



Key indicator 'Prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population'

2017 annual EMCDDA expert meeting

Summary

The 2017 annual expert meeting on the EMCDDA epidemiological indicator 'Prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population' (often referred to as the 'General population surveys indicator') took place on 6 and 7 June at the EMCDDA in Lisbon.

The meeting brought together experts from all EU Member States, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries, Japan, Switzerland, the United States as well as from the ESPAD schools project.

These regular meetings on the indicator change their focus from year to year. This year particular attention was given to methodological developments on the indicator, the link between drug use surveys and other drug-related monitoring tools. In addition, targeted surveys in drug use served as a platform for discussion on drug use issues more broadly.

Meeting objectives

- Provide an overview of progress and results for 2016.
- Exchange information between countries and international projects.
- Promote methodological discussion about ways to progress measuring and describing substance use as well as ways to analyse and interpret trends.
- Explore ways to bridge the gap between surveys, policy and responses.

Specific topics for the meeting

- Recent trend analyses based on the most recent national surveys, including a presentation of the first general population surveys carried out in Montenegro and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- Exploring and understanding national differences on drug use estimates and the implications for policy and response.
- Parallel sessions
 - Misuse of medicines — revision of the EMQ module
 - Cannabis use among ageing European citizens
 - European Web Survey on Drugs: patterns of use
- Cannabis: recent trends and policy developments
- Drug survey methodology: recent studies and new approaches
- Drug use in prison
- Monitoring emerging trends in drug use



Progress in 2016-17

The collection of methodological information has been improved by the mapping of core survey questions and the provision of more detailed information on response rates. This contributes to a better informed and nuanced assessment of the implementation of the key indicator than was possible in the past.

Relations with international school surveys have been strengthened, with the EMCDDA supporting the publication of the 2015 ESPAD Report and the hosting of the ESPAD schools survey meeting at the end of 2016.

In 2016-17 we are focusing on non-probabilistic surveys as a way to complement national drug surveys. A contract was launched to explore and map the existing studies on drug use in nightlife settings in the EU.

The new EMQ modules on use of 'new' psychoactive substances and perceived availability were made available on the EMCDDA's GPS webpage. Two sets of questions from the perceived availability module have been approved by the Reitox Focal Points to be added to Standard Table 1. A rapid information request will be possibly used to assess the feasibility of collecting data on NPS use through Standard Table 1 in the future.

The EMQ module for the misuse (non-medical) of medicines is under revision and should be ready in the second half of 2017 for testing with interested countries.

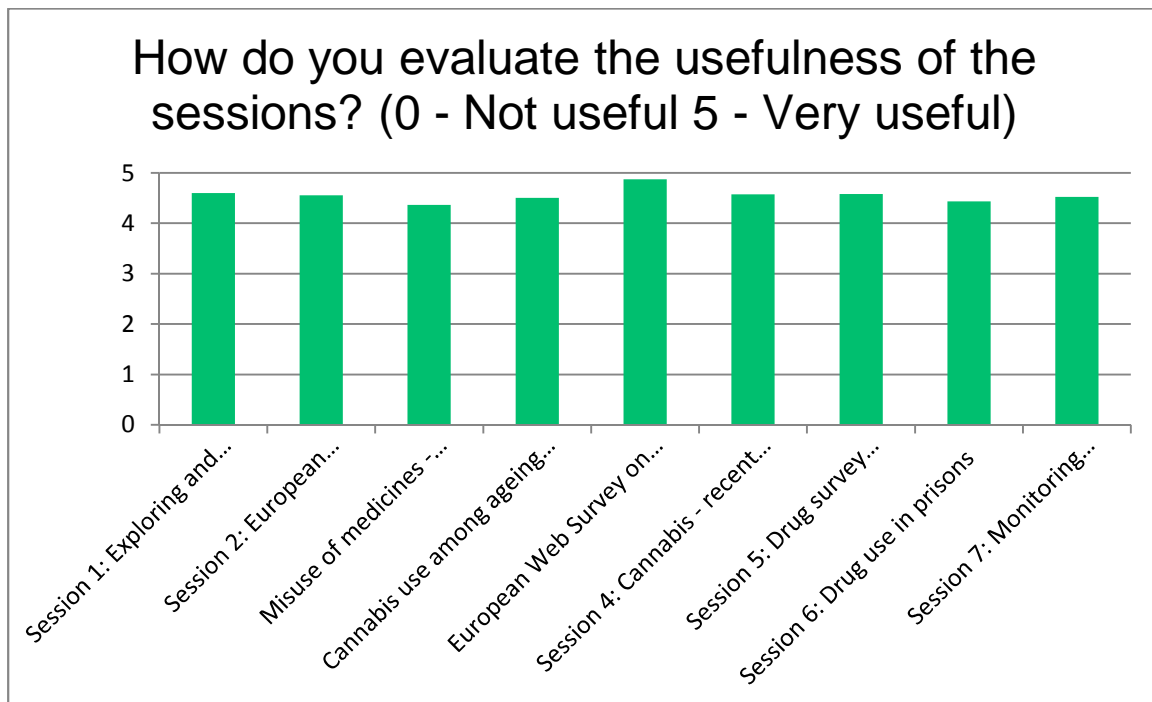
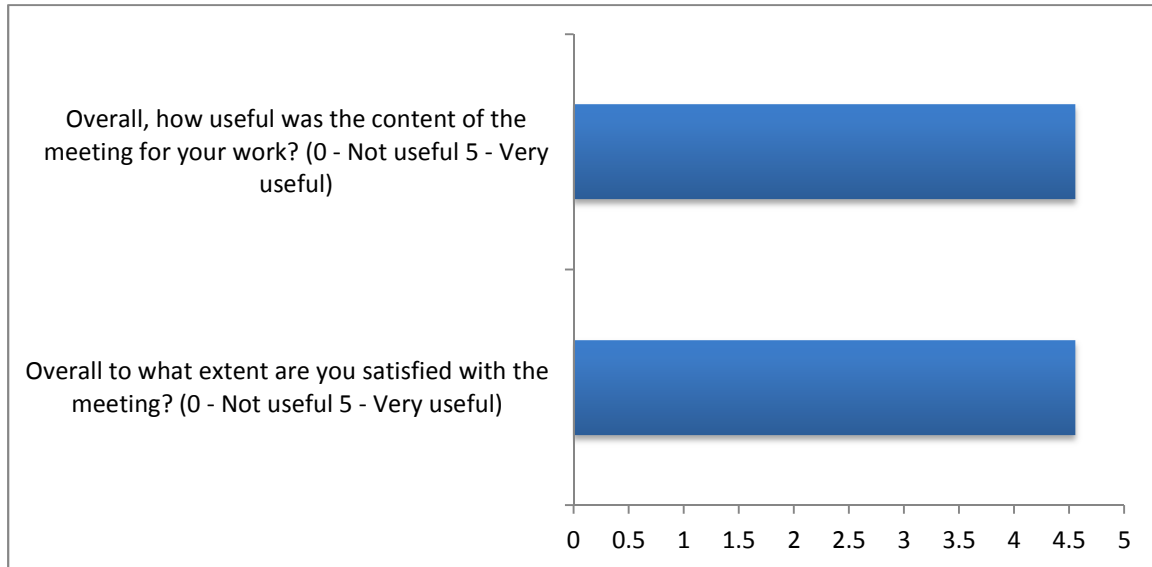
Increased profile in international initiatives: GPS as a European core health indicator and cooperation with European projects (RARHA) to improve measurement of alcohol use.

Increased capacity building together with the Reitox unit: the first GPS in Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were finalised and technical assistance given. A first exploratory meeting took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to assess the feasibility of carrying a nationwide GPS.

The key-indicator assessment was finalised in 2015. Overall, there is a better understanding and reporting of survey methodologies and greater comparability with the EMQ. All countries but one have conducted at least one national representative population survey, although some countries are not able to maintain a series of surveys with the same regularity, due often to budget constraints. Progress relies on the continuity of repeated general population and school surveys, because this indicator, like others, produces the most accurate assessment of the situation (and therefore allows for better policy formulation and evaluation) when it is repeated over time. In 2016 a lighter assessment exercise was performed.

Meeting assessment

An online survey was set up to evaluate the GPS experts' opinion on the 2017 expert meeting. The questionnaire was filled in by 31 of the meeting's participants, and the overall opinion was very positive towards the content of the meeting, its usefulness and the possibilities for networking.



Participants acknowledged the fact that it was very useful to have the abstracts for each presentation in advance and that non-European experts contributed significantly for having a wider view on drug use.

Having parallel sessions was very welcome and this should be repeated in the coming meetings.

It was suggested to allow more time for discussion between presentations and, possibly, to have more parallel sessions instead of only plenary sessions.

A discussant could be nominated beforehand and that this person could prepare himself/herself for one first comment or question. This would increase social interaction or



alternatively 1-2 straightforward questions upon which participants could reflect and prepare beforehand, so that contributions during the discussion time increase.

Next steps in 2017-18

- Rationalise and improve web-based information on the drug situation from population surveys.
 - Continue work, in co-operation with the PDU indicator, to assess intensive forms of cannabis use in population samples (psychometric scales) and finalise a technical paper on the guidelines for monitoring high-risk cannabis use in GPS.
 - Voluntary field trial (through a rapid information request) to be launched in order to collect available data on the prevalence of new psychoactive substance use.
 - Promote and regularly update the area regarding the GPS indicator in the Reitox Forum as a web platform for the GPS expert network.
 - Update the meeting page, and ask for agreement for uploading of presentations (done).
 - EMQ final alcohol module to be sent.
 - Update the questionnaire mapping -> repository
 - Network management, promote the web forum
 - Lx Addictions – GPS poster for the expert group
 - Medium-term revise the GPS Handbook
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- Follow-up on the parallel sessions

We invite you to check our [GPS indicator page](#) and our [Statistical Bulletin website](#) where we present the detailed methodological information about national surveys and on which you can find the most recent data.

Meeting page: [\[link\]](#)