



emcdda.europa.eu

Drugnet Europe

Newsletter of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

ISSN 0873-5379

In this issue...

- 2** Associations between HIV-prevention measures and incidence of diagnosed HIV infection among IDUs
- 3** CLAT 5: Globalisation, harm reduction and human rights
- 4** World drug report 2009: An overview of the global drug situation
- 5** Croatia to participate in the work of the EMCDDA
- 6** European Commission conference on drug-related research
- 7** New EMCDDA products and services
- 8** Management Board renews Director's mandate

Brain research throws light on addiction

How people become addicted to drugs and why they may find it difficult to stop are issues explored in new EMCDDA material released to mark International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking (26 June). The information package, dedicated to emerging research in neurobiology, examines the social, ethical and policy implications of scientific developments in this field (see p. 7).

How addiction is understood by society plays a pivotal role in shaping drug laws, policies and interventions. Drug addiction can be viewed as a disorder whereby the individual loses control over his or her consumption. Addicts may wish to quit, but find it hard to do so, despite often experiencing negative effects. Advances in brain research now provide a better understanding of how dependence develops, and offer the potential for new prevention strategies and psychological and pharmacological treatments. These issues are addressed in a new EMCDDA monograph *Addiction neurobiology: ethical and social implications*.

Commenting on the findings, EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz said: 'Across Europe, we pay a heavy price for the addiction of many of our citizens to illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Although improvements have been made over the last decade in treating some forms of drug use, overall the therapeutic arsenal in this area remains insufficient. Developments in neuroscience now provide us with a growing understanding of the biological mechanisms underlying dependence and raise the exciting hope of new opportunities for prevention and treatment'.

The package is completed by an EMCDDA briefing paper for policymakers entitled *Neurobiological research on drugs: ethical and policy implications*. According to the paper, most neurobiological research to date has focused on the fact that addictive drugs increase the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter which helps individuals memorise signals of pleasure or 'reward'. New findings suggest that serotonin and noradrenaline (which work as a couple controlling impulsivity and asserting vigilance) are also involved in the addiction process. The briefing describes how chronic drug use disrupts this coupling, making a person more prone to cravings and less capable of controlling consumption.



Photo: istockphoto

Advances in brain research now provide a better understanding of the biological mechanisms underlying dependence.

European Action on Drugs

'It is time to put the people of Europe at the centre of drug policy and to get Europe's citizens more involved', states the current EU drugs action plan (2009–12). With this in mind, the European Commission launched in Brussels, on 26 June, the European Action on Drugs (EAD), a new campaign to mobilise society and raise awareness on the dangers of illicit drug use. Building on the principle of shared responsibility, the initiative encourages individuals and groups to make practical commitments to address the drugs problem in their daily lives.

Launching the EAD, Vice-President of the Commission, Jacques Barrot, responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, said: 'With the EAD, we are reaching out to Europeans in their everyday lives, by providing them with the means of expressing their views and committing to action'. The initiative, which focuses on the dangers of drug use, will use the latest information technologies to achieve its goals and also operate in schools and clubs to offer families better information on risks to their children.

The EMCDDA was among the 21 organisations signing up to the EAD on the day of its launch. Individuals and organisations now have the opportunity to make use of the EAD — and add a European dimension to their work — by exploring how their daily activities, social responsibilities and environment could increase awareness and commitment to addressing drug problems. Specific and creative actions in Europe that positively influence drug-related behaviour, or generate greater awareness of drugs and the dangers of using them, are welcomed by the Commission at www.action-drugs.eu

Danilo Ballotta

Continued on page 8

July–September

2009

Drug situation

Associations between HIV-prevention measures and incidence of diagnosed HIV infection among IDUs

HIV-prevention measures specific to injecting drug users (IDUs), such as opioid substitution treatment and needle and syringe programmes (NSPs), are still not provided in many countries of the world where injecting drug use is endemic. In a recent scientific article published in the *American Journal of Public Health* ⁽¹⁾, experts from the EMCDDA and the European Centre for the Epidemiological Monitoring of AIDS (EuroHIV) set out to determine whether an association can be seen between HIV incidence among IDUs and IDU-specific prevention ('harm reduction') measures in the EU and five non-EU countries ⁽²⁾. To do so, they compared the provision of IDU-specific interventions from 2000–04 with diagnosed HIV incidence among IDUs from 2005–06.

Although the small number of countries does not permit a formal statistical comparison, countries with greater provision of opioid



Photo: istockphoto

Larger provision of prevention measures may have contributed to a lower HIV incidence

substitution treatment and NSPs in 2000–04 had a lower incidence of diagnosed HIV infection in 2005 and 2006. This suggests that larger provision of these programmes may have contributed to preventing HIV infections.

According to the article, important differences existed between the countries studied regarding the availability and coverage of HIV-prevention measures for IDUs in 2000–04 and in the incidence of diagnosed HIV infection among IDUs in 2005–06. The data also point to critical differences in responses to HIV among IDUs in different countries, suggesting a need for stronger international consensus regarding evidence-based policies.

⁽¹⁾ Wiessing, L., Likatavičius, G., Klemková, D., Hedrich, D., Nardone, A., Griffiths, P. (2009), 'Associations Between Availability and Coverage of HIV-Prevention Measures and Subsequent Incidence of Diagnosed HIV Infection Among Injection Drug Users', *American Journal of Public Health*, June 2009, Vol. 99, No 6.

⁽²⁾ The countries studied were: the EU Member States and Australia, Canada, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States.

Drug use in the general population

The EMCDDA expert group on the key indicator 'Prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population' held its annual meeting in Lisbon from 23–24 June and focused on the group's latest achievements and innovations. The meeting promoted methodological discussions on the measurement and analysis of patterns and trends in drug use in the general population and facilitated information exchange between a variety of European and international partners.

Central to the discussions were new insights in the area of polydrug use. These result from an EMCDDA data-collection exercise and multi-country analysis (nine countries) and a joint EMCDDA–ESPAD examination of 2003 school survey data on the topic. Together, the initiatives provide valuable information on the similarities and differences in polydrug use between countries. The EMCDDA will now offer small grants to country experts willing to carry out further pioneering work to adapt and analyse national data.

Also discussed at the meeting was progress made in measuring intensive (or otherwise problematic) cannabis use in population samples and the related prevention and treatment responses being drawn up in Europe. In a session on psychometric scales (short instruments to assess heavier patterns of drug use), work was presented on measuring cannabis use of this kind. Several countries are now conducting validation studies on two psychometric scales (the Cannabis Abuse Screening Test and the Severity of Dependence Scale), using DSM-IV/ICD-10 criteria as the gold standard ⁽¹⁾. This analysis is intended to improve the performance of the scales in interpreting problem cannabis use.

Finally, a session was devoted to how survey information is used for the formulation and evaluation of drug policies. It was found that most countries foresee the use of survey data in the evaluation of their national drug strategies.

Deborah Olszewski, Danica Klemková and Julián Vicente

⁽¹⁾ www.psych.org/MainMenu/Research/DSMIV.aspx — www.who.int/classifications/icd/en

Annual KBS symposium

Alcohol-related harm, drinking practices and social and institutional responses were among the issues discussed at the 35th annual alcohol epidemiology symposium of the Kettil Bruun Society (KBS), held in Copenhagen from 1–5 June. KBS is an organisation of scientists which promotes social and epidemiological research on alcohol and fosters a comparative understanding of alcohol use and related problems.

Although alcohol is the main focus of the event, space is also allocated to quantitative and qualitative research on other substances, such as tobacco and illicit drugs, including polydrug use. On the latter, the EMCDDA presented European data on polydrug use among clients in treatment, which confirm that alcohol is most often reported as the secondary substance used in combination with other drugs. The EMCDDA stressed the need to consider the health and social consequences of polydrug use when planning policy and interventions and the importance of improving the quality of polydrug use data at European level.

Linda Montanari and Margareta Nilson

www.kbs2009.dk/abstracts-kbs2009.pdf

Responses

CLAT 5: Globalisation, harm reduction and human rights

Over the last two decades, harm reduction has become a recognised component of a comprehensive approach to drugs. Examining its future and taking stock of achievements was the focus of the 5th Latin conference on harm reduction (CLAT 5) ⁽¹⁾, held in Oporto from 1–4 July. Organised in association with the EMCDDA, the conference brought together over 600 participants from Europe and the Americas to debate the theme 'Globalisation, harm reduction and human rights'.

Speakers at the event provided critical analyses of the benefits brought by harm reduction interventions to individuals and society to date. While acknowledging

progress, they questioned the current consensus that policies and practice be rooted largely in public health concerns and restricted to local micro-interventions aimed at reducing the health risks of drug use. Central to the debate was the need for harm reduction also to address more global concerns such as discrimination, vulnerability and inequality (North–South, East–West), which are often key factors underlying drug problems. It was argued that the risks associated with drug use were often more linked to social, cultural and historical conditions than to the substances themselves.

By setting in the context of human rights our current responses to drug production,

trafficking, consumption and harm, the debate was given an important new dimension and its horizons were broadened well beyond Europe. With over 50 workshops and expert discussions, CLAT 5 also offered a broad overview of the current evidence base and technical work in this field. EMCDDA staff presented outcomes of European data collection on drug-related harm, treatment, overdose prevention, the prevalence of cocaine use and responses to drug use in recreational and prison settings.

Dagmar Hedrich

⁽¹⁾ CLAT is the result of collaboration between five countries: Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland. www.clat5.org/en/clat5_objective.php

Monitoring wholesale drug prices in Europe

Reducing the supply, and therefore the availability of illicit drugs, is high on the political agenda in Europe. The EMCDDA has been collecting and analysing routine data on Europe's drug markets since 1995, particularly on seizures, drug purity/potency and on retail drug prices. The agency is now set to embark on monitoring wholesale drug prices in Europe ⁽¹⁾. Whereas retail drug prices indicate what users pay for a given drug, wholesale prices show what drug dealers pay to major distributors in the market where the drug is consumed. This new activity should contribute to a better understanding of European drug markets and trafficking routes and also help law-enforcement strategies better disrupt drug supply.

The EMCDDA organised its first expert meeting on this subject from 19–20 May. The meeting provided an overview of different European data-collection mechanisms in the field of wholesale drug prices and confirmed the feasibility of monitoring such prices at European level. Some 15 European countries already collect information on these prices using a comparable definition. Furthermore, six of these are in a position to relate these prices to the purity and potency of traded drugs (e.g. how much is paid wholesale in these countries for 1 kg of pure cocaine).

The EMCDDA is now developing tools to collect wholesale drug prices in close cooperation with Europol, national police forces and Reitox focal points. A common questionnaire has been designed and a pilot study will be launched later this year. In addition, a second expert meeting is planned for the beginning of 2010, in London, organised by the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), the UK national focal point and the EMCDDA.

Cláudia Costa Storti



Reducing drug supply is high on the political agenda in Europe

EU and US prevention projects compare notes

The EMCDDA and the US National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) are currently supporting collaboration between two school-based prevention interventions in the EU and US. The European Drug Addiction Prevention trial project (EU-Dap) and the US Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Study (ASAPS) are comparing notes on their respective school curricula to help improve the effectiveness of such programmes in future ⁽¹⁾. The project, launched in March 2009, will end with a final report in 2010.

EU-Dap is a controlled trial on the prevention of drug, tobacco and alcohol use among 12–14 year-old school students. Delivered by teachers via the 'Unplugged' curriculum, the project was implemented from 2003–05 and involved over 7 000 students. The ASAPS trial involved 18 000 students in six US cities from 2001–06. Its 'Take Charge of Your Life' curriculum is a substance abuse prevention programme, delivered by local instructors. The two partners will be looking at programme content, delivery, context and mediating factors. This EU–US analysis will help identify meaningful relationships between the programme, mediators and outcomes and help tailor prevention measures to target groups.

Fabrizio Faggiano (EU-Dap)

⁽¹⁾ www.eudap.net — www.nida.nih.gov

⁽¹⁾ For a definition of wholesale drug prices, see: Johnson, B. and Golub, A. (2006), 'The potential for accurately measuring behavioural and economic dimensions of consumption, prices, and markets for illegal drugs', *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Vol. 90, supplement 1, S16–S26, September 2007.

Bookshelf

World drug report 2009



This year's *World drug report* (see opposite) pays special attention to the impact of drug-related crime, calling for stronger measures to fight such crime and for more resources for drug prevention and treatment. It also offers a number of recommendations on how to improve drug control. These include: offering universal access to drug treatment; rendering urban communities less vulnerable to drugs and crime; and urging governments to enforce international agreements against organised crime.

Launching the report, UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa called for greater efficiency in law enforcement, encouraging the police to focus on the small number of high profile and violent criminals, instead of the large volumes of petty offenders. In some countries, the ratio of those imprisoned for drug use compared to drug trafficking is 5:1. 'This is a waste of money for the police and a waste of lives for those thrown in jail. Go after the piranhas, not the minnows,' said Mr Costa.

Publisher: UNODC

Languages: Full report available in English; Executive summary in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Date: 24 June 2009

ISBN: 978-92-1-148240-9.

United Nations Sales No E.09.XI.12.

Downloadable: www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2009/WDR2009_eng_web.pdf

Ordering information: publications@un.org

News release: www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/1/WDR09pressreleasefinal-english.pdf

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

World drug report 2009

An overview of the global drug situation

Global markets for cocaine, opiates and cannabis are steady or in decline, but there are fears that the production and use of synthetic drugs may be increasing in the developing world. This is according to the *World drug report 2009*, published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The report was launched in Washington DC, on 24 June, by UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa and Director of the United States Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), Gil Kerlikowske.

This year's report estimates that opium cultivation in Afghanistan — where over 90 % of the world's opium is grown — decreased by around one-fifth in 2008. And Colombia — which produces around half of the world's cocaine — saw declines in both coca cultivation and cocaine production compared to 2007.

Cannabis remains the drug that is most widely cultivated and used around the world. According to UNODC data, the average tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content of hydroponically grown marijuana in North America has almost doubled in the past decade.

While the use of synthetic drugs — amphetamines, methamphetamine and ecstasy — has levelled off in developed countries, UNODC data suggest an increase in their use in the developing world. 'What was once a cottage industry has become big business', says the organisation. Industrial-sized laboratories in South-East Asia are producing large quantities of methamphetamine tablets, crystal meth and other substances, such as ketamine. And use of the amphetamine Captagon has 'sky-rocketed' in the Near and Middle East. In 2007, Saudi Arabia seized one third of all amphetamine group substances in the world, greater than the combined total of China and the United States.

A shift in drug trafficking routes is also presented in the report. In West Africa, UNODC points to a decrease in seizures, which appears to reflect lesser cocaine flows, following five years of rapid growth. 'International efforts are paying off', said Mr Costa. Yet drug-related violence and political instability continue, especially in Guinea-Bissau. 'As long as demand for drugs persists, weak countries will always be targeted by traffickers', he said.

www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR2009.html



The report provides the latest global estimates of coca cultivation and cocaine production

World drug campaign 2009

UNODC is currently running the 'World drug campaign 2009' to raise awareness on the major challenge that illicit drugs represent to society. Entitled 'Do drugs control your life? Your life. Your community. No place for



drugs', the campaign aims to mobilise support and inspire people to act against drug abuse and trafficking. In particular, the initiative aims to discourage drug use among young people, encouraging them to put their health first.

Brochures and fact sheets are available at www.unodc.org/drugs/en/campaign-tools/print.html

Partners

INCB elects new President

Sevil Atasoy, Professor of Biochemistry and Forensic Science at Istanbul University, was elected President of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) on 14 May for a one-year term. A distinguished academic and member of INCB since 2005, Ms Atasoy was the founding editor of the *Turkish Journal of Legal Medicine* and has authored over 130 scientific papers on a wide range of drug-related issues. Since 2006, she has served as President of the Centre of Crime Control and Prevention in Istanbul.

www.incb.org — www.incb.org/incb/members_atasoy.html

Farewell to three partners

The EMCDDA recently bade farewell to three close partners working in the drugs field. Francisco Fonseca Morillo, former Director for Justice, Rights and Citizenship at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security now heads the Commission representation in Madrid. Mr Fonseca represented the Commission on the EMCDDA Management Board from 2004–09. Johannes Vos, former head of unit 'Police and customs cooperation' at the General Secretariat of the Council, in charge of the Horizontal working party on drugs (1997–2009) and Max-Peter Ratzel, former Director of Europol (2005–09) both retired in the spring.

The EMCDDA pays tribute to the three partners for their energy and contribution to promoting information exchange, transparency and evidence-based decision-making on drugs.

International

Croatia to participate in the work of the EMCDDA

An agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Croatia, concerning the country's participation in the work of the EMCDDA, was initialled in Brussels on 6 July by Jonathan Faull, Director-General for Justice, Freedom and Security, and Ambassador Branko Baričević, Head of Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the EU.

Vice-President of the Commission Jacques Barrot, responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, welcomed the agreement: 'I am delighted that the Republic of Croatia will participate in the work of the EMCDDA, helping to strengthen Croatia's efforts to establish a national monitoring system on illicit drugs in preparation for its accession to the European Union.'

EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz said: 'This is a major step towards consolidating Croatia's national drug monitoring capacity and building a firm evidence base on the country's drug situation in the European context. In turn, this will present us with a more complete overview of Europe's drug phenomenon and facilitate sound policymaking in the field.'

The Republic of Croatia is already an active partner in the Reitox network. This agreement, once ratified, will allow the country also to attend EMCDDA Management Board meetings. Participation of the candidate countries in Community agencies is an important part of the EU's pre-accession strategy as it involves the candidate countries in EU policies and helps them prepare for accession to the EU. A similar agreement regarding the EMCDDA has been agreed with Turkey and is pending ratification by the latter.

New psychoactive substances

Early-warning mechanism in the spotlight

How the Council Decision on the information exchange, risk assessment and control of new psychoactive substances was implemented in 2008 was top of the agenda at the 9th annual meeting of the Reitox early-warning system (EWS) network, held at the EMCDDA from 4–5 June ⁽¹⁾. The discussions took place ahead of an upcoming European Commission assessment of the functioning of this legal mechanism, foreseen by the EU drugs action plan (2009–12) and due in 2010.

Every year, the EMCDDA and Europol are required to report to the European institutions on the implementation of the Council Decision. The latest joint annual report, released to the public in April 2009, formed the basis of the discussions.

The report reviews achievements of the mechanism in 2008 as well as the challenges it may encounter in the coming years. It concludes that the EWS has high reporting capabilities ⁽²⁾.

Among the challenges reviewed at the meeting were the detection and monitoring of several new substances reported via the EWS, particularly Spice products and related synthetic cannabinoids ⁽³⁾. Emerging phenomena of potentially high significance were also discussed. These included the increasing occurrence of mCPP in the context of the ecstasy market (found alone or in combination with MDMA) and the appearance of 4-fluoroamphetamine as a potential amphetamine replacement. In addition, various psychoactive plants

(e.g. khat, kratom, kava, salvia divinorum) were examined and their potential for further spread discussed. The meeting ended with a discussion on the legal responses by Member States to new psychoactive substances, in general, and to Spice, in particular.

Participants at the meeting included representatives of Europol, the European Medicines Agency and the European Commission, as well as the Reitox EWS correspondents and EMCDDA staff.

Ana Gallegos and Roumen Sedefov

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision 2005/387/JHA on the information exchange, risk-assessment and control of new psychoactive substances, OJ L 127, 20.5.2005, p. 32.

⁽²⁾ See *Drugnet Europe* No 66, p. 5.

⁽³⁾ www.emcdda.europa.eu/downloads/spice-report.pdf

Spotlight

EC conference on drug-related research



Photo: istockphoto

Drug use in Europe remains at high levels, with up to two million problem drug users in the EU and around 8 000 drug-related deaths per year. Research is key to achieving a better understanding of today's illicit drug problems and a central plank of the EU drugs strategy and action plan (2009–12).

The European Commission (Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security/DG-JLS) will be organising a conference from 24–25 September in Brussels on 'Bridging the research gap in the field of illicit drugs in the EU'.

Today's multifaceted drug problems are examined through many different research fields. These include: clinical psychology, neuroscience, epidemiology, social sciences, genomics, pharmacology, toxicology, criminology and security technology. In other words, research activity is fragmented both at national and European level. In this light, the current EU drugs action plan calls, not only for the promotion of illicit drug research, but also for the development of its strategic direction and for cooperation among drug researchers across the EU.

The conference will take stock of research in the field of illicit drugs in the EU, taking a strategic look at future research priorities and needs. It will also discuss how coordination and cooperation could be improved at national and EU level to strengthen capacity in this important area of research. The event will bring together, from across the EU, over 200 policymakers, researchers and research funders, as well as representatives of European and international organisations.

Caroline Hager, European Commission

Registration deadline: 18 September 2009
For further details, see www.illicitdrugsresearch.eu

Documentation, including the Commission's forthcoming *Comparative analysis of illicit drugs research in the EU*, will be uploaded ahead of the conference.

Reitox

Focal points celebrate 40th meeting in Prague

The Czech Republic, under its Presidency of the European Union, hosted the 40th meeting of the Reitox heads of focal point from 27–29 May in Prague. The meeting kicked off with a presentation of the forthcoming EMCDDA three-year work programme (2010–12) and the role of the Reitox network in this regard. The focal points found the programme ambitious and responded favourably to the input expected of them. Other items on the agenda included: quality feedback from the EMCDDA on the national reports and datasets submitted last year by the focal points; the state of progress of the revision of structured questionnaires; latest developments in the Fonte database; and a preliminary discussion on a 'Reitox development strategy' to be drafted for the period 2010–12.

Representatives from the Western Balkan countries attended the meeting for the first time since they began cooperation with the EMCDDA in December 2007 ⁽¹⁾. In a session on international cooperation and technical assistance, they presented their organisations and activities at national level. The meeting concluded with a presentation of a report 'Global illicit drugs markets 1998–2007', funded by the European Commission (DG-JLS), and prepared by the *Trimbos Instituut* and RAND Corporation ⁽²⁾.

The next Reitox HFP meeting is scheduled to take place in Lisbon from 18–20 November.

Frédéric Denecker

⁽¹⁾ See *Drugnet Europe* No 61, p. 6. This Technical assistance project, financed through the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) programme aims to assess the capacity of the Western Balkan countries to establish a drug information system compatible with the EMCDDA. The project will be concluded at the end of October 2009. A follow-up project is scheduled to begin in December 2009, under the Instrument of Pre-Accession (IPA) programme http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funds/ipa/index_en.htm

⁽²⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/doc_centre/drugs/studies/doc/full_report_10_03_09_en.pdf

Statutory bodies

Scientific Committee presents formal opinion on three-year work programme

The upcoming EMCDDA three-year work programme (2010–12) was the focus of discussions at the latest Scientific Committee meeting held in Lisbon from 15–16 June. Following lengthy discussions on the text, the Committee issued a formal opinion on the programme which is now downloadable from the EMCDDA website ⁽¹⁾.

In this opinion, the Committee underlines the importance of developing work in the areas of supply and supply reduction, but recognises the difficulties in collecting data in this domain. It also states that, while identifying new trends and reporting information in a timely way are important to policymakers, findings need to be scientifically sound and measured if they are to be credible and impact on policy development. The Committee welcomed the common theme running through the programme of the need for more in-depth analysis. On this issue, it recommended that the EMCDDA explore further the potential for comparative analysis of data at country and regional level.

Several Committee members stressed the importance of increasing the visibility and scientific credibility of the EMCDDA through staff publishing in peer-reviewed scientific journals across a range of disciplines. It was also noted that the Committee could play a key advisory role to EMCDDA staff and related experts by providing scientific endorsement of outputs and publications.

Margareta Nilson

⁽¹⁾ www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index6821EN.html

Products and services

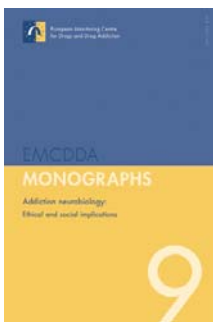


Latest EMCDDA policy briefing

This latest EMCDDA briefing paper for policymakers presents how new discoveries in neurobiology have the potential to transform our perception of drug addiction and its treatment. Entitled *Neurobiological research on drugs: ethical and policy implications*, the paper balances an analysis of the latest developments in the field with a call for rigorous testing before implementation.

Drugs in focus No 19, available in 25 languages at www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/drugs-in-focus

New monograph on addiction neurobiology



Addiction neurobiology: ethical and social implications is the title of the latest EMCDDA monograph, published on 26 June. The publication reviews developments in the neuroscience of addiction, explores how they might affect the way we view and treat drug problems, and considers the issues that they raise for drug policy in Europe. The publication presents the complex brain processes involved in addiction and the ethical implications inherent to current addiction research.

EMCDDA Monograph No 9, available in English at www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/monographs

EMCDDA–Europol report on methamphetamine



Methamphetamine — a European Union perspective in the global context is the title of the first edition in the new EMCDDA–Europol joint publication series (see *Drugnet Europe* No 66). The report presents information on the substance and its history, as well as its production and markets. The most recent information available on methamphetamine is used to analyse possible trends and future developments related to this drug in Europe.

More on the EMCDDA–Europol joint publication series at www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/illicit-drugs

General population surveys in Europe

To facilitate the comparison of general population survey (GPS) practices and to provide a tool for all those planning, organising or executing such surveys, a meta-analysis of 25 GPS surveys on drug use in Europe was carried out. The analysis — presented in the latest edition of the EMCDDA's Thematic papers — is part of a larger feasibility study in Belgium. The study was commissioned and financed by the Belgian Science Policy Office and conducted by Prof. Tom Decorte and Julie Tieberghien (Ghent University) and Prof. Dimitri Mortelmans and Sabine De Moor (University of Antwerp).

Available in English at www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers/gps

General report of activities 2008

Now available in English at www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/general-report-of-activities

Resources

Useful materials or events on the drugs issue



International conference on khat

The European Science Foundation (ESF) and University of Linköping (LiU) will be organising a major international conference on khat from 5–9 October in Linköping (Sweden). Entitled 'The changing use and misuse of *Catha Edulis* (khat) in a changing world: tradition, trade and tragedy', the event will present current research on the substance. Topics will include: economic, ecological and political issues of khat use; the changing culture of use; medical, pharmacological and psychological issues; and related legislation, regulation and international scheduling.

Khat is a naturally occurring stimulant plant, which contains the amphetamine-like cathinone. The chewing of khat leaves is a traditional habit in some African and Arab countries. The conference will aim to foster the interdisciplinary exchange and discussion about khat among researchers, policymakers, international organisations and community groups.

For more, see www.esf.org/conferences/09274

New Irefrea study

In recent decades there has been a rise in the number of young people travelling to specific tourist destinations to sample the nightlife. The Balearic islands are a well-known example. In order to assess the public health consequences of young people's participation in Balearic recreational settings, the Instituto Europeo de Estudios sobre la Prevención (Irefrea) coordinated a research project into youth tourism in these islands. The report is entitled 'Islas Baleares: turismo, vida nocturna y consumo de drogas'.

For more, see contenido2.irefrea.org/Indext.asp?idcontenido=5125

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

Calendar 2009

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

- 14–15 September: EMCDDA expert meeting on the treatment demand indicator, Lisbon.
- 7 October: Executive and budget committee meeting, Lisbon.
- 12–13 October: EMCDDA expert meeting on the infectious diseases indicator, Lisbon.
- 14 October: Modelling workshop on problem drug use and infectious diseases, Lisbon.
- 15–16 October: EMCDDA expert meeting on the prevalence of problem drug use indicator, Lisbon.
- 4 November: Presentation of the EMCDDA 2009 *Annual report: the state of the drugs problem in Europe*, LIBE Committee, European Parliament, Brussels.
- 5 November: Press launch of the 2009 *Annual report: the state of the drugs problem in Europe*, Brussels.

External meetings

- 5–9 October: 'The changing use and misuse of *Catha Edulis* (khat) in a changing world: tradition, trade and tragedy', Linköping, Sweden (www.esf.org/conferences/09274).
- 11–16 October: 52nd International ICAA conference on dependencies, Estoril (www.icaa.ch/ICAA_Estoril_2009.html).

EU meetings

- 17 September: Horizontal working party on drugs, Brussels.
- 24–25 September: 'Bridging the research gap in the field of illicit drugs in the EU', European Commission, Brussels.

Director's mandate renewed

At its meeting in Lisbon from 1–2 July, the EMCDDA Management Board decided unanimously to renew the mandate of Director Wolfgang Götz for a second five-year term, commencing on 1 May 2010. Fifty-seven-year-old Mr Götz was elected EMCDDA Director in spring 2005 and will now hold the position until April 2015.

Chairman of the Board, Marcel Reimen, welcomed the reappointment, stating: 'Mr Götz has shown full commitment to the endeavour he embarked upon in 2005, in particular enhancing the scientific quality and efficiency of the agency's work'.

The Director's reappointment coincides with a new EMCDDA three-year strategy and work programme for the period of 2010–12, which was adopted at the meeting. The work programme ensures that the EMCDDA remains a key resource for Europe, providing high-quality information to underpin effective drug policies and serving as a catalyst for developing national information systems. The overall strategy is based on a number of core EMCDDA values. These are to: concentrate on the basic information tools necessary for describing the drugs problem and responses to it; ensure work delivers maximum value and is relevant to the needs of target audiences; acknowledge that achievements result from partnership and effective working with others; and fundamentally ensure that the agency's worth lies in its impartiality, integrity and scientific rigour. The new premises of the EMCDDA were inaugurated in the presence of the Management Board and staff members on 1 July.

Monika Blum

Continued from page 1

New discoveries in neurobiology have the potential to transform some of our responses to drug problems and open up the possibility for a wider range of technologies to treat, or even prevent, addiction. Therapies under development include: vaccines that bind to the target drug (e.g. cocaine) in the bloodstream, preventing it from reaching the brain; and slow-release drug implants, allowing a gradual reduction in dose. Genetic testing is also helping scientists identify genes that may make a person susceptible to addiction.

But while research in neuroscience may hold the promise of new treatment possibilities, many of the approaches reviewed (e.g. neurosurgery) remain untested and raise important ethical concerns. According to EMCDDA Chairman Marcel Reimen: 'There is a pressing need to explore the ethical and policy implications of addiction neuroscience research to ensure that developments are taken forward in ways that adequately safeguard human rights and protect the ethical values of consent, liberty, equality and privacy... Any potential new approaches will require rigorous evaluation for safety and efficacy before being introduced into routine practice'.

See news release No 4/2009 at www.emcdda.europa.eu/about/press/news-releases