



FACT SHEET from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon

RESPONDING TO DRUG USE AND RELATED PROBLEMS IN RECREATIONAL SETTINGS

New EMCDDA report reviews measures for creating safer nightlife environment for young people

(23.7.2012, LISBON) How to prevent and reduce the health and social risks associated with drug and alcohol use in recreational settings is examined today in a new paper from the **EU drugs agency (EMCDDA)** ⁽¹⁾. The EU is actively addressing the use of these substances on the nightlife scene, as illustrated by the **2009–12 EU drugs action plan** and the adoption of specific **Council conclusions** in 2010 ⁽²⁾. Reflecting these conclusions, the paper — ***Responding to drug use and related problems in recreational settings*** — reviews some of the approaches used today to minimise the hazards for young people in this milieu.

Surveys confirm that in many recreational venues drug use is more prevalent than in the general population (see Table 1). Drug and alcohol use in recreational settings are linked to a range of health and social problems. These include: acute health problems (e.g. unconsciousness and unintentional injury); aggressive behaviour and violence; unsafe and unwanted sex; and driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

According to the paper: 'The increased mobility of young people and the globalisation of the entertainment industry make it necessary to address these problems in Europe, especially in popular tourist destinations in southern Europe' ⁽³⁾.

Today's report highlights the need for a balanced mix of prevention, harm reduction and law enforcement interventions to tackle the issue. It also describes how environmental strategies, targeting the economic and physical context of the substance use, can be effective (e.g. safe venues, crowd management, chill-out rooms).

Establishing partnerships between stakeholders (e.g. municipalities, police, health authorities) can also help implement successful nightlife interventions. Research shows that community-based programmes that deliver coordinated measures through multi-agency collaboration are more effective than single interventions.

Underage drinking, violence in or outside nightlife venues and drunk driving are often best addressed by means of policing and law enforcement measures. The paper shows that, while these can work, they need to be carried out 'on a regular basis and linked to real deterrents' if their positive effects are to be maintained. Training programmes for bartenders, door supervisors and other staff in recreational venues — which combine education with skills-building — can also prove valuable, although results are sporadic.

While the above approaches have shown positive results, the most common intervention targeting young people at nightlife events remains information provision via brochures or peer educators. Yet research has not found this to be an effective way of reducing drug- and alcohol-related problems in this target group.

To improve the dissemination and implementation of evidence-based interventions for creating safer nightlife settings, the **European Commission** has funded a website project '**The Healthy Nightlife Toolbox**' ⁽⁴⁾. This comprehensive source of information is designed to help local, regional and national **policymakers**, as well as **prevention workers**, to identify and implement effective responses.

⁽¹⁾ www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers ⁽²⁾ www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index66221EN.html (Action plan, Actions 10, 12) and www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/117558.pdf (Council Conclusions on the prevention and reduction of health and social risks associated with the use of illicit drugs in recreational settings) ⁽³⁾ An upcoming EMCDDA publication on drug use and tourism will be available on the EMCDDA website in August. ⁽⁴⁾ For more, see www.hnt-info.eu/