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Drugnet Europe 73

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In this issue...

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Wastewater analysis, an emerging science

New developments in wastewater analysis — an emerging science with the potential to monitor levels of illicit drug use in the community — were explored at the latest European meeting on the topic hosted by the EMCDDA on 28 January.

Thanks to technological advances and more sensitive detection techniques developed over the last 30 years, experts today can detect and quantify drug residues in liquids, even at very low concentrations ([1]).

By sampling a known source of wastewater — for example a sewage influent to a wastewater treatment plant — scientists can obtain precise estimates of the total quantity of drugs consumed by a community by measuring the levels of illicit drug metabolites excreted in urine. The method also has the potential to monitor trends and changing consumption habits in real time, while preserving the anonymity of the individuals involved.

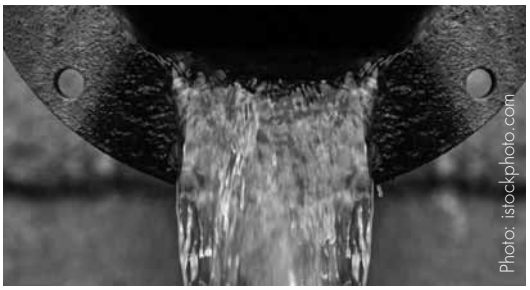
While such methods do not provide the type of detailed consumption data currently yielded by drug surveys (e.g. lifetime, recent, current use), their ability to pinpoint total consumption rates in a given population make them a useful complement to existing methods for studying drug use trends in Europe.

Opening the meeting in Lisbon, EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz said: 'Drug use presents us with a moving target and is difficult to observe. It is by nature a covert and often stigmatised activity, and no single measure can provide us with the full picture. The possibility that a new technique for estimating illicit drug use might be added to our existing multi-indicator repertoire is, therefore, an exciting and promising prospect'.

Over 20 analytical chemists, epidemiologists and engineers from Europe and the USA participated in the event. They reviewed the methodological and technological progress achieved since the first European meeting on this topic, held at the EMCDDA in 2007.

The participants reported on an exploratory collaboration project aimed at generating comparable data from several European cities, for cocaine, heroin, amphetamine, methamphetamine and MDMA.

Continued on page 8



Wastewater analysis: 'an exciting and promising prospect'.

Mephedrone ban across the EU

Europe has responded to rising concern over the use of the synthetic drug mephedrone by subjecting it to 'control measures and criminal penalties' throughout the EU. In a Decision of 2 December, the Council of the EU banned the drug, calling on Member States to introduce controls in line with their national law ([1]).

The announcement followed a proposal from the European Commission on 20 October that governments should act to stop the free spread of mephedrone. Reacting to the ban, European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding said: 'The EU has shown today that we can act quickly to stop this kind of drug from taking more lives'.

The Decision is based on the findings of a formal risk-assessment report on mephedrone prepared in July 2010 by the EMCDDA Scientific Committee, with the participation of experts from the Member States, the European Commission, Europol and the European Medicines Agency (see page 7).
The report examined the health and social risks of the drug as well as information on international trafficking and the involvement of organised crime. It concluded that, while there is limited scientific evidence on its overall health and social risks, and that further studies are needed, mephedrone can cause acute health problems and potentially lead to dependency.

Following the Decision, EU Member States have one year to take the necessary measures to submit mephedrone to controls. At the time of the Council Decision, 16 Member States had already controlled it.

([1]) For more, see http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/drug-situation/new-drugs

Drug situation

Monitoring illicit drug supply in Europe

The need to scale up the monitoring of illicit drug supply in Europe is an important component of the current EU action plan and EMCDDA work programme 2010–12. In October 2010, the first European conference on drug supply indicators ([1]) initiated work on the conceptualisation of technically sound and sustainable indicators in this area of key importance for European drug policy.

According to the strategy adopted, the overall conceptual framework to monitor illicit drug supply will integrate three components: drug markets, drug-related crime and drug supply reduction. Special attention will be given to the possible standardisation, extension and improvement of existing data-collection systems and targeted research will be used to improve understanding of the topic. Three working groups, supported by the EMCDDA, will produce a roadmap in 2011 comprising short, medium and long-term monitoring objectives for the three areas.

In the area of drug markets, future activities will focus, among others, on improving drug price and purity data sets and exploring the potential of forensic science. The development of a European standard monitoring instrument on drug law offences and of indicators on intra-European drug production will be key in the drug-related crime area, together with defining priorities for research. Policing and criminal justice agencies will play a central role in drug supply reduction. Work in this under-researched area will begin with a mapping exercise to provide an overview of drug supply reduction activities in Europe. As a first step, the EMCDDA will launch in 2011 a survey on the existence and role of specialised law-enforcement drug units.

Chloé Carpentier

([1]) Organised by the European Commission and the EMCDDA, with the active involvement of Europol.

See results at: www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/supply-indicator-conference-2010/conclusions

Measuring cannabis dependence in the general population

The EMCDDA estimates that there are at least 4 million Europeans (1 % of all adults) using cannabis on a daily or almost daily basis. Most of these are males, reaching up to 5–7 % of young men (15–34 years) in some countries. Studies show that between a third and one half of daily cannabis users fulfil dependence criteria.

In order to formulate adequate policies and responses in this field, a reliable and valid measure of cannabis dependence or abuse in the population is essential. The EMCDDA is currently collaborating with national experts ([1]) to develop a common European measurement methodology, with results expected at the end of the year.

Pioneering work in this area began in 2002 in some countries ([2]) where psychometric scales — short instruments to assess heavier patterns of drug use — were incorporated into population surveys and tested. Results of this work were reported regularly to the EMCDDA expert group on 'Prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population'. In recent years, the EMCDDA has actively promoted and supported the translation, adaptation and validation of such scales in additional countries, in pursuit of a common European approach.

Studies show that between a third and one half of daily cannabis users fulfil dependence criteria

Danica Klempová

([1]) Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands.
([2]) Germany, France, the Netherlands, Poland — see *Drugnet Europe* No 63 and 67.

SMART: developing standard measures of alcohol use

Use of alcohol is often closely associated to drug use, particularly among young people and in recreational settings ([1]). Today, population surveys on alcohol use and related problems are carried out regularly in almost all countries of the EU and European Economic Area (EEA). However, comparison of results is hindered by the current lack of standardised methodology. To address this issue, the 'Standardising measurement of alcohol-related troubles' (SMART) project was launched in 2008 and receives funding from the EU public health programme ([2]).

The EMCDDA participated as observer in the SMART conference on alcohol survey methodology organised on 19 October in Barcelona, where the results of a pilot survey on alcohol use and related problems in nine countries were presented ([3]). Among others, this survey tested the cultural relevance and feasibility of three consumption measures:

- beverage specific quantity frequency;
- graduated frequency; and
- last-occasion approach.

A model questionnaire was adopted at the meeting, designed for use in specific drinking surveys or as a component of other health surveys carried out at national, regional and EU levels.

The feasibility of this questionnaire will now be discussed at various fora, including a meeting of the European Commission's Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action.

Janusz Sierosławski and Jacek Moskalewicz

([1]) Although the EMCDDA focuses mainly on illicit substances, some of its key indicators (e.g. population surveys) also collect information on alcohol.
([2]) www.alcsmart.ipin.edu.pl. SMART receives a grant from the European Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (agreement 2007308). The leading partner in the project is the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology, Warsaw.
([3]) Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Finland, UK.

Responses

Policies and clinical practices in the treatment of cannabis-related problems

Around 23 million Europeans have used cannabis in the last year and some 4 million are estimated to be daily or almost daily users. Furthermore, around one fifth (21 %) of clients entering specialised drug treatment report cannabis as their main problem drug (around 85 000 clients). Yet, despite the large number of users potentially in need of assistance for cannabis use, and recent developments in this area of treatment, providing adequate support to this client group remains a challenge.

One of the key roles of the EMCDDA is to stimulate the sharing of best practice across the Member States. In partnership with the Hungarian national focal point, the EMCDDA hosted a meeting in Lisbon on 26 January, focusing on policies and clinical practices in the treatment of cannabis-related problems ([1]). Practitioners and researchers from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Hungary and the Netherlands exchanged national experiences in this area and discussed the latest developments in cannabis treatment approaches.

Bringing cannabis users into contact with the treatment system as a matter of priority in national policy was underlined as an important step.

Internet-based interventions, a new way of attracting cannabis users into treatment

Also raised was the need to evaluate available interventions and develop specific guidelines. A central topic during the meeting was how to balance the use of generic treatment services with cannabis-specific programmes. Finally, attracting hard-to-reach cannabis users into treatment was highlighted. Experiences with Internet-based and other targeted interventions were shared in this context.

Alessandro Pirona, Teodora Groshkova and Anna Peterfi

([1]) www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index121810EN.html

A new European Society for Prevention Research

A new European Society for Prevention Research (EUSPR) was formally established by the Polish authorities on 30 December within the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology in Warsaw. This international non-profit organisation is devoted to quality in prevention education and research and to promoting the active dissemination of research results to communities.

The EUSPR's mission, membership, future activities and alliances, were discussed at its first conference and members' meeting in Amsterdam from 10–11 November, attended by the EMCDDA ([1]).

European prevention researchers participating in the meeting considered that the EUSPR should support the implementation of evidence-based practice and back evidence-based recommendations. It could also assist the EMCDDA in selecting the most effective prevention programmes and promoting them in Europe. There is now much evidence that interventions can be transferred to other countries or continents. However, clear and useable guidelines are much needed for the successful implementation of exogenous prevention programmes.

The EUSPR has the potential to better connect European prevention researchers to national and European policymakers and to each other. This could facilitate the EMCDDA's information collection and dissemination in future.

The next EUSPR conference will be held at the EMCDDA from 8–9 December 2011.

Gregor Burkhart

([1]) www.euspr.org

Health in prisons

The German drug commissioner, Mechthild Dyckmans, was among 120 experts attending a workshop on 'drugs and imprisonment', organised by the German national focal point with the support of the Ministry for Health on 19 November in Berlin ([1]). The EMCDDA was represented at the event, along with prison health and social services, NGOs and policy bodies.

Presentations revealed that gaps remain in drug service provision inside prisons, a fact aggravated by budget restraints and shortages in staff. Yet opiate substitution treatment (OST) appears increasingly accepted inside prisons. An example from the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia showed that strategic approaches can make a difference. In this Land, the proportion of prison inmates in substitution treatment increased from 5 % to 17 % in only three years.

Gaps remain in drug service provision inside prisons

The acute risk of death among newly released prisoners through overdose was also examined. Raising awareness of these risks and providing a seamless transition to external drug treatment, can play a key role in reducing drug-related deaths in this high-risk group.

Roland Simon

([1]) www.dbdd.de/content/view/102/123/

Bookshelf

Sécurité globale: Stratégies anti-drogues

Leading European experts in the drugs field come together in this edition of the quarterly review *Sécurité globale* (Global security) to analyse the issue of anti-drug strategies. Through a collection of essays, the work describes how European coordination is a must in addressing today's drugs problem.

Georges Estievenart, founder and honorary Director of the EMCDDA, charts the EU's progression from an awakening to the drugs issue to the implementation of sophisticated strategies and action plans. In his article, he describes the EU strategy in the global context. Other contributors include: ex-Europol Deputy Director, Willy Bruggeman, who explores the fight against drug trafficking as the core of Europol's work; and former EMCDDA analyst and current Scientific Committee member, Henri Bergeron, who describes the Europeanisation and convergence of drug policies.

Further issues explored in the review include: 'The French contribution to the EU's role in the fight against drugs'; 'Cocaine production and trafficking — what do the statistics tell us?' and 'European penal law and the fight against drug trafficking — myth or reality?'

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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

2011 work programme — in step with today's drugs problem

The EMCDDA's 2011 work programme takes forward activities launched in 2010 to implement the agency's three-year strategy and work plan for 2010–12. This strategy seeks to: consolidate and deepen the analysis of core data sets held at the EMCDDA; invest in more complex and policy-relevant analysis; and develop a small number of new areas of strategic importance. It also reflects on the obligations of the agency's mission statement and is sensitive to the needs of the EU drugs strategy and action plan (2009–12).

The purpose of the 2011 work programme, adopted by the EMCDDA Management Board in December 2010, is to map activities to be undertaken this year and establish the methods needed to attain the goals set for 2012. It is structured around the substantive work areas set out in the three-year strategy, including: monitoring the drug situation and responses; monitoring and evaluating drug policies, laws and interventions; tracking new drugs and trends; and developing guidelines and best practice.

Priority is given in the 2011 work programme to the efficient collection and analysis of key indicator data and to maintaining the technical networks that sustain them. Of equal importance are the core instruments that allow the EMCDDA to report on Member States' responses to the drugs problem.

'A central consideration for the EMCDDA is to ensure that the reporting system remains relevant to European needs', says EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz, announcing that 'a top-level strategic review of the current reporting system will begin this year'. Here, the Reitox network will act as the main interface between the EMCDDA and national data collection and expertise.

The monitoring of supply reduction activities will also be taken forward in 2011, following important groundwork in 2010 (see page 2).

Photo: istockphoto.com

Other themes to be developed throughout the year will include polydrug use (moving beyond the traditional substance-specific perspective) and different types of addiction. An EMCDDA Insights publication on understanding drug use in the context of models of dependency and compulsive behaviour is planned for 2011.

EMCDDA Director Wolfgang Götz: 'Our reporting system must remain relevant to European needs'

Finally, the European Commission will launch an external evaluation of the EMCDDA in the course of the year. The EMCDDA will provide support to the Commission and the external evaluator in this exercise.

Monika Blum

Work programme 2011, available in English at www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index121903EN.html
Budget 2011, available in English at www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index122190EN.html
The EMCDDA Management Board adopted a total budget of EUR 16.3 million for 2011.

Partners

Russian drugs agency visits EMCDDA

Drug trafficking routes, chemical precursors and building national and regional drug information systems were among the topics discussed during the latest visit to the EMCDDA of its Russian partners on 21 January.
The visiting delegation, from the Federal Drug Control Service (FDCS) of the Russian Federation, was headed by FDCS Vice-Director Oleg Safonov.

The EMCDDA and the FDCS cooperate under a Memorandum of Understanding signed in October 2007 ([1]). Under this agreement, the two bodies collaborate in a number of areas, including: new drug types and emerging drug use trends; and the prevention of drug-related crime.

The meeting allowed participants to discuss developments in collaboration under the MoU as well as to explore technical issues. Fruitful exchanges were held on the topics of supply and supply reduction, the health and social responses to drug use and new drugs. On the latter, the FDCS showed particular interest in being linked to the European early-warning system on new drugs. Russian experts will be invited to participate in the EMCDDA's 1st International multidisciplinary forum on new drugs to be held from 11–12 May in Lisbon.

Cécile Martel

([1]) See news release No 6/2007.

International

Training on building national drug observatories in the Southern Mediterranean

Training on building national drug observatories in Southern Mediterranean countries was delivered at a technical meeting in Rabat in December 2010. The event came one month after the launch of an EMCDDA handbook on *Building a national drugs observatory* and the agency's first seminar on technical cooperation with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries (see page 6). The Rabat meeting took place in the context of a MEDNET seminar, organised by the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe ([1]).
The seminar, the first to be organised in Morocco by the Pompidou Group, gathered participants from Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco and Portugal.

Representatives of the EMCDDA and the national focal points (NFPs) of Cyprus, France and Italy shared their experience of building national drug observatories in the EU perspective, with a specific focus on strategic challenges and operational core functions. With the support of the EMCDDA and the NFPs, these experiences were discussed by each national delegation in workshops, before being debated in plenary.

While the members of the MEDNET network will continue their activities under the umbrella of the Pompidou Group, it is expected that countries interested by the EU offer to establish a closer relationship with the EMCDDA ([2]) will be formally consulted as a preliminary step to begin technical cooperation. Algeria and Morocco have already expressed their wish to develop bilateral cooperation with the EMCDDA. Other Southern ENP countries could follow suit in 2011.

Alexis Goosdeel

([1]) For a description of the MEDNET network see www.coe.int/t/dg3/pompidou/activities/mednet_en.asp
([2]) In March 2007, the Council of the EU agreed on the gradual participation of ENP partner countries in the work of EU agencies to encourage administrative reform and promote convergence of ENP partners' policies with EU norms.

Drugs-Lex

Poland passes new law to control 'head shops' and 'legal highs'

A new law entered into force in Poland on 27 November, eliminating the open sale of psychoactive substances not controlled under drug laws ('legal highs') ([1]). The new law came in the wake of 3 500 inspections by the Polish police and state sanitary inspectors in October 2010, resulting in the closure of 1 200 'head shops' ([2]). The inspections had been prompted by reports from Polish hospitals in the second half of 2010 of poisonings apparently caused by these substances.

As is the case with a law passed on 'head shops' in Ireland in August 2010, the new Polish legislation penalises suppliers rather than users. While the law in Ireland adopts a criminal-law-enforcement stance, the new law in Poland takes a health-protection approach. It modifies two existing legislative acts.

Article 1 of the new law modifies the 'Act on Counteracting Drug Addiction'. Essentially the revised legislation prohibits the manufacture, advertising and introduction of 'substitute drugs' into circulation ([3]). The penalty for manufacturing such drugs or introducing them into circulation is a fine by the state sanitary inspector of between 20 000 and one million Polish złoty (± EUR 5 000 to 250 000). The penalty for advertising them is up to one year in prison. (The law makes no specific reference to whether the drug should first be considered as harmful).

Article 2 of the new law modifies the 'Act on State Sanitary Inspection'. Previously the state sanitary inspectors were empowered to act against any 'failure to meet hygiene and health requirements'. As a result of the modification, they now have the specific right to withdraw from trade a 'substitute drug' for up to 18 months in order to assess its safety, if there is a justified suspicion that it might pose a threat to life or health. The costs of the assessment are met by the distributor in the event that the drug is harmful. If the drug is found to be harmless, the cost will be reimbursed by the state. The inspectors also have the right to close premises for up to three months.

Brendan Hughes and Artur Malczewski

([1]) Act of 8 November 2010, (Dz.U. z 2010 nr 213 poz. 1396) www.narkomania.gov.pl/portal?id=15&res_id=1005097
([2]) Retail outlets specialised in 'legal highs' and drug paraphernalia.
([3]) The term 'substitute drug' is redefined in the new law as a substance or plant used instead of, or for the same purposes as, a controlled drug, and whose manufacture or placing on the market is not regulated by separate provisions.

Spotlight

Towards an Italian network of drug observatories

Creating a network of regional drug observatories in Italy was the focus of the latest Reitox Academy held in Lisbon from 13–15 December. Representatives from all Italian regions participated in the academy which was organised by the EMCDDA and the Italian anti-drug policies department of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The event took place in the context of a broader project to create a national network of drug monitoring centres in Italy.

Professor Giovanni Serpelloni, Head of the anti-drug policies department, declared: 'The idea of an Italian network of regional drug observatories stems from the need to establish a national monitoring system that organises drug-related data collection, analysis and reporting in a participative and coordinated way, taking into account the structure of the state and the diversity of the regions'.

All participants received *Building a national drugs observatory,* the EMCDDA's practical guide to setting up such structures (see page 7). This had been translated into Italian by the national focal point for the event and enabled participants to look at the procedures for creating national and regional observatories and to discuss their functions.

This Reitox academy was the first to be organised at the request of a Member State to promote and disseminate the handbook. The Academy will feed reflection on the future development and consolidation of the Reitox network as set out in a development strategy for the network for 2010–15 (see *Drugnet Europe* No 69).

Alexis Goosdeel and Elisabetta Simeoni

Reitox

Cooperation with Europe's closest neighbours

Perspectives for technical cooperation between the EMCDDA and the 16 European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) partner countries were explored in 2010, with a particular focus on institution-building and boosting drug monitoring capacity. The EMCDDA has now embarked on a follow-up phase, drawing on the results of a seminar held in the context of the ENP in October ([1]).

Organised by the EMCDDA, in cooperation with the European Commission, the seminar was financed by the Commission's Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX) ([2]). In the wake of the event, the EMCDDA will consult all ENP countries to gauge the potential for establishing bilateral cooperation frameworks. Cooperation between the EMCDDA and an interested ENP partner country will only proceed if certain conditions are observed. For example, objectives and desired results of the cooperation need to be clearly defined and the EMCDDA must demonstrate the added value it can bring to the partner country's policy commitments, actions and investments.

The state of development of national drug information systems (NDIS) and national drug observatories (NDO) among the ENP countries differs greatly. Some countries conduct little or no monitoring and the concept of an NDO is not yet defined. Preliminary information and datasets are available in others but in the absence of an NDO. In a third group, countries report data-collection and reporting capacity as well as an established NDO, although these may require consolidation.

The EMCDDA is one of 16 EU agencies which are 'open' to the participation of ENP partner countries. To facilitate cooperation between these agencies and ENP partner countries, the European Commission has allocated EUR 3.7 million to a specific programme under inter-regional cooperation (East and South) for the period 2011–13.

Cécile Martel

([1]) 'The EU drug monitoring system, the EMCDDA and perspectives for cooperation with ENP countries'.
([2]) http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/taiex/index_en.htm

Best practice

What it is, what it isn't

'Best practice is the best application of available evidence to current activities in the drugs field'. This is according to a group of experts tasked with developing a working definition of the concept when responding to drug use. The group, meeting in Lisbon on 17 November, included: the Chairman of the EMCDDA Management Board João Goulão; members of the EMCDDA Scientific Committee; policymakers; and top-level researchers in the areas of treatment, prevention and harm reduction. According to the definition agreed, five points should be considered before applying the term best practice to an intervention, namely:

- underlying evidence should be relevant to the problems and issues affecting those involved (professionals, policymakers, drug users, their families);
- methods should be transparent, reliable and transferable and all appropriate evidence should be considered in the classification process;
- experience in implementation, adaptation and training should be systematically collected and made available;
- contextual factors should be studied by modelling different prevalence levels so as to assess the impact of an intervention on the population; and
- evidence of effectiveness and feasibility of implementation should both be considered for the broader decision-making process.

Highlighted in the discussions were the many factors to be taken into account when identifying and promoting best practice, such as how to export experiences to different contexts.

Marica Ferri

Products and services

EU agencies — the way ahead


Photo: Visvaldas Grauslys

European agencies have been set up in successive waves since the mid-1970s and today form an important part of the EU's institutional landscape. Responding to needs identified by the EU and its Member States, they perform a variety of legal, technical and scientific tasks across a broad range of policy areas. At an exhibition at the European Parliament (31 January–3 February), the agencies presented in thematic clusters how they work together on a broad range of policy issues and impact on the lives of Europe's 500 million citizens. The event was coordinated by the EMCDDA, in its capacity as chair of the agencies' Heads of Communication and Information Network (HCIN). On 1 March, the European Chemicals Agency will take over the one-year presidency of the HCIN.

For more on the event, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/eu-agencies-the-way-ahead

Building a national drugs observatory

The EMCDDA and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organisation of American States (OAS) launched in Montevideo on 18 October *Building a national drugs observatory: a joint handbook*. Based on the experience of the two bodies in establishing drug observatories in their respective geographical areas, the handbook provides a practical guide to setting up such structures. Relevant for all world regions, the handbook is complemented by an online toolbox to ensure the continued exchange of experience and best practice.

Available in Spanish, English, French, Italian, Croatian and Turkish. Coming soon in Arabic and Russian.
www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2010/8 — www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint/ndo-handbook

First European conference on drug supply indicators — key conclusions

The First European conference on drug supply indicators (20–22 October) laid the foundations for establishing a set of technically sound and sustainable indicators for monitoring drug markets, crime and supply reduction in Europe (see page 2). The key conclusions of the event, organised by the European Commission and the EMCDDA, are now available.

Available in English at www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/supply-indicator-conference-2010/conclusions

Mephedrone risk-assessment report

In 2010, mephedrone become the first cathinone derivative to be 'risk-assessed' by the extended Scientific Committee of the EMCDDA as part of a three-step process established by Council Decision 2005/387/JHA. On 2 December (see page 1) it was banned across Europe (the second substance after BZP to have been controlled under this mechanism). The *Report on the risk assessment of mephedrone in the framework of the Council decision on new psychoactive substances* is now available.

Available in English at www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/risk-assessments

Resources

Useful materials or events on the drugs issue


Photo: istockphoto.com

IHRA international conference

'Building capacity, redressing neglect' will be the theme of the 22nd international conference of the International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA) to be held in Beirut from 3–7 April. While harm reduction has been adopted in policy and practice in more countries than ever before, significant gaps remain. This year's conference will contain a strong focus on capacity-building among civil society to implement harm reduction and on women and marginalised populations.

For more, see www.ihra.net/conference

ISSDP conference 2011

The 5th annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy (ISSDP) will take place in Utrecht from 23–24 May. Organised by the Trimbos Institute, the event will focus on supply reduction indicators; harm reduction principles and practices in the supply field; and improving and utilising cross-national comparisons of problems and policies.

For more, see www.trimbos.org/trimbos-international/agenda/issdp-conference-2011

European HIV Conference

'HIV in the European region: unity and diversity', is the focus of the major European conference to take place in Tallinn from 25–27 May. The event is organised by the Estonian National Institute for Health Development in cooperation with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and other international organisations. The EMCDDA sits on the Scientific Board and Organising Committee.

For more, see www.aids2011.com/en/home
www.facebook.com/aids2011

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

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Calendar 2011

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

26 January:	European exchange on policies and practices in the treatment of cannabis-related problems, Lisbon.
28 January:	2nd European meeting on wastewater analysis, Lisbon.
1–2 February:	EMCDDA expert meeting on the revision of the treatment demand indicator, Lisbon.
1–2 March:	Reitox Academy on 'Drug use among the prison population: scope and responses', Lisbon.
16–17 May:	EMCDDA Scientific Committee, Lisbon.

External meetings

21–25 March:	54th session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Vienna.
23–25 March:	13th International symposium on substance abuse treatment, Barcelona.
3–7 April:	Harm reduction 2011: 22nd international conference, International Harm Reduction Association, Beirut (www.ihra.net/conference).
23–24 May:	5th annual conference, International Society for the Study of Drug Policy (ISSDP), Utrecht (www.trimbos.org/trimbos-international/agenda/issdp-conference-2011).
25–27 May:	'HIV in the European region: unity and diversity', Estonian National Institute for Health Development, Tallinn (www.aids2011.com/en/home).

EU meetings

1 March:	Horizontal working group on drugs, Brussels.
5 April:	Horizontal working group on drugs, Brussels.
6 April:	Political dialogue with Central Asian countries, Brussels.
3 May:	Horizontal working group on drugs, Brussels.

Scientific Committee: 'EMCDDA work programme grows in strength and quality'

'The EMCDDA work programme continues to grow in strength and quality and covers an appropriate range of policy-relevant topics'. So stated the EMCDDA Scientific Committee at its latest meeting in Lisbon from 15–16 November. The declaration came in a formal opinion on the 2011 programme, which acknowledges the programme's focus on scientific outputs.

Challenges in assessing the risks of new drugs were also among the issues reviewed at the meeting. Here, discussions centered on the results of a questionnaire to the Committee on the scientific aspects of the risk-assessment procedure under the Council Decision on the information exchange, risk-assessment and control of new psychoactive substances. A Scientific Committee opinion on the issue was drawn up in the context of an ongoing assessment of the Council Decision to be concluded later this year by the European Commission.

Upcoming EMCDDA publications in the area of treatment were also presented. To be published in the agency's Insights series, these will cover various aspects of treatment, including: heroin-assisted treatment; therapeutic communities and residential care; and social rehabilitation.

Margareta Nilson

(1) Meeting documents are available at www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index51814EN.html

New prize for top scientific papers

Europe's top scientific papers on drug-related topics will be acknowledged this year in a new initiative launched by the EMCDDA and its Scientific Committee. The annual prize giving, to take place in Lisbon in November, will celebrate excellence in scientific writing on drugs. The articles will have been published in 2010 in peer-reviewed scientific journals, with the primary author based in an EU Member State or Norway. For full details, see the EMCDDA homepage.

Wastewater analysis, an emerging science

Continued from page 1

Discussions at the meeting focused on how European research and networking in this area could be facilitated. Potential new uses of the technique were also explored, such as to inform analysis on the size of the drug market or to identify the use of new psychoactive substances in communities.

Ana Gallegos and Jane Mounteney

www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/insights/wastewater

(1) For example, in mass spectrometry and high-performance liquid chromatography.

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