



2018 Expert meeting on the indicator 'Prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population (GPS)'

15–16 May 2018, EMCDDA (Lisbon), Conference Centre

Book of abstracts

Tuesday 15 May 2018

9.00

Setting the scene

Chair: André Noor, EMCDDA

- Overview of the meeting, update on main developments and progress in the key indicator
João Matias, EMCDDA

Thematic session — Moving beyond illegal drugs

Chair: João Matias, EMCDDA

- Moving beyond illegal drugs. Development of a new indicator “addiction without substances” using surveys — Elena Alvarez, Spain

Spain is developing a new indicator in “addiction without substances” using surveys (among other sources of information). We collect some data in GPS and in student surveys related to internet use, gambling and gaming. We use a scale (CIUS- Compulsive Internet Use Scale) in order to determine the “internet addiction”.

The aim of this presentation will be to share with others our experience in this issue and to know if any other country is working on this line of investigation.

- Mental health and substance use
Pavla Chomynova, Czech Republic

In the general population aged 15–64, about 10.1% of the population show signs of worsened mental health conditions (based on the MHI-5 screening tool included in the National Survey on Substance Use 2016), among them 3.8% fell into a category of high probability of mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression (3.4% of males and 4.1% of females). The presence of mental health disorders is significantly higher among groups of regular tobacco smokers, as well as problem alcohol consumers categorized by CAGE screening instrument (about 2 times higher), high-risk cannabis users categorized by CAST scale (3 times higher) and problem gamblers categorized by Lie/bet and PGSI screening instruments (3-4.5 times higher) showing a close correlation between substance use, and problem gambling for money, and worsened mental health conditions.

- Misuse of medicines: revision of the EMQ module
Karoliina Karjalainen, Finland

During 2017 a project aiming to develop the methodology in monitoring misuse of medicine through general population surveys was conducted. It included e.g. a GPS mapping exercise, which showed that one third of the European countries had included questions concerning the misuse of medicines in their previous general population surveys. A module on misuse of medicines to be included in the European Model Questionnaire (EMQ) was developed during the project. The proposed module includes core questions covering last year prevalence (LYP), last month prevalence (LMP), frequency of use, motivation for use and supply; and voluntary questions covering lifetime prevalence (LTP), age of onset, supply, diversion, perceived availability, risk perceptions.

- Update on alcohol research
Janusz Sieroslowski, Poland

11.00 Coffee break



11.30

Monitoring drug use in recreational settings: challenges and opportunities

Chair: João Matias, EMCDDA

- From ecstasy to MDMA: recreational drug use, symbolic boundaries, and drug trends
Marit Edland-Gryt, Norway

Background: Ecstasy pills with MDMA as the main ingredient were introduced in many European countries in the 1980s. However, use gradually levelled off. Extensive use of MDMA now seems to be re-emerging in many countries. In this study, we investigated the cultural and social meaning associated with MDMA use in Oslo, Norway, with an emphasis on how users distinguish MDMA crystals and powder from “old ecstasy pills”.

Methods: Qualitative in-depth interviews (n=31, 61,3% males) were conducted with recreational MDMA/ecstasy users.

Results: Research participants emphasised three important perceived differences between the MDMA crystals and ecstasy pills: (i) The effects of MDMA were described as better than ecstasy; (ii) MDMA was regarded as a safer drug; (iii) Users of MDMA crystals were described as more distinct from and less anchored in out-of-fashion rave culture than those using ecstasy. These differences were an important part of the symbolic boundary work MDMA users engaged in when justifying their drug use.

Conclusion: One important reason for re-emergence of MDMA seems to be its perceived differentiation from ecstasy pills, even though the active ingredient in both drugs is MDMA. This perceived distinction between MDMA and ecstasy reveals the importance of social and symbolic meanings in relation to psychoactive substance use.

- Main findings of a survey on drug use among attendees of nightlife settings in Lithuania
Lina Jurgelaitiene, Lithuania

Nightlife settings survey was implemented in 2018 and it was performed the third time in Lithuania. 500 respondents in the four largest towns in Lithuania have participated in the survey. The results of the survey showed that 69 perc. of nightlife settings visitors were going out twice a month and more often. The consumption of drugs have increased by 20 perc. since the last survey in 2013. The LMP indicator varies from 49 perc. in Vilnius to 7 perc. in Šiauliai (the fourth biggest town in Lithuania). The results showed that cannabis was the most popular drug. The LMP indicator of cannabis consumption grew more than 3 times comparing to the survey performed in 2013. 71 perc. of respondents stated that they have never used two or more drugs at the same time. 57 perc. of respondents told that they were using drugs while attending friends and known people parties. 41 perc. of respondents told that they have received drugs from friends. Respondents were asked about the measures, which they would like to be implemented in nightlife settings. 60 perc. of them would like to have a possibility to perform rapid HIV testing.

- Drug use surveys in music festivals in Portugal
Elsa Lavado and Vasco Calado, Portugal

SICAD has been conducting social research in recreational settings in general, and music festivals in particular, since 2003. We will briefly present the main results of some of these studies, namely prevalence and frequency of illicit drug use, but also perceptions and social representations. We can conclude that, among young people, illicit drug consumption is higher in recreational settings and that partygoers use drugs (and cannabis in particular) mostly to increase the fun and the leisure experiences. Also, drug use varies fairly according to music preferences, and consequently is different from music festival to music festival

- Targeting drug users in nightlife settings: (meta)reflection on questionnaire and current terminologies
Lies Gremeaux, Belgium

Internationally, music festival attendees report particularly high levels of illicit drug use compared with the general population. The events bring with them a host of risky activities associated with festival culture, certainly when it comes to drug use. For a relatively small country, Belgium punches above its weight when it comes to festivals, often appealing to a broad, international audience that hence clearly presents an interesting target audience for exploring recreational drug use.

In the light of the setup of a web survey that mainly focuses on patterns of use as well as the related experienced (adverse) effects during a single specific event, the GPS expert meeting creates an excellent setting for an interactive session to reflect on the following issues:



- i. Recent web survey results lead to the believe that difficulties on the terminology of NPS might stand in the way of the (self-reporting) data collection, therefore putting questions to the use of the current EMQ module for monitoring NPS use in this survey setup.
- ii. Next to supporting the mapping of current EU survey activities and developments in nightlife settings, the recommendations and interaction on the presented questionnaire will pave the way for future cross-country collaboration on this topic.

13.00 Lunch break

14.00 Parallel sessions

Estimation of high-risk cannabis use through scales in GPS

Chair: Julián Vicente, EMCDDA

- National presentations

Implementing a general population survey on drug use: challenges and experiences

Chair: Sandrine Sleiman and Katerina Skarupova, EMCDDA

- National presentations

Monitoring drug use in recreational settings: reflections on questionnaire design and terminologies

Chair: Lies Gremeaux, Belgium

15.45 Coffee break

16.15 Cocaine use going up. What can surveys tell us?

Chair: Federica Mathis, EMCDDA

- Reasons to use cocaine. An empirical analysis of cocaine as part of binge drinking culture
Marit Edland-Gryt, Norway

Cocaine is, after cannabis, the most commonly used illegal drug globally. Internationally, there have been numerous pharmacological and epidemiological studies on cocaine, but few studies have focused on why people use cocaine in club settings, and what characterizes the culture surrounding its use. The aim of this article is to explore why young adults in a club setting use cocaine. Empirically, this article is based on qualitative interviews conducted with 35 young adult party-goers in Oslo, Norway. The analysis is structured into five segments to illustrate the different reasons young adults offered to explain their use of cocaine. These reasons centered around the perceptions of cocaine offering the user: (1) the distinct high (2) the feeling of unity with friends (3) the possibility to control and extend binge drinking (4) less hangover symptoms, and (5) the perception that it is easy to get and take. Several of these reasons show that cocaine use is perceived as an extension of binge drinking. To better understand the use of powder cocaine, greater research focus is needed on cocaine as an integrated part of binge drinking culture, as opposed to the use of cocaine by itself. Young adults' reasons to use cocaine may be an important factor in preventing cocaine use in club settings.

- "I have no clue why I'm doing this" — a qualitative study on crack cocaine use in Frankfurt
Lukas Sarvari, Germany

While crack cocaine nearly disappeared from the focus of social drug research after the 1990s, it has been the 'co-no. 1 drug' in the marginalized drug users' scene in the city of Frankfurt, for almost two decades. This setting is relatively unique in Germany and throughout Europe. In the last two years, there has been a growing discussion about this setting and particularly the use of crack cocaine in Frankfurt. The research presented aims to get more information about the site-specific conditions that may have favored the rise of



the drug. On the other hand, we wanted to gather knowledge about the subjective motives for using crack cocaine. Remarkably, the users' craving for crack cocaine appears to be linked to their mere presence in the core area of the scene. Further results concern varying quality perceptions, different patterns of crack cocaine use, and possible substitutes of crack cocaine.

- Facilitated groups: Introduction
Alessandra Bo and João Matias, EMCDDA
 - What's happening with cocaine use and with crack cocaine use? Stable, increasing trends?
 - Is cocaine use and/or crack cocaine use geographically limited or EU-wide? Local? Regional? Urban? Rural? Differences between cocaine and crack?
 - Which risk populations/groups are associated with cocaine use and with crack cocaine use in Europe? What are their socio-demographic characteristics?
 - How can surveys contribute to understanding current and emerging trends?
- Feedback in plenary from the facilitated groups

17.30 End of the first day

20.00 Dinner

Wednesday 16 May 2018

9.00

Drug survey methodology: recent studies and new approaches

Chair: Katerina Skarupova, EMCDDA

- Feedback from the parallel sessions
- Qualitative and quantitative pilot testing of the GPS questionnaire
Darja Lavtar, Slovenia

The Slovenian National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ) has recognised an important role of qualitative and quantitative testing in identifying problematic survey questions. Pre-field methods include cognitive interviews that focus on investigating mental processes involved in answering questions. This in-depth qualitative method was employed to thoroughly examine questions on smoking habits, use of drugs, misuse of medicines, alcohol drinking habits, use of cannabis for medical purposes, polysubstance use, etc. Cognitive interviews were implemented in two consecutive phases: 1) face-to-face cognitive interviews, 2) web cognitive interviews with more in-depth questions for most sensitive survey questions and web survey usability questions. In the next step, a pilot study was conducted using two separate samples: 1) face-to-face interviewing (CAPI) with a two stage sample of 600 inhabitants, 2) computer assisted web interviewing (CAWI) with a simple random sample (SRS) of 600 inhabitants splitted into two halves, allowing to test and compare the original and revised version of selected questions. The findings of 2017 qualitative and quantitative pre-testing improved the Slovenian GPS questionnaire (data collection started in March 2018).

- What I say is not what I mean: cognitive testing of the European Web Survey on Drugs questionnaire
Katerina Skarupova, EMCDDA

Back to basics: How different drug using patterns and different language among heterogeneous group of drug users shape their survey responses and why piloting of any questionnaire should not be neglected.

- Making sense of polydrug use: a Finnish perspective
Karoliina Karjalainen, Finland



A project called Making sense of polydrug use: Prevalence, use patterns and harms has been conducted in Finland during 2014–2018 (funded by the Academy of Finland). It aimed to produce knowledge of the polydrug use, involving licit and illicit drugs, alcohol and pharmaceuticals, and comprised three subprojects: 1) The prevalence of polydrug use in different populations, 2) the use practices and the cultural meanings of use, and 3) the harms and risks of polydrug use. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used. In the presentation, the project will be briefly described and some results based especially on the GPS data will be presented.

- NPS Euronet project: patterns of NPS use using wastewater-based epidemiology
Sara Castiglioni, Italy

The NPS Euronet project used an integrated analytical-epidemiological approach to identify the New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) mostly used in Europe. A selection was done among those frequently and recently seized by police, or identified in specimens from intoxicated subjects or in forensic specimens. The selected “priority list” included about 200 NPS and was updated during the project to include new NPS appearing in the market. Wastewater-based Epidemiology (WBE), a new approach based on the measurement of specific biomarkers in urban wastewater to assess the pattern of drug use, was employed for qualitative and quantitative screenings in several European countries. Generally, the levels of NPS were lower than those of the classical drugs. Different spatial and temporal profiles of NPS use were found among countries and were compared with those of classical drugs. WBE was a good complementary tool to evaluate the use of NPS in the general population.

11.00 Coffee break

11.30 Local realities Chair: João Matias, EMCDDA

- Study on unaccompanied minors immigrating to Sweden and substance use
Emma Wahlstedt, Sweden

During 2017 the Public health agency of Sweden got tasked by the Swedish government to investigate the prevalence of drug use among unaccompanied minors (under 22 years old) in Sweden. The study gathered information from the social services, registries, focus groups with professionals in the field and a cross sectional comparison of unaccompanied minors and other youth that were registered at specialized treatment facilities for drug use. The study found that it was not possible to make any conclusions regarding if drug use was more common among unaccompanied minors compared to other youth but identified a worry among the profession regarding this group. The study also found that there are signals indicating that mental health is worse among the group compared to other youth and that unaccompanied minors have more risk factors for mental health issues and social exclusion than other youth.

- Unaccompanied minor refugees and substance use in Vienna
Julian Strizek, Austria

GPS data only provides very limited information on substance use among ethnic minorities. UMR are a small group but vulnerable group with respect to substance use due to several personal and environmental risk factors. Qualitative interviews were conducted with UMR and professionals working in refugee aid and drug treatment/drug counselling to identify specific features of substance use among UMR (risk factors, consumption patterns and motives, attitudes towards substance use, possibilities for support). Results indicate that substance use among UMR shows several differences to substance use among peers born in Austria and accordingly requires specific interventions that to some extent go beyond the competence of the health sector.

- Study among Roma population: substance use and gambling
Pavla Chomynova, Czech Republic