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Drugnet Europe

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EMCDDA *Annual report 2012* highlights

Europe is faced with an increasingly complex stimulant market, in which consumers are confronted with a wide variety of powders and pills. While cocaine, ecstasy and amphetamines continue to be the main players on the stimulant scene, they are now competing with a growing number of emerging synthetic drugs, such as cathinones, one of the largest new drug groups being reported in Europe today. Other stimulants are also under scrutiny, and there are signs of methamphetamine making further inroads into the market. Developments in the European stimulant market are described in the *Annual report 2012: the state of the drugs problem in Europe*, launched by the EMCDDA on 15 November (see p. 2).

In the eyes of the consumer, these drugs are, to some extent, 'interchangeable products', states the report, with factors such as availability, price and purity influencing consumer choices and making for a volatile market. The report also describes how users may often be unaware of what they are actually purchasing.

Launching the report in Lisbon, Cecilia Malmström, European Commissioner for Home Affairs said: 'Stimulant and synthetic drugs play a central role in the European drug situation, creating a market which is fast moving, volatile and difficult to control. More than ever before, young people are exposed to a plethora of powders and pills. Data from emergency rooms, toxicology reports and drug treatment centres indicate that the associated risks are not always well known by the users.'

'In addressing these new challenges', added EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz, 'it is critical that we improve our understanding of the health and social impact of emerging trends and develop measures to reduce demand. To do this, better forensic and toxicological analysis is essential, as is the need to proactively engage with those most at risk'.

Among the findings in this year's report are signs that cocaine use may have peaked. Over the last decade, cocaine has established itself as the most commonly used illicit stimulant drug in Europe, although most users are found in a small number of western EU countries. Around 15.5 million

Continued on page 8



Malmström: Coordinated actions required to respond effectively.

Enhancing coordination and cooperation

The drug situation in Europe remains a major policy challenge. The use of illicit substances continues to undermine public health, inflicting damage not only on individuals, but also on their families and the communities in which they live. The *Annual report 2012* highlights the many challenges Europe faces in addressing this complex phenomenon.

This year's analysis shows that drug use levels remain high in Europe and that today's drug market is volatile and dynamic, especially with regard to stimulants and synthetic substances. Nevertheless, the report presents some positive signs that, for Europe's major illicit drugs (heroin, cocaine and cannabis), consumption levels have peaked or are in decline in some countries.

Commenting on the report in Lisbon, European Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström, noted: 'This new analysis from the EMCDDA is particularly welcome as it highlights the drug problems we share across the European Union and informs the work we are currently undertaking to strengthen Europe's strategic and operational approach to drug trafficking and use. I am particularly struck by the speed of developments we are now seeing in the area of synthetic drugs. I think it is clear to all that strong and coordinated actions are required if we are to respond effectively in this area'.

EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz added: 'The difficult financial situation in many European countries means that resources for addressing health and social problems are in short supply. It is essential to ensure that the available funds are invested in well-targeted activities of proven effectiveness. By working together and sharing experiences and best practice, EU Member States can help achieve this'.

October–December

2012

Annual report 2012

Further signs of MDMA making a comeback on the 'ecstasy' market



Powders and tablets containing high doses of MDMA appear to be becoming more common on the 'ecstasy' market

Around 11.5 million Europeans (15–64 years) have tried 'ecstasy' in their lifetime, around 2 million in the last year (Chapter 4, Table 6). Data presented in the *Annual report* confirm last year's analysis that MDMA — the best-known member of the 'ecstasy' group of drugs — is making a comeback. This follows a shortage of MDMA in recent years when tablets sold as 'ecstasy' often contained other substances (e.g. mCPP, BZP, mephedrone).

The drop-off in the manufacture of MDMA has been linked to successful measures to limit the diversion of PMK, the precursor chemical needed to make it. However, manufacturers are now finding alternative chemicals as their starting material for MDMA. While the contents of tablets sold as 'ecstasy' remain diverse, powders and tablets containing high doses of MDMA appear to be becoming more common.

4-MA — new amphetamine-type stimulant under scrutiny in the wake of deaths

Europe has responded to rising concern over the use of the stimulant drug 4-methylamphetamine (4-MA) by formally requesting a risk assessment on the substance. The exercise will be carried out in Lisbon on 16 November by the EMCDDA Scientific Committee with experts from the European Commission, Europol and the European Medicines Agency. Currently, the substance is not controlled under drug control legislation in most of the EU Member States (1).

The risk assessment will include an examination of the drug's physical, chemical, pharmaceutical and pharmacological properties and its potential to cause dependence and abuse. Also examined will be the health and social risks associated with the drug, prevalence of use and any involvement of organised crime in its production and distribution.

The exercise is the second stage of a three-step legal procedure through which

Europe monitors and acts on new drugs. It was prompted by deaths linked to this substance in Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK (the latter two control the substance) and reports of seizures in 14 European countries. A risk-assessment report will be submitted to the European Commission and Council of the EU after the meeting, on the basis of which the Council may decide to subject the drug to control measures across the EU.

4-MA belongs to the group of synthetic phenethylamines and is closely related to amphetamine. On the illicit market, it appears to be sold as amphetamine or mixed with it. This suggests that, while there is little evidence of a specific demand for 4-MA, amphetamine users may be at greater risk of exposure to the drug should it become more available.

(1) For further details, see Joint report at www.emcdda.europa.eu/activities/action-on-new-drugs

Methamphetamine makes further inroads into Europe's stimulant market

Use of amphetamines (a term encompassing amphetamine and methamphetamine) remains overall lower than that of cocaine in Europe. Around 13 million Europeans (15–64 years) have tried amphetamines in their lifetime, around 2 million in the last year (Chapter 4, Table 5). Latest trend data presented in the *Annual report* show last-year use of amphetamines among young adults (15–34 years) to be overall stable or declining (Chapter 4, Figure 7). Of the two drugs, amphetamine is more commonly used. But methamphetamine use, historically low in Europe and mainly limited to the Czech Republic and Slovakia, now appears to be spreading.

Recent EMCDDA *Annual reports* have pointed to rising availability of methamphetamine and its edging into new territory in the north of Europe, where it has partially been replacing amphetamine as the stimulant drug of choice (Latvia, Sweden, Norway, Finland). The EMCDDA notes that, in 2010, Germany, Greece, Cyprus, Hungary and Turkey also reported signs of problem use of methamphetamine, although this is estimated at low levels.

Data on seizures published in the report suggest that production is scaling up and that methamphetamine is making further inroads into Europe's stimulant market. Between 2005 and 2010, the quantity of methamphetamine seized in Europe (25 EU countries) rose from around 100 kg to around 600 kg. Meanwhile, the number of methamphetamine seizures more than tripled in this period from around 2 200 to around 7 300. Countries witnessing marked rises in the number of seizures of this drug between 2009 and 2010 include Germany, Estonia, Latvia and Austria.

Further concerns highlighted in the report relate to the first, albeit sporadic, reports of methamphetamine smoking in Europe and to the availability of 'crystal meth'. Methamphetamine smoking, to date extremely rare in Europe, is known to be particularly damaging to health. Early in 2013, the EMCDDA will launch a 'trendspotter' review of this drug which has caused considerable problems outside Europe (e.g. Australia, Japan, New Zealand, USA).

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/10

Annual report 2012

Over 50 new drugs already detected in 2012

The *Annual report* shows how new drugs continue to be reported in the EU at the rate of around one per week. A total of 49 new psychoactive substances were officially notified for the first time in 2011 via the EU early-warning system (EWS). This represents the largest number of substances ever reported in a single year, up from 41 substances reported in 2010 and 24 in 2009. And preliminary data for 2012 show no signs of a decline, with over 50 already detected.

Synthetic cathinones (e.g. mephedrone, MDPV), which can mimic the effects of cocaine, are one of the two largest drug

groups monitored by the EWS (the other being synthetic cannabinoids — e.g. found in ‘Spice’ products). All new drugs notified last year, and so far those notified in 2012, have been synthetic.

Alongside rising diversity within the more common new drug groups, the report reveals that more obscure chemical groups are also being reported. It also informs that: ‘The number of products containing multiple psychoactive substances appears to be rising’, with seizures and test purchases revealing samples to contain both controlled and uncontrolled substances. One example is

the detection of PMMA in products sold as ‘legal highs’. Placed under control in Europe following an EU risk assessment in 2002, this drug carries high risks of overdose and poses a serious threat to users.

Until now, data have been scarce on levels of use of these substances, but with countries now carrying out representative surveys including new drugs (e.g. Ireland, Spain, UK), preliminary prevalence data are emerging. Whilst the reported levels of the overall use of these drugs remain relatively low, there is potential for increased uptake in use amongst certain groups.

Record number of online shops selling ‘legal highs’

The *Annual report* presents the results of the 2012 EMCDDA snapshot of online retailers of ‘legal highs’ which identified a record 693 online shops purportedly selling psychoactive products to EU countries — up from 170 in January 2010. Although three natural products — kratom, salvia and hallucinogenic mushrooms — lead the Top 10 ‘legal highs’ most frequently offered online, the other seven substances were synthetic. The snapshot identified a marked rise in the number of Internet shops offering synthetic cathinones (e.g. MDPV, 4-MEC), suggesting that online operators are seeking a replacement for mephedrone, now controlled in the EU. To date, most new drugs have been targeted at recreational drug users. Yet, in some countries, problem drug users are also using new drugs. Reports from Hungary show opioid users injecting synthetic cathinones (mephedrone, MDPV) in times of heroin shortage.



istockphoto.com

2012 EMCDDA snapshot of online retailers of ‘legal highs’ identifies a record 693 online shops

‘Older-new’ drugs must not be overlooked

As attention focuses on old established drugs or the emergence of new substances, a number of the ‘older-new’ drugs have established themselves on the market and should not be overlooked, states the report.

These now include GHB, GBL, ketamine, mephedrone and PMMA for which pockets of high use, or increased availability, are reported. Negative health effects, including dependence among chronic users, have been linked to these drugs, while unexpected problems have surfaced, such as bladder disease in ketamine users.

These developments underline the need for countries’ drug information systems to be more sensitive to emerging trends and health problems relating to these substances.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/10

Proactive response: countries devise range of tools to tackle threat of emerging drugs

Across Europe, a variety of measures are being developed to reduce the demand for, and supply of, new drugs (see ‘Responses’ Chapter 8). The speed at which new psychoactive substances can appear and be distributed challenges countries’ established legislative procedures for drug control. The *Annual report* describes how several countries have responded with ‘innovative changes to

their legislation or enforcement policies’ (e.g. new criminal laws, temporary controls, generic controls). The main trend in many countries appears to be to focus on penalising supply rather than use. However, drug laws are not the only means used to meet the challenges posed by these new substances. Countries are also turning to their medicines and consumer safety laws, for example, to tackle the issue.

Looking to the future, the European Commission, supported by the EU Member States, the EMCDDA, Europol and the European Medicines Agency is working on new legislation to better address the emergence of new psychoactive substances in the EU.

For more on these stories, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/10

Annual report 2012

Heroin use in decline

Since the 1970s, heroin has occupied centre stage in Europe's drugs scene and is still responsible for the largest share of drug-related diseases and deaths in the EU. But while heroin-related problems continue, they do so at lower levels. According to the *Annual report 2012*: 'We may now be moving into a new era in which heroin will play a less central role in Europe's drugs problem'.

'Increasingly, it has been noted that in parts of Europe today, new recruitment into heroin use has fallen, the availability of the drug has declined and, recently, some countries have experienced acute shortages', states the report. Developments in the illicit drug markets will need to be followed closely to establish whether recent shortages will result in a long-term reduction in heroin availability and in other substances taking its place.

Recent declines in heroin use have occurred against a backdrop of rising treatment provision. Over half of the estimated 1.4 million regular opioid users in the EU and Norway (mostly heroin users) have access to substitution treatment today.

Around half (48 %) of those entering specialist drug treatment report opioids, mainly heroin, as their main problem drug. But, on a positive note, the report describes how the drug is now claiming fewer new recruits. Across Europe, the number of those entering specialist drug treatment for the first time for heroin problems fell from 51 000 in 2005 to 46 000 in 2010, having peaked at 61 000 in 2007.



Heroin: now claiming fewer new recruits

Market indicators suggest that heroin is becoming less available on the streets of Europe. Latest figures for seizures and drug-law offences, for example, both point to an overall decrease in heroin supply. Shortages were felt in some countries in late 2010 and early 2011, particularly in Ireland and the UK, where law-enforcement successes may have played a role.

Also on a positive note, data from treatment clients continue to show an overall decrease in opioid injection (particularly heroin injection) in Europe. Among first-time treatment entrants, the percentage of heroin injectors fell to around a third (38 %) in 2009 from over a half (58 %) a decade earlier.

The report states that changes in heroin availability in Europe may be linked to a 'shift in drug use patterns', such as switching to synthetic opioids. In Estonia, over three-quarters of those entering treatment report fentanyl as their main problem drug. Misuse of buprenorphine, commonly used in substitution treatment, is the most frequently reported primary opioid among those entering treatment in Finland.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/11

HIV outbreaks in Europe

Latest European data show that the average rate of newly reported HIV cases among injecting drug users continues to fall in Europe and has reached a new low of 2.54 new cases per million population per year (an estimated 1 192 new cases in 2010). This compares favourably with the situation in some countries bordering the EU where the average rates are much higher (Russia 104.3; Ukraine 151.5). However, the virus retains the potential to spread rapidly in certain groups. The *Annual report* provides an update on worrying outbreaks of HIV infection among injectors reported by Greece and Romania in 2011 and how these countries have responded. Slight increases in HIV indicators in other countries stress the need for caution.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/11

Cannabis: concerns about intensive use

Some 80.5 million Europeans (15–64 years) have tried cannabis in their lifetime, around 23 million of them having used it in the last year. The latest European data confirm the general stabilising or downward trend in cannabis use among young adults (15–34 years) cited in previous *Annual reports*. Less encouragingly, an estimated 3 million European adults (15–64 years) still use the drug on a daily basis. Optimism around steady levels of use needs to be tempered by the fact that this drug remains an important public health issue.

For more on cannabis use and markets and student drug use, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/11

Selected issues 2012

Prisons and drugs in Europe

In a new review published alongside the *Annual report*, the EMCDDA provides insight into drug use in the prison population and the efforts made at European and national level to improve prisoners' rights and health. While many countries have scaled up the provision of interventions within prisons (e.g. substitution treatment), these institutions still do not offer a standard of care equivalent or comparable to that provided to the wider community. The report presents progress now being made in several countries towards promoting 'equivalence of care' and closing this 'treatment gap'.

Pregnancy, childcare and the family

Families and the related issue of drug users with parental responsibility are analysed in this new study. The report finds that, although those with drug problems do not necessarily make bad parents, they are likely to require additional support. The report concludes that treatment services, in particular, must be sensitive to the needs of these individuals, as worries about childcare or child protection can act as a barrier to seeking help.

www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/selected-issues

Wastewater analysis

'Testing the waters': 2013 conference

'Testing the waters' is the title of the first international multidisciplinary conference on illicit drugs and wastewater to take place in Obergurgl, Austria, from 6–11 May 2013. The event is being organised by the European Science Foundation (ESF) in partnership with the EMCDDA and the Innsbruck Leopold-Franzens University (!).

Wastewater analysis is a rapidly developing scientific discipline with the potential for monitoring real-time population-level trends in illicit drug use and for assessing the efficacy of drug control interventions. By sampling a source of wastewater — for example a sewage influent to a wastewater treatment plant — scientists can estimate the total quantity of drugs consumed by a community by measuring the levels of illicit drug metabolites excreted in urine. Research into wastewater analysis has been largely pioneered by European scientists but is of increasing global interest and relevance.

The conference will assess the state of the art in this emerging scientific discipline, consolidate research findings and identify a common approach and set of methodologies for wastewater analysis and monitoring. A multidisciplinary approach is a central requirement for developing this area. For this reason, the conference will combine the perspectives of analytical chemistry, physiology, biochemistry, sewage engineering, spatial epidemiology, statistics and conventional drug epidemiology.

While wastewater analysis methods do not provide the type of detailed consumption data currently yielded by drug surveys, its ability to provide timely estimates of illicit drug consumption in a given population make it a useful complement to existing methods for studying drug use trends in Europe.

Liesbeth Vandam

(!) For information on applications and abstract submission, see www.esf.org/index.php?id=9600 and www.emcdda.europa.eu/wastewater-analysis

Reitox Academy

Building national drug observatories

Building national drug observatories in Mexico and Peru was the focus of an EMCDDA Reitox Academy organised in Lisbon from 3–5 September. Participating in the academy were two visiting national delegations headed by Dr Carlos Tena Tamayo, National Commissioner on Drugs (CONADIC, Mexico) and Ms Joanna Fischer Battistini, General Secretary of the National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs (DEVIDA, Peru).

Both countries have invested considerably in recent years in establishing a national drug monitoring centre. The academy offered the opportunity for the visitors to present these achievements and to hold technical discussions with EMCDDA staff on these and upcoming developments. Sharing EU experience and know-how in building national drug observatories is a key element in cooperation between the EMCDDA, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and the EC-funded COPOLAD project (!).

Dr Cejana Cirilo Passos, Head of the Brazilian Drugs Observatory and Dr Teresa Salvador-Llivina, Director of the COPOLAD coordination and implementation unit, joined the meeting on the third day of the academy for a session dedicated to the EU early-warning system (EWS) on new psychoactive substances. Brazil has shown a specific interest in establishing an early-warning system at national level and is also exploring with COPOLAD possibilities of establishing such a system in Latin America.

Alexis Goosdeel

(!) http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/latin-america/regional-cooperation/copolad/index_en.htm

EMCDDA and academia

Summer school 2013

The Lisbon-based Instituto Superior das Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa (ISCTE), in collaboration with the EMCDDA, will be offering a second summer school in July 2013 entitled 'Illicit drugs in Europe: supply, demand and public policies'. During the two-week course in Lisbon, EMCDDA scientific experts, ISCTE-professors and policymakers, will prepare participants to meet the complex policy challenges in this field, by providing a multidisciplinary and inclusive approach to the study of the drugs problem.

The inaugural July 2012 summer school brought together 34 students from a variety of academic and professional backgrounds from across Europe and beyond. Students providing feedback expressed their general satisfaction with the course and their appreciation for its comprehensive approach.

For more, see www.drugsummerschool.cies.iscte-iul.pt/

First EMDAS graduation

The first group of 15 students graduating from the European Masters in Drug and Alcohol Studies (EMDAS) received their diplomas at a ceremony at the EMCDDA on 24 September. The students attended a two-day meeting at the agency where they presented and discussed their projects.

EMDAS, a project funded through the EC-Lifelong Learning Programme, involves three European universities: Aarhus (Denmark), Piemonte Orientale 'A Avogardo' (Italy) and Middlesex (UK). The EMCDDA and the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research are also associated with the project. EMDAS is a multidisciplinary programme designed to be relevant to the needs of policymakers, practitioners, students and researchers working in, associated with, or preparing to enter, the field of alcohol and drug use.

Maria Moreira

Spotlight



2012 EMCDDA scientific paper award winners

The three winners of the 2012 EMCDDA scientific paper award were acknowledged at the annual award ceremony held in Lisbon on 26 September (1). This year the results reflected the female face of science, with all three acclaimed authors being women. The winners were: Dr Traute Demirakca, Dipl. Psych (Germany); Dr Johanna Gripenberg, PhD (Sweden) and Dr Katy M.E. Turner, PhD (UK). Abstracts of the winning papers are available online in German, English and French, along with a list of those shortlisted.

Inaugurated in 2011 by the EMCDDA and its Scientific Committee, the prize celebrates scientific writing and distinguishes high-quality research in the field of illicit drugs. Papers could be submitted in a number of categories, including: basic biological, neurobiological and behavioural research; population-based and epidemiology studies; and demand and supply reduction. All articles were published in 2011 in peer-reviewed scientific journals, with the primary author based in an EU Member State, Croatia, Turkey or Norway.

Some 30 eligible entries were received this year and judged on the criteria of: scientific originality; scientific quality; clarity and quality of writing; and EU relevance. The jury was composed of members of the EMCDDA Scientific Committee and the agency's senior scientific staff. Commenting on the initiative, Chair of the EMCDDA Scientific Committee Dr Marina Davoli congratulated the winners on their 'positive contribution to our knowledge base in the field of drugs and drug addiction'.

The award ceremony took place in the margins the annual meeting of the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors.

(1) For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/6

International cooperation

Drug prevention and monitoring workshop

What kind of information on drug prevention and best practice in demand reduction is collected by the EMCDDA and the Reitox network? How can this information be used for planning or implementing new interventions in the area of prevention? How can the Southern Partnership countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) benefit from this experience? (1)

These were some of the questions discussed at a workshop on 'Drug prevention and monitoring: situation and perspectives in the ENP Southern Partnership countries', held in Limassol, Cyprus, from 15–16 October. The workshop was organised by the EMCDDA in cooperation with the European Commission (DG Justice) and financially supported by TAIEX (2). It was held under the auspices of the Cypriot Presidency of the EU.

The meeting gathered participants from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Tunisia, together with EMCDDA staff, the Head of the

Cypriot Reitox focal point and members of the Cyprus Anti-Drugs Council. Representatives of the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe and UNODC (Vienna and Cairo regional office) also attended and presented their activities in the region.

A list of proposals was drawn up at the meeting to support cooperation. These included the need for countries to develop comprehensive and balanced national drugs strategies that include a national drug information system and a national drug observatory. Also stressed was the role of information on the drug situation and responses in the region to help raise the awareness of decision-makers and international donors. A report on the follow-up of the decisions and recommendations of the meeting will be presented at the next Reitox Week in May 2013.

Alexis Goosdeel

(1) http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/index_en.htm

(2) http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/taieux/what-is-taieux/index_en.htm

EU and Russian agency chiefs meet in Moscow

Wolfgang Götz, EMCDDA Director and Viktor Ivanov, Director of the Federal Drug Control Service of the Russian Federation (FDCS), met in Moscow on 12 July to lay the groundwork for joint activities over the next three years.

Directors discuss monitoring of new drugs entering market

The EMCDDA and FDCS cooperate under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in the margins of the EU–Russia summit in October 2007 (Mafra, Portuguese Presidency of the EU). The agreement between the two agencies foresees the participation of experts in meetings as well as training and capacity-building activities. Particular focus was placed during the Moscow visit on monitoring new drugs entering the market.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/fs-3

New accord with Moldovan Ministry of Health

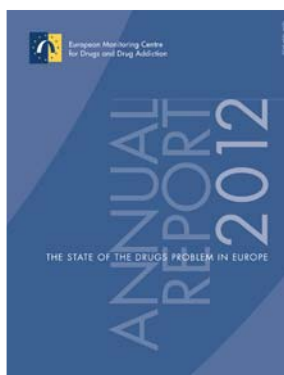
The EMCDDA and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Chisinau on 17 July. The signatories were Andrei Usafii, Moldovan Minister of Health and Wolfgang Götz, EMCDDA Director. The ceremony was followed by a visit to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, His Excellency Vladimir Filat. The MoU was adopted by the EMCDDA Management Board on 5 July, following talks begun in October 2011.

Signed for an initial period of five years, the new agreement establishes structured cooperation between the EMCDDA and the Moldovan competent bodies and promises to enhance the partners' knowledge base on the drugs situation and responses to it in areas of both supply and demand. Also underlined is the importance of exchanging information on monitoring and on preventing and treating drug use.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/fs-5

Products and services

Annual report 2012 information package



The *Annual report 2012* was launched at an EMCDDA press conference in Lisbon on 15 November. On the panel were European Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, Chairman of the EMCDDA Management Board João Goulão and EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz. To mark the occasion, the agency released a comprehensive, multilingual information package offering the latest findings on the drug phenomenon across Europe. This package comprises: the report itself (plus press pack) in 22 languages; the 2012 Statistical bulletin, providing tables and graphs on the European drug situation; Country overviews, presenting national drug situations

'at a glance'; and two Selected issue publications on drugs in prison and drugs and pregnancy, childcare and the family. The package is completed by a number of supporting reports on a variety of issues (e.g. daily cannabis use; fentanyl), multilingual ESPAD summary). Some 10 countries marked the release of the report with national launches and events combining European and national drugs perspectives.

Information on, and links to, all *Annual report* products, promotional items, services and events are available at www.emcdda.europa.eu/events/2012/annual-report

Users' voices

A collection of narratives from substance users in Europe about their attempts to control or reduce their consumption was released by the EMCDDA on 28 September. Entitled *Users' voices*, this paper illustrates how qualitative research can provide glimpses into the experiences and perceptions of substance users that statistics alone cannot provide.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers/users-voices and www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/fs-9

Insights on social reintegration and employment



Neglecting the social needs of drug users can undermine chances of long-term recovery. This is according to the latest EMCDDA Insights publication on the theme of social reintegration and employment, released on 15 October. Complementing the study, a new module dedicated to the topic was also launched on the EMCDDA Best practice portal, highlighting the benefits of interventions based on motivation and incentive.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/insights/social-reintegration and www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/8

Public expenditure profiles

How much do countries in Europe spend on drug-related activities as a percentage of their GDP? Do national governments allocate specific budgets to drug policy? How has national drug-related public expenditure evolved over time and what can be expected in the future? These are some of the questions which the EMCDDA's new 'Public expenditure profiles' aim to answer. Recently published on the agency's website, the profiles cover 30 countries.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/countries/public-expenditure

Resources

New EMCDDA studies available online



Preventing opioid overdoses in Europe: a critical assessment of known risk factors and preventative measures

This study focuses on the individual, situational and organisational risk factors linked to overdoses and how they can be modified to reduce fatal outcomes. Key risk and protective factors were categorised for the study and their efficacy plus the factors facilitating or impeding overdose prevention were critically discussed by an expert panel. The review evidenced that many interventions may reduce overdose, particularly in settings where the drug user is in contact with treatment or emergency services. It also shows that specific interventions are proven to be effective (e.g. pharmacological treatment). At the population level, where many drug users are not in contact with services, overdose reduction depends on behavioural change (e.g. avoiding the mixture of opiates and depressant drugs). The study concludes that overdose prevention involves personal and societal issues which call for multifaceted interventions.

Cocaine-related deaths in mortality registers in Europe: a review of the trends, numbers and characteristics of the victims

Nineteen countries (nine of which submitted data), responded to an EMCDDA survey on cocaine-related deaths. The identification and coding of cocaine-related deaths varies across registers and across countries. The study shows that during the 2000s there was an increasing upward trend in the numbers of these deaths, followed by a decline in most countries. By far, most deaths were reported in the UK (2 400 deaths over 1998–2009) and Spain (1 300 deaths over 2005–09). Most victims were males (7–9 in 10), in their late 20s or early 30s, having often used cocaine with opioids and sometimes with more drugs. Around two-thirds of all reported cases died of an overdose. The report also calls for further examination of deaths indirectly related to cocaine use.

Isabelle Giraudon and Julián Vicente

Available at www.emcdda.europa.eu

Calendar 2012

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

- 12–13 November: EMCDDA expert meeting on the drug-related deaths and mortality indicator, Lisbon.
- 15 November: EMCDDA *Annual report 2012* launch, Lisbon.
- 15–16 November: EMCDDA Scientific Committee meeting, Lisbon.
- 16 November: Risk-assessment meeting on 4-MA, Lisbon.
- 22–23 November: Second European conference on drug supply indicators, Lisbon.
- 27 November: *Annual report 2012* presentation to European Parliament LIBE Committee, Brussels.
- 28–30 November: Reitox heads of focal point meeting, Lisbon.
- 5 December: EXCO and COBU meeting, Lisbon.
- 6–7 December: EMCDDA Management Board meeting, Lisbon.

External meetings

- 13–14 November: High-level conference of the Pompidou Group Permanent Correspondents, Strasbourg.
- 16 November: ReDUse 2012 conference, Checkit! Vienna.
- 28–30 November: Conference on new threats arising in the field of precursor diversion, Pompidou Group, Strasbourg.
- 28–30 November: 52nd CICAD regular session, San José, Costa Rica.

EU meetings

- 7 November: Horizontal working party on drugs, Brussels.
- 9 November: EU–USA dialogue, Brussels.
- 21 November: Horizontal working party on drugs, Brussels.

EMCDDA *Annual report 2012* highlights

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Europeans (15–64 years) have tried cocaine in their lifetime, around 4 million having used it in the last year. While cocaine use remains a major part of the stimulant drug problem, the report confirms the 2011 analysis that its popularity and image as a ‘high-status drug’ may be declining.

While some countries still report rising cocaine consumption, recent surveys of cocaine use reveal some positive signs in high-prevalence countries. Denmark, Ireland, Spain, Italy and the UK for example — the five countries with highest levels of use — report some decline in last-year cocaine use among young adults (15–34 years), echoing the trend in Canada and the United States. Potential users may now be more aware of the negative consequences that can accompany cocaine consumption. Low cocaine purity may also be causing some users to switch to other stimulants. Of the 23 countries providing trend data on cocaine purity, 20 reported a decline between 2005 and 2010. The EMCDDA index of average cocaine purity in the EU fell by 22 % in this period.

The report shows that the number of cocaine seizures in Europe continues to fall, reaching around 88 000 in 2010, compared with 100 000 in 2008. The quantities of cocaine seized are also on the decline at European level. Having peaked at around 120 tonnes in 2006, they fell by around half to 61 tonnes in 2010. This rather dramatic fall in the volume seized probably reflects a diversification in cocaine trafficking operations that has made cocaine interdiction more challenging. It may also reflect changes in drug law-enforcement resources and priorities in key seizing countries.

Evidence that fewer drug users are seeking treatment for cocaine problems also suggests that its popularity may be waning. Around 15 % of drug users entering specialist treatment report cocaine as their main problem drug. Recent data on trends in those entering treatment for cocaine problems now show a modest drop in numbers.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2012/10

Second European conference on drug supply indicators

The EMCDDA and the European Commission will host the Second European conference on drug supply indicators in Lisbon from 22–23 November. Building on the results of the first conference, held in October 2010, the event will focus on three proposed drug supply indicators: drug markets, drug-related crime and drug supply reduction.

For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu