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Drugnet Europe

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In aqua veritas? Illicit drugs in wastewater

A novel approach to monitoring illicit drug use in the community was showcased by the EMCDDA in December in the latest edition of its Insights series (1). Entitled *Assessing illicit drugs in wastewater: potential and limitations of a new monitoring approach*, the report looks at how analysing communal wastewater (e.g. from treatment plants) for residues of illicit drugs can provide real-time insights into local drug consumption levels and trends.

The report explains how technological advances and more sensitive detection techniques (e.g. mass spectrometry; high-performance liquid chromatography) have enabled scientists to identify drug residues in liquids, even at very low concentrations. The method involves analysing wastewater to measure levels of illicit drug by-products excreted in urine. These levels are then used to calculate the consumption levels of specific substances in a particular community.

‘While work in this area is still in its infancy and considerable uncertainties remain, the approach appears increasingly promising’, said EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz. ‘It is becoming clear that new developments in our ability to detect drugs and their metabolites in wastewater are likely to have important implications for the approaches we adopt to monitoring drug consumption trends over time’.

The methodology was originally used by scientists in the 1990s to monitor the environmental impact of liquid household waste. Its potential in the area of illicit drug monitoring was quickly understood, with work focusing on cocaine launched in 2005. Since then, the procedure has been extended to other drugs including opioids, amphetamine-type stimulants and cannabis. Although it is possible to sample both wastewater (e.g. untreated fluid waste in treatment plants) and surface water (e.g. rivers, lakes), the report focuses on the former.

Scientific research in this newly emerging field is developing quickly and in a multidisciplinary fashion, involving analytical chemistry, physiology and biochemistry, spatial epidemiology and statistics, sewage engineering and conventional drug epidemiology.

Continued on page 8



Wastewater analysis, a promising prospect for drug monitoring.

New EU drugs action plan: mobilising European citizens

On 8 December, the Council of the EU endorsed the EU drugs action plan 2009–12, presented to it by the Commission in September 2008. Like its predecessor, the new plan includes wide-ranging measures to strengthen European cooperation to curb the adverse consequences of drug use and to cut drug-related crime. It is conceived around five priorities: improving coordination, cooperation and raising public awareness; reducing the demand for drugs; reducing supply; improving international cooperation; and improving understanding of the drugs phenomenon.

Creating a European Alliance on Drugs

The new plan foresees the creation of a European Alliance on Drugs, an innovative Commission initiative to be launched with an event in Brussels on 26 June. The purpose of the alliance is to mobilise the public and raise awareness (particularly among young people) about drugs and the dangers of drug use. Vice-President of the Commission, Jacques Barrot, responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, encourages potential actors (e.g. government bodies, public services, voluntary organisations, companies, individuals) to join the alliance and make specific, practical commitments to addressing drug problems.

The European Commission welcomes participation from all those interested in joining this ‘awareness-plus-commitment’ campaign. For further details on how to become involved, please send your contact information to: JLS-ALLIANCE-DRUGS@ec.europa.eu

January–March

2009

Drug situation

HIV among IDUs in Europe: increasing trends in the East

The HIV epidemic among injecting drug users (IDUs) continues to develop differently in various parts of Europe. In the countries of the EU and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), for example, the rates of reported newly diagnosed cases of HIV infection in IDUs are mostly at stable and low levels, or in decline. However, in many other (eastern) countries of the World Health Organization's (WHO) European Region, rates increased in 2007. In a recent article for *Eurosurveillance*, the EMCDDA, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and WHO/Europe highlight this as a 'worrying' situation and one which suggests that the HIV epidemic among IDUs in Europe is still growing ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾.

According to the article, even in those eastern countries where some declines had occurred since 2001 (Russia, Belarus), new increases have been noted in more recent years. In 2007, newly diagnosed and reported rates of HIV infection per million population among IDUs varied from zero in Turkmenistan to 80 cases per million in Kazakhstan and 152 in the Ukraine. For Russia (2007 data unavailable), the rate was 78 cases per million in 2006.

In absolute terms, the Ukraine reported the largest number of newly diagnosed cases of HIV among IDUs in 2007 (7,087 cases), followed by Uzbekistan (1,816 cases) and Kazakhstan (1,246 cases). (Russia reported 11,161 cases in 2006). Several other non-EU/EFTA countries in the East, with overall lower numbers and rates, nonetheless show an increasing trend in reported cases, suggesting that epidemics may be taking place there among IDUs. These countries include: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan. In countries or regions where indicators of HIV incidence show upward trends, existing prevention measures may be insufficient and in need of strengthening.

⁽¹⁾ Wiessing, L., Van de Laar, M.J., Donoghoe, M.C., Guarita, B., Klempová, D., Griffiths, P., 'HIV among injecting drug users in Europe: Increasing trends in the East', *Eurosurveillance* Vol. 13, Issue 50, 11 December 2008. <http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=19067>

⁽²⁾ WHO region, East (15 countries): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia (EU), Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia (EU), Lithuania (EU), Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

EU-LAC cities collaborate on drug treatment data collection

A common questionnaire to collect data on drug users entering treatment in European, Latin American and Caribbean cities is currently being developed under the 'EU-LAC drug treatment city partnerships project' ⁽¹⁾, funded by the European Commission. The project comprises three working groups, one of which is dedicated to improving drug treatment services in EU and LAC cities.

The questionnaire, which is in line with EMCDDA standards — TDI Standard Protocol 2.0 ⁽²⁾ — was discussed by this group at the second meeting of the 'EU-LAC interregional city forum on public policies in drug treatment', organised by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 4–6 December. The meeting reached an agreement on a core list of items for the treatment questionnaire which includes both socio-demographic and drug-use related questions. The questionnaire will be presented for approval in March at the next meeting of the group to take place from 5–6 March in Jamaica ⁽³⁾.

Luis Royuela and Linda Montanari

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.eulacdrugs.org/eulac> (see also *Drugnet Europe* No 62).

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

⁽³⁾ <http://www.eulacdrugs.org/eulac/montegobaygrupo2>

Improving access to treatment

Poor access or late entry to treatment for alcohol- and drug-using individuals can aggravate their health problems and suffering, decrease their quality of life and increase costs for society. An EU-funded project, IATPAD ⁽¹⁾, launched in 2006, is currently working with eight countries to improve access to health services for this vulnerable group.



Photo: istockphoto

Poor access or late entry to treatment can aggravate health problems and suffering

In the first phase of the project (December 2006–September 2007) national policy documents were examined and interviews conducted in order to compile country overviews of barriers to treatment entry. Surveys were then conducted to analyse two such barriers: attitudes of healthcare personnel towards clients with substance use problems; and 'system' barriers (e.g. cost of services). In this second phase (October 2007–February 2009), barriers were assessed through interviews and questionnaires.

In the final phase of the project (later in 2009), a report will be published covering the project's goals, methodology and results and offering examples of best practice. The countries taking part in IATPAD are: Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and the UK. The EMCDDA participates as technical advisor.

Zuzana Alexanderčíková and Danica Klempová

⁽¹⁾ Improvement of access to treatment for people with alcohol- and drug-related problems (IATPAD) <http://www.iatpad.eu>

Responses

Concerns expressed over Spice

At the end of 2008, concern was expressed in some European countries in relation to 'Spice', a herbal mixture monitored since early last year by the EMCDDA's early-warning system (EWS) on new psychoactive substances. Spice refers to a blend of plant or herbal ingredients, including Indian Warrior and Lion's Tail ⁽¹⁾.

A number of Spice products can be bought on the Internet, as well as in head shops and smart shops in some Member States, and are sometimes sold as a mix of air-freshening herbs. A 2008 EMCDDA study into 'legal highs' sold via the web, found that Spice was frequently offered as a smoking blend (i.e. 37 % online shops investigated) ⁽²⁾. Different blends and flavours are marketed under a variety of names including: Spice silver, Spice gold, Spice diamond, Spice tropical synergy and Spice Yucatan fire.

Some users have reported that, when smoked, Spice products can have similar effects to those produced by cannabis. This may be due to the fact that a new psychoactive substance, JWH-018 (Naphthalen-1-yl-(1-pentylindol-3-yl) methanon) ⁽³⁾ — a synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonist — has been identified in Germany and Austria in at least three Spice products (gold, silver and diamond). It is currently unclear whether JWH-018 is present in all Spice products or merely in some types or batches. It is also possible that other natural or synthetic psychoactive substances are being surreptitiously added to Spice products.

Responding to potential health concerns, Germany and Austria have taken legal action in recent weeks to ban or otherwise control Spice products. In Austria, a directive under the Medicines Act of 7 January 2009 declares that 'smoking mixes containing JWH-018' are

prohibited from being imported or marketed in the country. And the Austrian authorities continue to review whether control is required under its Narcotic Drugs Law. In Germany, following rapid control under the national Pharmaceutical Law in 2008, an emergency regulation (in effect from 22 January), brought five cannabinoids found in Spice mixes under the Narcotic Drugs Law (one of which is JWH-018).

Jennifer Hillebrand, Brendan Hughes and Roumen Sedefov

⁽¹⁾ Others include: Baybean, Blue Lotus, Dwarf Scullcap, Honey, Lousewort, Maconha Brava, Marshmallow, Pink Lotus, Red Clover, Rose, Siberian Motherwort and Vanilla.

⁽²⁾ Hillebrand, J., Olszewski, D., Sedefov, R. (in press) *Substance Use and Misuse*, Vol 45.

⁽³⁾ Another chemical name is (1-pentyl-3-(1-naphthoyl) indole).

Towards the better treatment of addiction

Ongoing research can make a valuable contribution to the effective treatment of drug addiction. This is according to high-ranking scientists attending the European Conference of Scientific Experts, held in Paris from 9–10 December. Organised under the French Presidency of the EU by the Interdepartmental mission for the fight against drugs and drug addiction (MILDT), the event was entitled 'How can we better treat drug addiction? New scientific and clinical challenges for Europe'.

The purpose of the event was to review the most recent scientific advances in understanding addiction, in order to identify the most promising routes for new therapeutic strategies. A session dedicated to neurobiology showed how better insight into the mechanisms underlying addiction could improve interventions. Approaches for treating cocaine and crack addictions were also explored, such as the use of central nervous system (CNS) stimulants as a cocaine substitution. Also presented were the first results of a European adaptation of a US family-based behavioural therapy programme for problem cannabis users, as well as lessons to be learnt from cases of self-healing.

Despite progress made in understanding and tackling addiction, the researchers expressed concern over lack of sustainability (e.g. short-term funding) and problems in putting theory into practice. Possible remedies were discussed in a roundtable session involving researchers and practitioners as well as the European Commission, the EMCDDA and the Council of Europe's Pompidou Group. Proposals included: longer-term planning and funding; an adequate slot for drug-related research in future EU research framework programmes; better integration of national and EU funding for addiction research; and the creation of research clusters for better collaboration and concentration on specific themes.

Roland Simon

For a summary and full report, see <http://mildt.systalium.org/article6022.html>



Best practice portal: selective prevention

The EMCDDA has recently launched a new module in its Best practice portal dedicated to selective prevention and its efficacy ⁽¹⁾. The portal, launched last May, focused in its first phase on universal prevention.

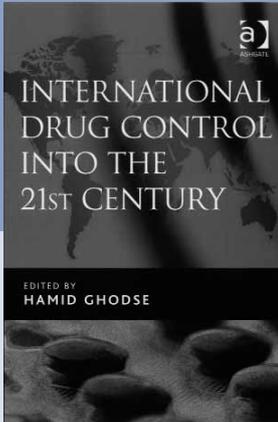
Research has shown that certain groups of young people are more likely to try drugs and/or develop drug-related problems than the general population. Selective prevention targets these groups. At present there is limited evidence of the efficacy (lack of studies) of selected prevention. Nevertheless there are indications that school prevention programmes targeting at-risk students can be more effective than those that target general student populations. Scientists have also found that selective addiction-prevention measures have preventive effects on drug-use behaviour if implemented as school-based social skills activities or mentoring or life-skills programmes. In addition to offering information on efficacy, the portal provides links to evaluated selective prevention interventions in Ireland, Spain and Austria.

Jennifer Hillebrand

⁽¹⁾ Selective prevention <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/best-practice/evidence/selective-prevention>

Bookshelf

International drug control into the 21st Century



This volume, edited by Executive Director of the International Narcotics Control Board, Dr Hamid Ghodse, provides a comprehensive analysis of drug use and dependence today and the responses adopted in different parts of the world.

The book covers various controversial issues, taking into account the way in which pressure groups would like to see changes in national and/or international drug control regimes. Among the many topics discussed are: the legalisation of drugs; prevention, treatment and rehabilitation; supply and demand reduction; and money laundering. The book is designed as a resource for professionals and academics in law enforcement, health and social services, behavioural sciences, pharmacy and drug regulatory agencies. The material is drawn from extensive studies carried out by the UN over the last 15 years and each theme has been examined by a group of experts.

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Ordering information:
<http://www.ashgate.com>

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

Drug use, a growing challenge for EU road safety

Alcohol remains the number one substance endangering lives on European roads, but more drivers are now found to be using illicit drugs and psychoactive medicines, presenting a growing challenge for policymakers. This is according to the EMCDDA's latest report on drugs and driving, released in December.

The report, *Drug use, impaired driving and traffic accidents*, a review of the latest research in this field, explores the potential impact on road safety (1). Concerns are expressed in the report over the prevalence of drivers under the influence of drugs on EU roads as well as the detection of a broader range of drugs. 'The range of psychoactive substances available for illicit use today is widening', says the report 'and the latest studies which look for evidence of their use in drivers are indeed finding increased rates'.

The report is dedicated to the effects and risks associated with the use of individual substances or with multiple drug use. Among the substances covered are amphetamines, cannabis and cocaine as well as a range of synthetic drugs (ecstasy, GHB, ketamine, PCP). Also included are opioids (buprenorphine, fentanyl, heroin, methadone and morphine) and benzodiazepines (e.g. sedatives).

'Preventing driving under the influence of drugs is targeted by the current EU drugs strategy 2005–12 and its action plans', said EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz, 'and policymakers are increasingly called upon to respond to the problems of road fatalities linked to licit and illicit substances. Determining the link between drug use, impaired driving and traffic accidents is a remarkably complex subject and a fast-moving area of research. With this report we aim to offer a precise overview of findings to date and an important signpost towards more effective solutions in the future'.

Research covered in the report is broadly split into two types: epidemiological and experimental. Epidemiological studies examine the prevalence of drugs in driving populations, and are conducted through a range of surveys (e.g. roadside, hospitals). Experimental studies, where a drug is administered to volunteers in measured doses, help gauge potential risks through performance tests (e.g. assessing reaction times, visual skills); driving simulator exercises (e.g. testing braking ability); and real driving 'tests' on the road (e.g. monitoring deviation, speed).

According to the report, experimental studies show that most illicit drugs can affect some aspect of driving performance and increase the risk of being involved in a traffic accident. And chronic (long-term) use of any illicit drug can decrease driving performance, even when the subject is no longer intoxicated.

Dominique Lopez and Brendan Hughes

(1) <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/insights/driving> (Multilingual news release and summary available).

The full range of EMCDDA products on drugs and driving is available at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/driving>



Photo: istockphoto

More drivers now found to be using illicit drugs and psychoactive medicines

International

Creating and consolidating national drug observatories

Representatives of national drug observatories (NDOs) from 20 member countries of the Organisation of American States (OAS) gathered at the 4th Ibero-American workshop of NDOs, held from 20–24 October in Antigua, Guatemala. Organised by the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID) ⁽¹⁾ and the Spanish *Plan nacional sobre drogas*, the event also welcomed delegates from the Andean Community, UNODC and the EMCDDA.

Creating and consolidating NDOs were central to the discussions, as was reflection on their role and principles. In this context, a forthcoming EMCDDA–CICAD handbook on this theme was presented and positively received, ahead of its release later this year ⁽²⁾. Ensuing talks on NDO activities underlined the need to convey to policymakers the utility of these bodies in evidence-based decision-making.

Other subjects addressed at the meeting included the drug situation in the Americas (particularly marijuana use); drug surveys among the university population; and drug-related crime. Following the workshop, CICAD will explore future regional or sub-regional activities to be developed with international organisations for the further development and strengthening of national monitoring systems in Europe and the Americas.

Alexis Goosdeel

⁽¹⁾ The statistical and scientific research branch of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), tasked with building a network with, and for, the Americas to collect objective, reliable, up-to-date and comparative information on drugs. See <http://www.cicad.oas.org/oid> — <http://www.oas.org>

⁽²⁾ See *Drugnet Europe* No 63.

Conference update

Identifying Europe's information needs

Preparatory work for the EMCDDA conference 'Identifying Europe's information needs for effective drug policy', (6–8 May, Lisbon), is gaining momentum, with over 350 invited participants now signing up. Among the invitees are: key policymakers at European and national levels; the EMCDDA's main partners in science and research; Portuguese authorities; and officials from European institutions and international organisations.



The by-invitation conference, which commemorates 15 years of drug monitoring in Europe, will focus on the themes of policy, practice, trends and horizons. The venue will double up as a showcase for European drug-related information with displays featuring the activities of the EMCDDA and the Reitox national focal points. Up-to-date information on the conference can be found at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/events/2009/conference>

Margareta Nilson and Maria Moreira

Drugs-Lex

Legal responses to new psychoactive substances in Europe

The latest in the EMCDDA's series of 'Legal reports' is now available in the European Legal Database on Drugs (ELDD) and focuses on the 'Legal responses to new psychoactive substances in Europe' ⁽¹⁾. The report outlines the multitude of systems and legal procedures currently at countries' disposal to control new psychoactive substances entering the illicit drug market.

The need for certainty in criminal law calls for specific legal definitions of drugs under control. However, these definitions can simply prompt illicit drug traffickers to supply new, but uncontrolled, substances with similar psychoactive effects. In such cases national legislatures have to decide

whether or not to bring the new substance under control, and in cases of immediate risk to public health, they need to act quickly. These national risk assessments, and their roles in legal procedures, are also considered in the report.

The document updates a 'Legal report', published in the ELDD in 2004, on the legal responses specific to new synthetic drugs. The former report was drawn up in line with the 1997 'Joint action on the information exchange, risk assessment and the control of new synthetic drugs', which was replaced in May 2005 by the 'Council decision on the information exchange, risk assessment and control of

new psychoactive substances' (2005/387/JHA) ⁽²⁾. The new report is broader than its predecessor both in subject matter (addressing all new psychoactive substances in line with the Council decision) and in geographical coverage (covering an enlarged EU).

Brendan Hughes

⁽¹⁾ ELDD Legal reports available at <http://eldd.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index5175EN.html>

⁽²⁾ For more on the Council decision see brochure 'Monitoring new drugs' at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/brochures>

Spotlight

The social cost of illicit substances in Cyprus



Photo: istockphoto

'The social cost of illicit substances in Cyprus' is the focus of a recent research study commissioned by the Cyprus Anti-drugs Council under the supervision of the country's national focal point. The study, covering the year 2007, measures the economic cost of illicit drugs in Cypriot society and determines whether, or to what extent, money is being usefully spent in attempts to reduce drug supply and demand. Undertaken by economist Dr Pierre Kopp (Panthéon-Sorbonne University), it also outlines the framework of national public policy in this field.

Data for the study were collected by relevant ministries as well as hospitals, NGOs and prevention, treatment and harm-reduction services. According to the results, the total social cost of illicit substances in Cyprus, lost every year as a result of the drugs problem, is approximately one fifth of a percentage unit of the GDP (0.22 %) (an average rating compared with other countries where similar studies have been undertaken). But it is thought that the total cost would have been much higher if all relevant bodies had been in a position to provide more concise and documented information.

The study found that a relatively low proportion of the social cost of illicit substances (8 %) was assigned to healthcare in the country, suggesting that, in overall health terms, drug users could be cared for better in Cyprus. Some 20 % was linked to research and prevention, reflecting the paradigm that it is better to prevent than to cure. The indirect cost of the losses of income and productivity to households and companies was low at 8 %. Finally, the cost of law enforcement suggested that, in the absence of treatment, repression has been over-represented with a figure as high as 64 %.

Elena Demosthenous, Cyprus national focal point

Coming soon at <http://www.ektepn.org.cy>

Reitox

Reitox Academy for the Andean Community

Experts working in the drugs field in the Andean Community attended a two-day Reitox Academy in Lisbon from 24–26 November in the framework of the EC-funded project DROSICAN, launched in 2008 (1). Through the provision of reliable and comparable information, this project aims to help institutions take coordinated action to prevent and control the effects of synthetic drug supply and demand in the region.

Visiting scientists from France and Hungary presented to the academy the state of knowledge and research regarding the use of new synthetic drugs and the structures and nomenclature of 'designer drugs'. The EMCDDA complemented these lectures with a description of its monitoring of new psychoactive substances and a presentation of its early-warning system (EWS), which detects new drugs entering the illicit drug market. Synthetic drugs, such as ecstasy and amphetamines, are not traditionally produced in the Andean countries, but their use, particularly among young people, is becoming a challenge for public policies. The potential for adapting the EWS to the Andean region was discussed in this light.

In addition to these themes, the academy addressed the creation of national drug monitoring centres and the use of key indicators to report on the drug situation. The academy ended with a summary of the drug situation in the countries attending (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru) and a visit to a Portuguese judicial police drug analysis laboratory. A representative of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission attended the event.

Cécile Martel

(1) DROSICAN: Support for the Andean Community in the area of synthetic drugs (*Apoyo a la Comunidad Andina en el área de drogas sintéticas*) <http://www.comunidadandina.org/ingles/press/press/np21-7-08.htm>

National reporting: new guidelines for 2009

New guidelines for reporting on national drug situations were adopted by the Reitox focal points at their meeting from 19–21 November with the aim of enhancing the quality of reported information. The guidelines ensure appropriate and harmonised data gathering across Europe and strengthen links with other EMCDDA data-collection tools.

Frédéric Denecker and Sandrine Sleiman

Scientific Committee

Members present vision for next three years

The upcoming three-year EMCDDA work programme (2010–12) was high on the agenda at the last meeting of the Scientific Committee held in Lisbon from 15–16 November. During the meeting, the members presented their vision on the agency's scientific work for this period, particularly in the areas of: emerging drug trends; data collection; concepts and methods to measure problem drug use; and the monitoring of supply and supply reduction. Also discussed was how the agency could improve its visibility in scientific publications.

The Committee submitted a formal opinion on the EMCDDA's 2009 work programme, acknowledging that it was comprehensive and in tune with the agency's leading principle of pursuing scientific excellence. In addition, the Committee adopted its own 2009 work plan, detailing the input it could bring to a range of projects and activities. In particular, members pointed out the need for the Committee to be involved at the early planning stage of activities in order to help strike a strategic balance between policy needs and scientific rigour.

Margareta Nilson

Products and services

New thematic paper on indicated prevention



The EMCDDA published its latest online thematic paper in February entitled: *Preventing later substance use disorders in at-risk children and adolescents: a review of the theory and evidence base of indicated prevention*. The study adds to the current knowledge and understanding of risk factors in the development of later drug problems, focusing on the mental health and behavioural problems that develop during childhood. The study also identifies models of best practice for prevention activities targeting vulnerable children in European countries.

Indicated prevention is a relatively new branch of drug prevention and describes a preventive approach targeting individuals at high risk of developing substance abuse or

dependence later in life. Drawing on the current scientific literature, the study describes the results of research into psychosocial and individual risk and protective factors. The neurobiology of drug use and how childhood psychiatric disorders can predispose to addiction are described in detail. One chapter of the report is devoted to the ethical issues raised by indicated prevention. The report also contains a wealth of practical information. This includes guidelines for the assessment and treatment of specific psychiatric risk conditions for adolescent substance abuse, and detailed information on the indicated prevention programmes that have been identified in the study.

Downloadable in English from <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers>

BZP added to online 'drug profiles'

The EMCDDA released in February the latest in its series of online drug profiles. The new profile is of the stimulant drug 1-benzylpiperazine (BZP) which was subjected to control measures and criminal provisions in EU Member States in March 2008 (countries have until March this year to take the necessary measures in line with their national laws). Completing the BZP package is a *Report on the risk assessment of BZP in the framework of the Council decision on new psychoactive substances*.

Drug profiles, in German, English and French at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/drug-profiles>

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

Partners

Farewell to Pompidou Group chief

Chris Lockett, Head of the Pompidou Group's secretariat since 1985, attended his last meetings with the organisation at the end of 2008, before retiring. The events, organised from 25–26 November in Warsaw, included a meeting of the group's Permanent correspondents and a conference assessing the group's activities at the midpoint of its 2007–10 work programme (theme: 'Are we able to meet policymakers' needs?'). Participants attending the meetings saluted Mr Lockett's commitment, professionalism and diplomacy in heading the group for over 20 years. The EMCDDA, attending the meetings, acknowledged the historical importance of the Pompidou Group as well as Mr Lockett's work in building an excellent partnership between the two organisations.

Margareta Nilson

Resources

Useful materials or events on the drugs issue



Photo: istockphoto

Connections conference

The Connections project, launched in 2007, is managed by the European Institute of Social Services (EISS) of the University of Kent (UK) and co-funded by the European Commission's public health programme. The project focuses on the potential for partnerships within criminal justice systems of the EU Member States to develop joined-up responses to drugs and drug-related infections, particularly HIV/AIDS and hepatitis.

The 1st Connections conference will be held from 25–27 March in Krakov, Poland, under the theme 'Joining the dots: criminal justice, treatment and harm reduction'. The aim of the conference is to facilitate the development of an evidence base for different harm reduction and drug-free interventions for drug users, which can be implemented throughout all the phases of the criminal justice process.

For more, see: <http://www.connectionsproject.eu/conference2009>

CLAT 5 conference

'CLAT 5', the 5th Latin conference on harm reduction, will take place in Oporto, Portugal, from 1–4 July. The event, which will debate harm-reduction policies and practices, results from networking between several European countries (e.g. Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland) and Latin American nations. The conference is organised in association with the EMCDDA.

For more, see <http://www.clat5.org>

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

- 21 January: Heads of EU agencies meeting, Brussels.
- 5–6 February: Reitox Academy on cannabis markets and production, EMCDDA.
- 13 March: Reitox Academy on prevention trials, EMCDDA.

External meetings

- 2–3 March: 3rd Annual conference of the ISSDP, Vienna (<http://www.issdp.org>).
- 11–12 March: Steering group meeting, Prison and Health, WHO, Copenhagen.
- 11–20 March: 52nd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), Vienna (<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/index.html>).
- 25–26 March: Criminal justice conference on precursors, Pompidou Group, Bucharest.
- 25–27 March: 'Joining the dots: criminal justice, treatment and harm reduction', Connections project, Krakov (<http://www.connectionsproject.eu>).
- 27–28 March: HIV Portugal 2009 conference 'Working together towards early healthcare and diagnosis of HIV infection', Lisbon (<http://www.eruditus.pt>).

EU meetings

- 25–26 March: HIV/AIDS think-tank meeting, Brussels.
- 17 April: Horizontal working party on drugs, Brussels.
- 29 April: National drug coordinators' meeting, Prague.

Management Board adopts 2009 work programme and budget

The 2009 work programme and budget were the key points on the agenda at the latest EMCDDA Management Board meeting held in Lisbon from 3–4 December. The 2009 programme is the last annual work plan implementing the goals set by the broader EMCDDA work strategy for 2007–09.

Reflection on the future direction of EMCDDA activities will be particularly relevant this year. For example the agency's work will be reviewed in the context of the new EU drugs action plan (2009–12) and areas developed or adjusted to better meet the plan's needs. In the perspective of the next three-year work programme (2010–12), maximising the agency's policy relevance through more timely reporting will also be examined, as will striking a balance between core activities and investing in areas requiring further development (e.g. improving information on supply reduction, polydrug use, public expenditure, modelling the drug economy).

The Board adopted a total budget of € 14.9 million for 2009 as follows:

- € 14.4 million — subsidy from the European Commission;
- € 376,795 — contribution from Norway;
- € 100,000 — contribution from Turkey;

A preliminary draft budget of € 15.8 million was adopted for 2010.

Monika Blum

In aqua veritas? Illicit drugs in wastewater

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The report explores how the approach can be applied to estimating drug use in the community, looking at: how drugs are broken down in the body; how drugs are transported in urban drainage systems; and how maps and geographical information systems (GIS) can be used to understand the complex inter-relationships between humans, disease and the environment. Experts also look at the ethical and legal aspects of wastewater sampling and how data from wastewater studies can complement drug use estimates gained from more conventional approaches.

'Illicit drug use is, by its nature, a covert and hidden activity, and traditional survey methods (such as population or household surveys) can be inefficient and sometimes ineffective ways of estimating levels of at least some types of illicit drug use', states the report. 'The possibility that a new technique for estimating illicit drug use might be added to the existing repertoire of research methods is, therefore, an exciting prospect'.

Norbert Frost

(1) See EMCDDA Insights No 9 at <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/insights>