 February:	Horizontal working party on drugs, Brussels.
7–8 February:	Working party on 'Statistics on crime and criminal justice', Eurostat, Luxembourg.
27 February:	Horizontal working party on drugs, Brussels.
1 April:	Horizontal working party on drugs, Brussels.

Management Board adopts 2008 budget

The external evaluation of the EMCDDA and the selection of the new Scientific Committee were the key points on the agenda at the last EMCDDA Management Board meeting held in Lisbon from 5–6 December 2007 (see p. 1).

The Board also adopted a total budget of € 14 million for 2008 with the following breakdown:
- € 13.4 million — subsidy from the European Commission;
- € 427 579 — contribution from Norway;
- € 100 000 — contribution from Turkey.

Finally, the Management Board appointed Piotr Jablonski (Poland) and Franz Pietsch (Austria) to the seven-member EMCDDA Executive Committee which prepares the decisions of the Board and assists and advises the Director.

Monika Blum

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the European Parliament, Commission and Court of Auditors, as well as by Member States through statutory bodies, these keep an independent check on the content of work programmes and budgetary and decision-making processes. The results of this second evaluation of the EMCDDA are now being taken on board by staff with the aim of heightening the agency's overall performance'.

Surveys conducted during the evaluation revealed that the EMCDDA's publications and other outputs are 'generally well regarded'. Feedback from surveys also showed that the agency's current organisational set-up is 'working well', with a strong focus on communicating with target audiences and an integrated approach to scientific activities. Around 79% of survey respondents considered the agency either 'very effective' or 'quite effective' in communicating with target audiences (policy-makers, practitioners, researchers), although it appears to be targeting these groups better at European than national level. While the report found that, to date, the agency has had sufficient analytical capacity to cope with its work programme objectives, additional human resources/scientific capacity may be needed in future to fulfil upcoming tasks and goals.

But plaudits apart, the report points to various ways in which the agency's performance as information-provider on the European drug situation could be enhanced. For example the quality of key indicator data on the drugs situation is dependent on the quality of the national data gathered, and there is still much variation in this area. At present the agency's data-collection system is only implemented to around 60–70% at Member State level.

([1]) http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/about/evaluation

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