



## 2017 Expert meeting on the indicator 'Prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population (GPS)'

6-7 June 2017 - EMCDDA (Lisbon) - Conference Centre

### BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Tuesday 6 June 2017

**9.00 - 10.45**    **Setting the scene**  
Chair: Julián Vicente and João Matias, EMCDDA

- **Opening and welcome (Julián Vicente, EMCDDA)**
- **Overview of the meeting, update on main developments and progress in the key indicator (João Matias, EMCDDA)**

#### **Thematic session - Exploring and understanding national differences and the implications for policy and response**

Chair: Nicola Singleton (EMCDDA)

- **Integrating GPS data with other drug indicators to evaluate the effects of drug policy (Gregory Midgette, USA)**  
Abstract  
There is no single ideal source of data on drug consumption. Analysts must rely on a combination of imperfect available sources. In this presentation, I will review various sampling frames, survey questions, and methods for validating self-reported data. Using the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy report What America's Users Spend on Illegal Drugs as a case study, methods for integrating imperfect survey data with other supply and demand indicators will be explored.
- **Drug use data as a basis for drug policy and action planning (Stelios Stylianou, Cyprus)**  
Abstract  
In Cyprus, since the establishment of the Monitoring Department of the Cyprus Antidrug Council (Focal Point) three ESPAD surveys, three drug related infectious diseases surveys, two surveys among military conscripts and four general population surveys were carried out and provided reliable and objective information with the aim of drafting the National Strategy for Illegal substances and the harmful use of alcohol and the accompanying Action Plans. The above surveys serve as a tool not only to assess the extent of the drug and alcohol problem, but also to understand the social context of use. General population survey has provided rich information in different subgroups, which lead to the implementation of surveys among targeted groups, helping to design specific prevention and early intervention programmes among these groups. In addition, findings from school population survey helped to draft and implement many actions related to legislative measures aiming at the reduction of binge drinking among the youth.
- **Cannabis trends and recent policy developments in Albania (Genc Burazeri, Albania)**  
Abstract  
Different surveys indicate an increase in the prevalence of cannabis use in Albania. However, the only consecutive comparable survey using standardized questionnaire and measures on European level is the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD). Two consecutive waves of ESPAD surveys, carried out in 2011 and 2015 in Albania, suggest a strong increase in the lifetime, last year and last month prevalence of cannabis use by 61% (from 4.4% to 7.1%), 49% (from 3.7% to 5.5%) and 83% (from 2.1% to 3.7%), respectively, even though national averages remain much lower compared to European averages. Such an increase in the prevalence of cannabis use is in line with the increased production and availability of cannabis in Albania. To address this situation, policy changes are proposed. The National Action Plan against Cultivation and Trafficking of Cannabis 2017-2020 entered into force on 29 March 2017, aiming to thoroughly tackle the situation through joint inter-institutional efforts.



- **A dramatic increase in cannabis use among young and adult populations in Israel: The “normalization” effects of the intense public debates regarding cannabis legalization and medicalization (Yossi Harel-Fisch, Israel)**

Abstract

One of the recent major developments in the international drug scene is the growing public debate and significant changes in policy and national regulatory systems, related to the use of cannabis. In many countries, new regulatory approaches and policies have been implemented to enable the prescription of Marijuana to treat medical conditions. In most European and North American countries, public debate regarding legalization or decriminalization of cannabis for recreational (non-medical) use, has been growing consistently. In Israel, for the past 5 years, the issue of cannabis use has been in the central focus of intensive public debate. A small vocal lobby of opinion leaders, including parliament (Knesset) members, journalists and celebrities, have been aggressively pushing for legalization. In addition, Israel has become one of the leading country worldwide, in developing and implementing regulations to provide marijuana for medical use. The number of patients receiving legally prescribed marijuana, increased from about 6,000 four years ago, to over 30,000 patients. Both these developments resulted in a significant decline of the perception of risk of cannabis among youth and adult populations resulting in over a quarter of the population perceiving the use of cannabis as having no, or very little, risk. Recent finding of two major population surveys have shown a dramatic increase in the prevalence of cannabis in both adolescents and adults. The 2014 HBSC survey, for the first time in 20 years, shows the rates of cannabis use among 15-17-year-old youth increased from about 6% in 2011 to over 10% in 2014. The national epidemiological survey of late 2016, shows a dramatic increase in prevalence of cannabis use during the past 12-months in adults (18-65 years old) from about 10% to over 27%. Young adults ages 18-26 reported over 35% prevalence of cannabis use for the same period. These new findings change the cannabis-use-status of Israel from a low-rate, to a very high-rate country. No similar increase was found for any other substance. The dramatic increase in the reported cannabis use may include a substantial percent of users who are experimenting, illegally, with cannabis for medical use without legal medical prescriptions. However, the vast majority of the increase cannot be explained by medical use. Rather, it is most likely due to the effects of the perceived normalization of cannabis use that today is perceived by the public as a more “normative” or socially accepted behaviour, that is not correlated with other risk taking behaviours. In addition, the government of Israel has recently announced a new decriminalization policy to take effects from June 2017. The paper discusses the consequences and challenges that these changes post for policy and prevention strategies, and the critical role that general population surveys are, and will be taking, in monitoring and evaluating the effects of the new policy on the changing trends of cannabis attitudes and use in the Israeli society.

**11.15 - 13.00 European overview and international presentations on recent surveys**  
Chair: Daniela Piontek, Germany

- **Is cocaine consumption in the U.S. going up or down? A review of the evidence (Gregory Midgette, USA)**

Abstract

Between 2006 and 2010, U.S. cocaine consumption was cut in half, though the factors influencing this historic drop are unclear and potentially numerous. The trend in U.S. cocaine consumption and its resultant harms since the collapse is unclear. In recent years, deaths involving cocaine and cocaine initiation have both increased dramatically in the U.S., as has coca cultivation in Colombia. At the same time, other indicators—treatment admissions for cocaine, cocaine prevalence in drug testing, and overdoses strictly due to cocaine—have remained flat or decreased. Reviewing the available data, I will discuss the state of knowledge about cocaine consumption in the U.S., including the strengths, weaknesses, and complementarities of diverse indicators, and remaining information gaps including reporting lags and the role of opioids.

- **CADAP project: Patterns of psychoactive substances use among adolescents in Kyrgyzstan (Dinara Madybaeva, Kyrgyzstan)**

Abstract

Based on the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs – ESPAD. Objective: to study licit and illicit psychoactive substances use prevalence and patterns among 16 years old students of high and of vocational schools in the Kyrgyz Republic Design of study: cross section study, survey of 5000 pupils 16 years old (born in 2001) from high school including private, gymnasiums, vocational schools and colleges in the sampling sites of Kyrgyzstan. Tools: standard ESPAD questionnaire (translated into the Kyrgyz and Russian languages). Subject of study: 9th and 10th grades of high school students include private from the sampling cities; the 1st course of vocational schools and colleges students. Sample size: the sampling methodology is stratified cluster sampling. Data collection (done): 4651 respondents from 116 schools in seven districts of KR. Analysis (on - going): the SPSS software (version 22.0) is used.



- **Epidemic and decline of new psychoactive substances in Japan: data from nationwide survey on drug use (Takuya Shimane, Japan)**

Abstract

An epidemic of new psychoactive substances (NPSs), marketed as “legal herbs,” has been leading to continual occurrence of crimes and serious fatal traffic accidents by users. This poses a significant social problem in Japan. According to the Nationwide General Population Survey on Drug Use, those who had used an NPS at least once in their lives numbered approximately 400,000 as of 2013, and had decreased to 310,000 as of 2015. One cause for the NPS epidemic is considered to be high availability. NPSs have been cheaper than other drugs such as methamphetamine, and could easily be purchased at head shops and online. The other reason is considered to be that NPSs were sold with emphasis on their legality. Japan has traditionally maintained a zero-tolerance policy toward illicit drugs, and possession and/or use of drugs such as methamphetamine has been strictly prohibited by law. In 2014, a designated substances system for controlling NPSs was reinforced, including mandates for scientific testing and suspension of sales and/or advertising, and to eliminate stores and websites selling NPSs. These measures led to reduced opportunities for obtaining NPSs. The decrease in NPS users indicates the decline of the NPS epidemic.

- **The first General Population survey in Montenegro - methodological aspects and challenges (Tatijana Djuricic, Montenegro)**

Abstract

Montenegro is running the first General Population study. This presentation will cover methodological aspects and challenges, fieldwork, control of the fieldwork, challenges and lessons learned.

- **European Drug Report 2017 (João Matias, EMCDDA)**

Abstract

This presentation will cover the main highlights of the most recent EMCDDA's European Drug Report (results still under embargo).

#### 14.00 - 15.45 Parallel sessions

#### Misuse of medicines – revision of the EMQ module

Chair: Karoliina Karjalainen (Finland)

- **Overview on the on-going work (Karoliina Karjalainen, Finland)**

- **Hypnotic consumption in Spain: A deeper approach (Begoña Brime, Spain)**

Abstract

During the 2015 GPS survey a hypnotic module was included. Information about different hypnotic drugs consumed, with or without a doctor's prescription, posology, symptoms and external causes for their consumption, concomitant hypnotic and alcohol consumption and problematic hypnotic consumption using the DSM-V criteria, was included. Results show stabilization in hypnotic consumption with or without a doctor's prescription and increasing trends in hypnotic used without a doctor's prescription. Data on problematic hypnotic consumption is discussed.

- **Does ESPAD data point to a distinctive group of adolescent medicinal drug misusers? (Anastasios Fotiou, Greece)**

Abstract

Drawing on 2015 ESPAD data (n=91,100) we explored whether 16-year-olds misusing medicinal drugs form a distinctive group based on demographic, familial and other risky behavioural characteristics. Latent class analysis identified 4 classes of adolescents: 'non-users'(75%), 'polysubstance users,' with higher probability of using each substance (3%), 'typical users,' with higher probability of using alcohol, tobacco and cannabis (14%), and 'medicinal drug users,' with higher probability for medical and non-medical use of tranquillisers/sedatives and a probability for using painkillers, cannabis, and inhalants (8%). Multilevel multinomial logistic regression suggested that females had higher probability of belonging to the classes of 'medicinal drug misusers' and 'non-users.' Restructured family, low parental control and support, truancy, problem gaming and gambling were also associated to membership to the medicinal drug user subgroup. Overall, risk profiles were similar across groups, but the effect of gambling and most familial covariates was weaker for medicinal drugs misusers compared to 'typical' -and 'polysubstance users'. Country-level drug prevalence showed no association with membership the medicinal drug misuser group.



- **Prevalence of medicines use in Lithuania (Lina Jurgelaitienė, Lithuania)**
- Focused analysis with several countries

### **Cannabis use among ageing European citizens**

Chair: Alessandro Pirona (EMCDDA)

The aim of this workshop is to investigate cannabis use among older age groups (44-54; 55-64) and how prevalence levels changed over time within these groups.

As reported in the 2010 EMCDDA Selected Issue 'Treatment and care for older drug users', we are observing in some Member States an increase in lifetime and last month cannabis prevalence levels among older age groups compared to 10~20 years ago.

### **European Web Survey on Drugs: patterns of use**

Chair: João Matias (EMCDDA)

The aim of this workshop is to reflect on the experiences of the first round of data collection for this pilot project, and start planning the second round with interested countries.

## **16.00 - 17.45 Cannabis: recent trends and policy developments**

Chair: Peggy van der Pol, Netherlands

- **Cannabis in the UK: how the dominance of skunk may have impacted on prevalence and harm (Craig Wright, UK)**  
Abstract  
Although it has been relatively stable in recent years, cannabis prevalence is markedly lower in the UK than it was 10 years ago. Treatment presentations for cannabis show a similar inverse pattern. These divergent trends have often been seen as being at odds with each other but perhaps they are actually two sides of the same coin. Other sources indicate more people experiencing harms with cannabis than before. There is research to suggest high strength skunk is associated with increased negative effects and we know that high strength herbal cannabis has come to increasingly dominate the market. It is possible that negative effects associated with the predominant form of cannabis has lowered its appeal among the general population (lowering prevalence) while also motivating those with dependency issues to seek help from treatment services to stop using.
- **Cultivation, supply and trafficking of cannabis in Europe: recent trends (Tim Surmont, EMCDDA)**  
Abstract  
Reflecting its dominant position in the drugs market and relatively high prevalence of use, cannabis is the most commonly seized drug, accounting for more than three quarters of seizures in Europe. Europe has shifted from an import hub of all forms of cannabis to a domestic production area: most EU Member States report production of cannabis. Nonetheless, this does not mean importation has faded out: cannabis is still being trafficked from Africa and Asia to Europe. Also, within Europe, the dominance of the Western Balkans in producing and exporting (outdoor) cannabis products is becoming more and more significant.
- **Policies to control cannabis use and supply - legal and illegal (Brendan Hughes, EMCDDA)**  
Abstract  
Throughout Europe there is media and public discourse on the issue of changing cannabis laws. Cannabis supply for medical purposes has been (in)famous in the USA since the end of the 1990s, but more restricted permissions are recently emerging in some European countries. National administrations generally oppose the decriminalisation or legalisation of cannabis for recreational use, concerned they may lead to increases in cannabis use and related harms, though there is a European trend to reduce penalties for drug use-related offences. Nonetheless, cannabis laws and the medical and scientific research that informs policy-making can be regarded as entering a period of change, the direction of which is still unclear. The debate has been fuelled by the legalisation of supply and use of cannabis for recreational purposes in some US states and Uruguay since 2012, with a new (and different) proposal recently put forward by the government of Canada.



Wednesday 7 June 2017

9.00 - 11.00

**Drug survey methodology: recent studies and new approaches**

Chair: Federica Mathis, EMCDDA

- **National Survey on Substance Use 2016 – Parallel F2F and CAWI Data Collection and Differences in the Results (Pavla Chomynová, Czech Republic)**

Abstract

A large-scale nationally representative GPS was carried out in 2016, which follows the National Survey on Substance Use 2012. The survey used two methods in parallel – a. multistage stratified sampling where respondents were contacted in households (altogether 6235 households selected) and face-to-face interviews were used (net sample size 3601 respondents aged 15+); b. quota sampling of respondents from an Internet panel (altogether 6974 respondents were contacted, net sample size 1000 respondents aged 15+) and respondents self-completed questionnaires on web (CAWI).

Preliminary results show significant differences in all topics surveyed (tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption, illicit substance use and gambling activities). In some cases, results may be explained by differences in formulation of questions, however, most differences come from different character (though weighted by gender, age, region and education) of the sample of the Internet panellists and their willingness to participate in survey (response rate). Thus, in the Czech Republic, the two methods used yield completely different results meaning that CAWI survey in the Internet population cannot substitute F2F interview surveys in randomly selected general population.

- **Experiences and challenges in conducting the first GPS in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Silvana Onceva, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)**

Abstract

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is running the first General Population study. This presentation will cover methodological aspects and challenges, fieldwork, control of the fieldwork, challenges and lessons learned.

11.30 - 13.00

**Drug use in Prisons**

Chair: Linda Montanari, EMCDDA

- **The European Questionnaire on Drug Use among Prisoners (EQDP): results of the pilot data collection exercise and overview of EMCDDA activities on drugs and prison (Linda Montanari, EMCDDA)**

Abstract

A large part of the prison population use drugs and suffer from problems related to their drug use. Nevertheless information on drug users in prison is scarce and little comparable across countries. The EMCDDA has defined a general framework for monitoring the issue of drugs and prison in Europe” including the definition of a common “European Questionnaire on Drug Use among Prisoners (EQDP)”. The questionnaire took into account the formulation of questions included in other existing European tools (GPS, TDI, DRID). Results from a pilot exercise in 2015-16 in five volunteer countries show high levels of lifetime and last year prevalence among the prisoners when compared to the general population and reduction of drug use in prison when compared to periods before imprisonment. The EQDP+ methodological guidelines are available online

(<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/technical-reports/european-questionnaire-drug-use-among-prisoners-egdp>).



- **Monitoring drug use in custodial institutions for juvenile offenders: a Portuguese experience with the implementation of the European Questionnaire on Drug use Among Prisoners (Ludmila Carapinha, Portugal)**

Abstract

Aims: To determine the prevalence and intensity of drug use among juvenile offenders in custodial settings.

Methods

Design and Setting: National cross-sectional study in the 6 custodial facilities for juvenile offenders in Portugal.

Participants: Of 152 young offenders detained in June/2015, 142 agreed to participate in the study.

Measurements: Self-reported frequency of drug use and injecting drug use before and during current custody, experience of drug overdose before and during current custody.

Results: Above 80% of participants used alcohol and/or illicit drugs in the 12 months before custody. During custody, in the same period, 1 in 3 used illicit drugs, mainly cannabis, and 1 in 4 drank alcohol.

Alcohol drinking was done almost only outside facilities. Inside facilities there was no experience of injecting or overdose.

Conclusions: Among Portuguese offenders in custodial settings, drug use appears to be common before custody and 1 in 4 maintain it once inside.

- **The use of illicit drugs, tobacco and alcohol among convicted people in Slovenia (Ines Kvaternik, Slovenia)**

Abstract

Accurate up-to-date data on the extent of illicit drug, tobacco and alcohol use among the prisoner population are a necessary pre-requisite for health and social service planning and policy development. The most recent national study assessing the prevalence of drug use and risk behavior in prison in Slovenia was carried out over a decade ago. In 2015 the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) conducted cross-sectional study, »Research on illicit drugs, tobacco and alcohol use among convicted people in Slovenia«. The main objectives were: to describe the nature, extent and pattern of consumption for different illicit drugs, tobacco and alcohol among the prisoner population; to identify risk behaviors associated by the injecting of illicit drugs Slovenian prisons.

All convicted people were asked to participate in the survey. A detailed, validated and piloted self-completion questionnaire was administered to prisoners under the supervision of the research team. Overall 688 convicted people participated, with a final response rate of 56 %.

The results reveal last month's prevalence of illicit drugs use pre-prison and in-prison. For example last month cannabis use among all convicted people pre-prison was 17,4 % in-prison was 13,6 %. Likewise, heroin pre-prison was 9,5 % , in-prison was 4,4 %. There was a higher prevalence of pre-prison (11,7 %) than in-prison (2,7 %) ever injecting drugs among convicted people. Data shows that almost two thirds of convicted people smoke. 12 % convicted people reported being under the influence of alcohol at the time of their crime.

- **Assessing drug use in a Greek prison in the context of a program targeting infectious diseases (Vana Sypsa, Greece)**

Abstract

According to the Ministry of Justice, people charged or convicted for drug related offences represented 21% of people in Greek prisons both awaiting trial and serving sentences in January 2017. Concerning drug use in prisons in Greece, there are no available data with the exception of two earlier studies in 1994/1995 and 2000 which had reported high risk injection behaviours. A program targeting infectious diseases in the largest Greek prison (Korydallos) will be carried out during the second half of 2017. Within this context, the European Questionnaire on Drug Use among Prisoners (EQDP) will be used as a basis to collect data from participants concerning drug use inside and outside prison as well as health problems related to drug use. Participants will be tested for hepatitis C and B, HIV, tuberculosis and those diagnosed will be linked to care.



14.00 - 15.30

### Monitoring emerging trends in drug use

Chair: João Matias (EMCDDA)

- **National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS): A New Approach for Monitoring Emerging Drugs and Drug Trends in the United States (Erin Artigiani, USA)**

Abstract

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) awarded funding to CESAR in 2014 to create the Coordinating Center for the National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS). NDEWS is the first national public health surveillance system in the United States with the ability to rapidly identify emerging drugs and facilitate more rapid and informed interdisciplinary responses to outbreaks and changes in substance use and misuse. NDEWS has developed a set of techniques for detecting, monitoring, and following up on trends and sharing information about these trends. These include the NDEWS Network of more than 1,600 members from around the world, targeted HotSpot studies, analyses of national and local drug indicators, and social media and news scans. This enables NDEWS to foster evidence-based epidemiologic research to rapidly uncover valuable new information and to serve as a unique conduit between the epidemiologic research community and the users of scientific information.

- **Combination of web survey data and wastewater-based epidemiology (WWBE) to help assessing prevalence of drug use: the example of cocaine consumption in Switzerland (Robin Udrisard, Switzerland)**

Abstract

Assessing the prevalence of illicit drug use in general population is of interest to public health issues. However, it's not an easy task since drug users are sometime hard to reach through traditional surveys and because of potential unreported or under-reported cases.

Since drugs metabolites content in sewage are not affected by these biases, their analysis can help assessing the number of drug users. Indeed, wastewater-based epidemiology offers the possibility of estimating the consumption volumes of an illicit drug by the population connected to the wastewater treatment plant. By combining this estimation with data on the frequencies of consumption and quantities of drugs that are used, we can try to go back up to the number of users, thus having another prevalence indicator.

A first attempt in this direction was done in Switzerland with data issued from the pilot project European Web Survey on Drugs conducted by the EMCDDA in which Switzerland took part in 2016. Comparing the estimations to the ones realized through general population surveys (GPS) in Switzerland offers a possibility to discuss these different ways of estimating prevalence of drug consumption during the period of analysis.

- **Trendspotting in Europe: taking a multidimensional view of emerging drug trends and threats (Jane Mounteney, EMCDDA)**

Abstract

Since 2011, the EMCDDA has been undertaking regular in-depth studies to explore new trends and emerging phenomena in the European drug situation. This session introduces the EMCDDA trendspotter methodology which has been used to investigate topics such as: heroin shortages, fentanyl and methamphetamine outbreaks, on-line drug markets, the re-emergence of MDMA and the use of new drugs among high risk users. The approach has been identified as a useful addition to the epidemiological toolkit, and a response to the need to report rapidly to emerging phenomena in areas where conventional drug monitoring tools are less viable. This rapid information assessment approach can be situated within a mixed method research paradigm, and relies on the use of multiple data sources, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and a strategy of triangulation for complementarity and confirmation to enhance the validity of results. This presentation will utilise a summary of findings from a 2016 study on the European MDMA market to illustrate the use of the trendspotter method in practice. Results focus on similarities and differences between the European ecstasy/MDMA market in its earlier iteration in the 1990s, and the drug market we now see in 2016. With regard to the rapid information approach used, the study demonstrates how this method can provide a method for rapid identification of new trends and emerging topics; help to identify knowledge gaps and inform future formal research; and provide information of utility for policy making purposes.

**Conclusions, AOB**

<http://emcdda.europa.eu/meetings/2017/gps>