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European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

DrugNet Europe

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On 4 November 1997, the EMCDDA launches its second *Annual Report on the State of the Drugs Problem in the European Union* in Lisbon in the presence of the President of Portugal, Mr. Jorge Sampaio. Over 100 representatives from diplomatic, political and media circles in 15 countries will attend the event to hear the report's new findings. But underlying the data is a long-term process as important as its current outcome. As the EMCDDA's Director, Mr. Georges Estievenart, puts it: "In a sense we are creating a new language, one which will enable us to talk about drug problems at a European level, to compare notes and learn from each other."

Europe's diverse approaches to the drugs problem pose formidable obstacles to this process but also provide the motivation for overcoming hurdles; with this diversity of experience, the potential gains are also formidable. The *Annual Report* is the core expression of this new language and evidence of its progress. This year, the report's authors were able to measure this progress and found it was substantial, giving policy-makers more of what they need to make effective decisions.

The advantages of accessing pan-European experiences were nowhere clearer than in a new chapter on the use of drugs such as ecstasy, LSD and amphetamines in the context of the mass youth culture described as 'rave', 'techno' or 'dance'. Rave culture is international in origin and has traversed communication channels to spread across the EU with unprecedented rapidity. So today music, dance and associated drug use patterns will be familiar to ravers from Stockholm to Rome, Lisbon to Athens. The problems will also be similar and the responses may be internationally applicable. Wherever we are, it would

be foolish to dismiss the lessons of on-site pill testing in Amsterdam, safer dancing guidelines in Manchester, peer education in Hannover, police intervention in Stockholm and the many other activities cited in the report.

The same is true at the starker end of the drug-use spectrum where heroin dependants across Europe face the risks

Over the spectrum of drug issues, information available to European policy-makers via the EMCDDA and its National Focal Point partners has improved substantially. Such progress is timely as, across Europe, nations are reviewing their drug policies, partly driven by the widened and clarified vision of their neighbours' responses created by EU initiatives such as the EMCDDA. What the report sees as this policy "ferment" is creating real-world 'experiments', particularly in co-ordination, community involvement, demand reduction, and achieving the cost-effective disposition of limited resources. With this report, each Member State now has a clearer view of its national strategy in the context of EU-wide trends.

This year, the report also attempts to penetrate national administrative structures to shed light on the costs imposed on society by drug misuse and the funds

devoted to curbing those costs. It is just a beginning, but holds the promise that it will become possible to say how one country compares to another in these respects - an important extension to the 'language' available to European policy-makers.

The figures, activities and trends cited above are merely illustrative and the reader will find more in the full report, a 144-page book with 43 tables, the same number of charts, and over 100 illustrations. It will be available from the launch date in English and a 12-page summary of key points will be published simultaneously in the other 10 EU languages. Both publications are available from the EMCDDA or through National Focal Points.

Mike Ashton
Editor, *Annual Report* - 1997.

Annual Report - 1997

The process behind the data



In some EU countries unprecedented numbers of young people have adopted the use of synthetic drugs in the context of the mass 'rave' culture.

of injecting-related illness and impose health and crime burdens on the wider community. Last year's estimates have been refined to an EU average of perhaps 0.2 to 0.3% of the population dependent on heroin, providing the beginnings of a benchmark against which national figures can be assessed.

We can also now, with greater confidence, describe trends in approaches to the heroin threat, such as the near tripling in 1993-96 of the number of EU patients treated with the heroin substitute, methadone. Here too, despite the complexities, it would be wasteful in the extreme not to learn from, for example: trials of a longer-acting variant of methadone in Portugal; France's experience with prescribing buprenorphine; rapid detoxification in Italy; and attempts to curb public nuisance in the Netherlands.

UNDCP Declaration and Resource Book Series on Demand Reduction

In 1990, the United Nations declared the period 1991-2000 the *Decade on Drug Abuse*, and in June 1998 will hold a Special Session of the General Assembly dedicated to the drug problem*. In this framework, particular attention is given to demand reduction, and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) is preparing a *Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction* (to be approved by the Special Session) as well as an accompanying *Resource Book Series*. The EMCDDA, as a partner organisation of UNDCP, is actively participating in the development of these initiatives.

The draft *Declaration* was discussed at a meeting at UNDCP in Vienna from 13 to 17 October which, attended by the EMCDDA, concluded with an improved draft which found consensus among all countries represented.

The *Declaration* is designed to be an international instrument on the adoption of effective demand reduction action, which aims for a balanced approach between demand reduction and supply reduction, which has been (and still is) the main focus of UNDCP. It is a comprehensive document, covering prevention and assistance to drug users, including the reduction of negative health consequences and rehabilitation. The *Declaration* proposes that demand reduction should be integrated into broader health and social policies, designed to meet the needs of target groups, and be sensitive to cultural and gender issues. It also stresses the importance of an accurate assessment of the drugs problem and of evaluation.

Australia has taken the lead in starting up the *Resource Book Series* and a first meeting of a working group was held in Sydney from 18 to 19 August 1997. The target group of the *Resource Books* are policy-makers, and the purpose is to guide national authorities to assist in the design, implementation, management and evaluation of demand reduction programmes. A "Lexicon" of demand reduction terms will also be developed where the EMCDDA's work in the field will be an asset.

Margareta Nilson

* See *DrugNet Europe* N° 5.

Can we alter these images ?

For those readers who may have missed the last edition of *DrugNet Europe*, the EMCDDA has launched a photographic competition aimed at encouraging reflection on images of drugs in the media. The competition, which will run until 1 March



Photo: Diário de Notícias

1998, focuses on positive approaches to the drug problem (prevention/demand reduction; harm/risk reduction; rehabilitation; the international response to drugs) in response to the negative messages and over-dramatising news often found in the media. The initiative will result in a photographic exhibition of 20 entries, the top three winners being invited to attend the opening of the event. The possibility of staging the exhibition at the European Union's pavilion at EXPO '98 is currently being explored.

For more, please contact the EMCDDA's Department for Information Strategies and Communication Services:
Fax: 351 1 813 0615 or info@emcdda.org

Centre's website revamped

For all you ever wanted to know about the EMCDDA and more... <http://www.emcdda.org> is where it's at.

On 27 October 1997, the EMCDDA launched a new edition of its website following an operation over recent months to update and revamp its forerunner. Using advanced Internet techniques, a new modern presentation has been designed to provide user-friendly access to information. And it seems to be working: in the first week of opening the site, over 450 entries were recorded per day.

The website offers general information on the Monitoring Centre - its origins, activities and achievements - as well as details on the REITOX network and other partners. In addition, Acrobat PDF files of the *Highlights of the Annual Report 1997*, *DrugNet Europe* and other publications may be downloaded and reports ordered through a special e-mail facility. Users may also reach EMCDDA staff members directly by e-mail and send comments, questions and requests.

The site is available in English but other languages may be found in the case of publications.

Gianni Contestabile

New EMCDDA publications and reports

The first volume in a new series of EMCDDA Scientific Monographs entitled "*Estimating the Prevalence of Problem Drug Use in Europe*", will be published by the Centre early in November. The monograph follows on from the Scientific Seminar on *Addiction Prevalence Estimation Methods and Research Strategies*, organised by the EMCDDA and the Pompidou Group in June 1996, and is the result of collaboration between over 20 specialised scientific authors, peer-reviewers and scientific editors. Copies available on request from the EMCDDA's Information Department.

The final report of a study carried out for the EMCDDA by Paul Turnbull and Russell Webster* entitled "*Demand Reduction Activities in the Criminal Justice System in the European Union*" is now available on request. The study includes a revision of existing literature on the topic as well as a description of the activities undertaken in the different stages of the criminal justice system: arrest, trial and sentencing by court, imprisonment and release from prison. Please contact the EMCDDA's Demand Reduction Department for copies.

*The Centre for Research on Drugs and Health Behaviour (UK).

EMCDDA explores Legal Database on Drugs

The EMCDDA is currently studying the feasibility of setting up a legal database on drugs in line with the second work priority outlined in its founding regulation which relates to monitoring national and Community strategies and policies in the field. The aim of the database will be to provide users with access to the drugs legislation of the European Union Member States via an on-line electronic service. The preliminary results of the feasibility study will be ready early in 1998.

Draft resolution: decriminalisation of cannabis

A draft resolution on the harmonisation of Member States' laws on drugs will be presented for adoption at the Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs of the European Parliament on 3 November 1997. The draft text, which, among others, points to the negative repercussions of diverse approaches to drugs in the EU and calls for increased funding for demand reduction and harm reduction activities, calls on the European Council to authorise Member States to officially decriminalise the consumption of cannabis and to set up a system regulating its sale to adults. Signed by 64 European parliamentarians, the draft proposal meets anti-prohibitionist criteria. It also meets with lively opposition from some European political groups.

Daniilo Ballotta

DrugNet Europe

DrugNet Europe has recently celebrated its first birthday and in its first 12 months has built up a broad readership. While the newsletter has been fulfilling its function as an information instrument, bringing you regular news and features on the work of the EMCDDA, we are now interested in enhancing its networking function by announcing your projects and publications. Those interested are requested to contact the editor, Kathy Robertson on Tel: ++ 351 1 811 30 00. Fax ++ 351 1 813 06 15. E-mail: Kathryn.Robertson@emcdda.org

Scientific Committee: Opinions

The 7th meeting of the EMCDDA's Scientific Committee took place on 4 and 5 September and concluded with written opinions on: the 1998-2000 three-year work programme; the *Joint Action on New Synthetic Drugs*; and, finally, the Committee's own composition.

Suggestions on the work programme included: the introduction of a special initiative for the year 2000 defined as a "Millennium Study" (which could consist of a set of surveys and study designs); the promotion of the scientific quality and competence of the work of the REITOX network; and an increase in the Centre's activity for developing and diffusing guidelines for information systems.

On the *Joint Action on New Synthetic Drugs*, the Director of the EMCDDA, Mr Georges Estievenart gave a presentation on the negotiations leading to the adoption of this initiative and on the role of the National Focal Points and Scientific Committee in implementing the early-warning and risk assessment phases of the mechanism. The written opinion of the Scientific Committee on this subject called, among others, for adequate risk assessment methodologies as well as scientific and technical expertise at EMCDDA and REITOX level.

The third written opinion, unanimously adopted by the Scientific Committee, concerned its own composition. The opinion stated that the need for a multidisciplinary Committee could be satisfied through a stable representation of the major biomedical and social disciplines. However, in cases where specific expertise was necessary, an additional six members, nominated by the Management Board on the basis of proposals of the Scientific Committee, could be recruited.

Finally, on the topic of quality assurance for the REITOX network, a document on the role of the National Focal Points (currently under discussion by the Management Board and REITOX) was discussed. This led to a proposal that the Committee draw up a draft protocol on the scientific accreditation of the National Focal Points. The Scientific Committee next meets on 25 November.

BOOKSHELF



World Drug Report

The United Nations International Drug Control Programme

"Throughout the past decade, seizures of most major drugs have risen. In terms of volume, the most heavily trafficked drug in the world is cannabis." This statement features among the many findings of the World Drug Report which offers a comprehensive analysis of the illicit drugs issue and its global ramifications.

Commissioned by UNDCP, the United Nations programme responsible for co-ordinating international action against illicit drugs, the report provides pragmatic and concise explanations of many aspects of the drugs issue, revealing the problem as international in impact and multidimensional in nature.

Beginning with an overview of current knowledge of the topic, the report goes on to shed light on lesser known issues such as: the reasons why people take drugs; the health and social consequences of drug abuse; and the economics of the global illicit drugs industry. The report also examines national and international responses to the drugs issue and deals with many of the contentious questions surrounding international drugs policy, including the debate on legalisation.

Published by: Oxford University Press.
Authors: Prepared for UNDCP by an editorial team under the supervision of the UNDCP Policy Development and Methodology Branch. Date: June 1997. Languages: English (translations into French and Spanish in due course). Price: £40.00 (Hardback) £14.99 (Paperback) ISBN: 0-19-829320-8 (Hardback) or 0-19-829299-6 (Paperback).

For further information, please contact: Cash with Order Department, Oxford University Press, Saxon Way West, Corby, Northamptonshire NN18 9ES. Tel. ++ 44 1536 74 15 19. Fax: ++ 44 1536 45 45 18.

The EMCDDA is responsible for the selection of materials for the Bookshelf and for the text presented. However, the content of these books, and the opinions expressed therein, lie with the authors themselves.

A Glimpse at a National Focal Point United Kingdom

The policy Focal Point for REITOX in the UK is the Department of Health, whose representatives sit on the Management Board of the EMCDDA. However, the *Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence* (ISDD) acts as the operational Focal Point as a natural extension of its mission to advance knowledge, understanding and policy-making about drugs, through information services, consultancy and research. ISDD has a multidisciplinary approach to drugs and endeavours to cover everything from public health and prevention through to trafficking, organised crime and foreign policy.

In the early 1990s, ISDD explicitly extended its work to the European Union and since that time, has viewed all its work in this perspective. The past few months have been especially rich in terms of EU-UK drug policy developments: the Council agreed the new *Early-Warning System on New Synthetic Drugs* in June and, more broadly, the Amsterdam Treaty was signed which has consequences for drugs policy in the future. It is in this context that the UK will take the next EU Presidency in January 1998 and has recently appointed its new "UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator"*, a post which has responsibility for drawing together governmental action at both national and international level.

At ISDD, Focal Point activity is integrated into the rest of the organisation's work and there is close interaction between activities with local UK information users, national partners and European activities. Wide external consultation and flexible internal team-working is stressed with close co-operation between project administrators, information officers, research workers and editors, backed by the ISDD management team.

A typical information request from the EMCDDA will involve ISDD in a series of tasks: checking with local and national producers of drug information ("What is the basis of this information?"); discussion with experts ("How can it be interpreted?"); work with editorial staff ("What is the best way to express this for the particular readership?"); and dialogue with EMCDDA staff ("How close are we to comparable information?").

ISDD has developed a "UK information network" in the most pragmatic of ways: as it has needed help in a particular area, it has drawn in new partners. This is because it is anxious not to build expectations that cannot be met regarding the provision of information from the EMCDDA to participants in the UK. It is clear that the information flow upwards, from local and national information sources to the EMCDDA is already quite extensive, but the information flow downwards is more modest at this stage of development. ISDD considers this imbalance perhaps the greatest challenge and believes that the success of the EMCDDA in this respect will influence ISDD's ability to work with UK information partners.

Finally, ISDD considers its work as a Focal Point for the EMCDDA as adding value to information and information systems at both European and national level. In particular, ISDD looks forward to developing its work with European partners during the forthcoming UK presidency.

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* Mr. Keith Hellawell, a senior police officer who chairs the drug sub-committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), UK.

EMCDDA Calendar

3-4 Nov. - Meeting of the EMCDDA

Management Board, Lisbon.

4 Nov. - Launch of the EMCDDA's Annual Report, Lisbon.

20-21 Nov. - EC Seminar on "Training and Drugs", Brussels.

25 Nov. - EMCDDA Scientific Committee, Lisbon.

27-28 Nov. - Participation in a European Conference on Synthetic Drugs, Brussels.

1-2 Dec. - Joint Seminar, COST A-6 and EMCDDA, Evaluation of Action Against Drug Abuse in Europe, Zurich.

3-4 Dec. - "Reconvened 40th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs" Vienna.

8-10 Dec. - Meeting of the Pompidou Group Epidemiology Experts, Strasbourg.

Selected EU Meetings

10/26 Nov./2 Dec. - Horizontal Drugs Group within the Council of the EU, Brussels.

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Focal Points get set for early-warnings

The 12th meeting of the Heads of the REITOX Focal Points was held at the EMCDDA's headquarters in Lisbon from 2 to 4 October, the third of its kind to be convened this year.

At the meeting, the Centre provided the participants with feedback on its second encounter with the Europol Drugs Unit on the topic of the *Early-Warning System on New Synthetic Drugs**. In this context, the importance of the participation of the Focal Points and their respective national networks in the establishment and functioning of such a system was underlined - both in terms of information collection and back-up to the EMCDDA's Scientific Committee in the risk assessment phase. The results of the questionnaire received by the EMCDDA from the national centres on this topic indicate that the REITOX network is prepared to install the necessary mechanism but appropriate funding appears necessary to carry out the task.

On the role of the National Focal Points (the topic of a paper drawn up in 1996), the centres were requested to take contact with their respective EMCDDA Management Board member so as to discuss the text bilaterally ahead of the Board's meeting on 8 and 9 January where the text would be up for formal adoption.

In addition to the above topics, the participants were given a progress report on the Centre's *Annual Report -1997*, and a preliminary discussion paper on the dissemination policy of the Centre's publications. Presentations of the EMCDDA's *Information System on Drug Demand Reduction Activities* and its planned legal database were also provided.

The meeting concluded with a session dedicated to a discussion on the draft architecture of the future IDA/REITOX network. The results of this session will be included in the final proposal which will be forwarded to the Focal Points for their comments by 20 November. The final approval of the project will be given by the IDA-Unit of the European Commission assisted by the Project Steering Group on 19 December 1997.

The next REITOX meeting is scheduled for 5 and 6 February 1998 in Lisbon.

Alain Wallon, Frédéric Denecker.

* See *DrugNet Europe* n°7.