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European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

DrugNet Europe

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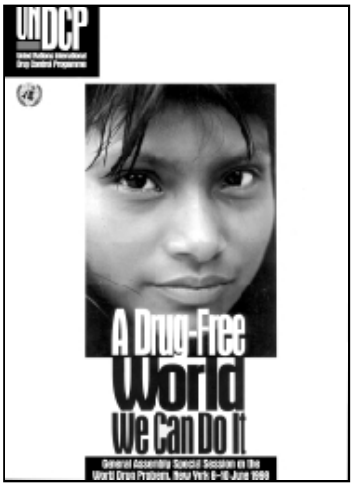
UN Drug Summit:

Countries commit to reducing illicit supply and demand for drugs by 2008

World leaders from some 150 States left the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) on 10 June having approved a series of proposals for combating the global drug problem over the next decade. The UNGASS, which marked the 10th anniversary of the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, aimed to assess the existing global drug situation, review the current drug-control regime and forge a forward-looking strategy for the 21st century.



The 'Drug Summit' set benchmarks for the international community with three resolutions: a political declaration; a Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction; and a five-part resolution with collective measures to enhance international co-operation in countering the world drug problem. These measures included action plans to: combat Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS); control precursors; promote judicial co-operation; counter money-laundering; and promote international co-operation in eradicating illicit drug crops and introducing alternative development.

In adopting the political declaration, Member States committed themselves to achieving significant and measurable results in reducing the illicit supply and demand for drugs by 2008. The declaration calls on States to strengthen their domestic laws and programmes by 2003 to deal with such issues as money-laundering and synthetic drugs, increased drug prevention among young people and enhanced co-operation between nations to catch and prosecute drug traffickers. Nevertheless, varying policies described at the Session underlined the still widely differing approaches world-wide to tackling the drugs problem.

The Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction aims to assist governments in setting up or enhancing demand-reduction programmes by 2003. This Declaration contains standards to help governments design effective prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes and calls for the provision of adequate resources. The groundbreaking document proposes a balanced approach which, for the first time, acknowledges the responsibility of both consumer and producer nations.

Speaking from the UNGASS in New York, EMCDDA Director Georges Estievenart welcomed the Guiding Principles, particularly the section stating that drug demand-reduction programmes should be based on a regular assessment of the nature and magnitude of drug use and abuse and drug-related problems in the population. Estievenart said: 'We all welcome the concrete steps taken in New York to design and implement, at national and international level, a more balanced approach to the global drugs problem. To reach this goal, the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction and its consistent implementation will be particularly helpful. The Guiding Principles give us a real chance to translate political intentions into concrete action and hard facts'.

Finally, regarding the review of the existing drug-control regime, the General Assembly considered a report of an expert group set up to re-examine the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and to strengthen the UN machinery for international drug control. The report stressed, among others, that the effectiveness of the UNDCP could be enhanced via institutional changes and improvements in its funding arrangements in order fully to address its mandate and responsibilities.

Organised by the UNDCP, the UNGASS was the largest multilateral gathering ever held on combating illegal drug trafficking and abuse.

Special Session press kits are accessible at: http://www.undcp.org/index/html/.
For further information see: http://www.undcp.org/undcp/gass/content/htm/ or http://undcp.org/undcp/gass/pressrel.htm/.

UNDCP
United Nations International Drug Control Programme

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EDDRA Evaluation Seminar

A seminar to evaluate the feasibility phase of EDDRA, the EMCDDA's electronic information system on drug demand-reduction activities, took place at the Centre's headquarters in Lisbon from 14–15 May.* The event was attended by experts, selected by the National Focal Points to key in and update programme data, who shared their experience of the technical, content-related and strategic aspects of implementing an information system of this kind.

All the participants were very positive about the utility and future potential of the system which offers drug professionals a means of networking and exchanging know-how. The system also provides European policy-makers, professionals and citizens with a fresh overview of a wide range of high-quality demand-reduction activities under way in each Member State, thereby improving the visibility of this area throughout Europe.

Professionals working in the field are the group that will benefit most from EDDRA, finding inspiration for new projects, drawing on the experience of others, and raising the profile of their own programmes. The participants at the seminar concluded that the system was a useful information source for reference services, institutions and professionals and formed a sound basis for decision-making and planning, providing as it does estimates of the funding, human resources and evaluation needed to deliver demand-reduction services. Last but not least, EDDRA was seen as a practical instrument for improving the horizontal information exchange between professionals and researchers in demand reduction on the one hand, and the vertical information flow between policy-makers, the EMCDDA, programme-managers and the general public in the European Union on the other.

Gregor Burkhart

*** Exchange on Drug Demand-Reduction Action (EDDRA). The EDDRA database now contains demand-reduction programmes from all EU Member States and may be accessed on the Internet at http://www.sema.be/eddra/. This address will change when EDDRA moves to the EMCDDA's own web server at http://www.emcdda.org in summer 1998. To facilitate access and navigation, EDDRA includes two search tools.**

Guidelines available by e-mail

The EMCDDA's *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Drug Prevention* are now available in all 11 European Union languages by e-mail from: Gregor.Burkhart@emcdda.org/.* These translations have been adapted by participants in the feasibility phase of the project to the language and terminology used in each EU Member State. Consequently, an accessible language style and suitable scientific content have been maintained in all versions.

Thanks to the *Guidelines*, drug-prevention professionals throughout Europe may now increase the quality of their prevention activities through sound evaluation. During the forthcoming implementation phase, the *Guidelines* will be distributed in Europe by mail and e-mail and advice will be provided in case of queries.** Feedback from programmes using the *Guidelines* will be collected via the returnable feedback form and processed by the EMCDDA and its partners.

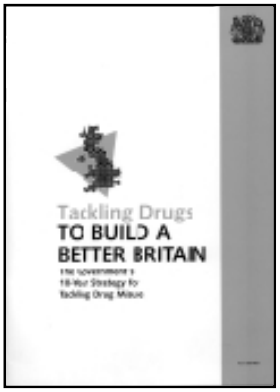
Gregor Burkhart

*** Available as '.doc files'.**
**** Contact: shaw@ift.isar.de or teresa.s.ll-ceps@jet.es**

UK presents ten-year strategy against drugs

The UK Presidency of the Council of the European Union staged a conference in Brighton (UK) from 18–19 May to present its new strategy for tackling drug misuse over the next decade.

Some 130 participants from the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe attended the event which focused on prevention, high-risk groups and social exclusion. In particular, the meeting underlined the need to identify young people prone to drug problems and to address specific risk and protective factors. Volatile substance abuse, an often neglected issue among policy-makers and professionals, was also discussed and good prevention practice was described by experts from the UK and other European countries.



The UK government's White Paper 'Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain' may be consulted at http://www.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm39/3945/3945.htm/.

Keith Hellawell, the UK 'drug tsar', presented the key elements of the UK drugs strategy, namely: prevention targeted at young people; safer communities; treatment; and reducing availability.* In his speech, Hellawell stressed the role of the EMCDDA in promoting awareness of the impact of drugs on society and the effects of different national policies on the problem.

The Minister of State at the UK Home Office, Joyce Quin, linked the UK's activities in the drugs field to the priorities of the European Union Presidency in general, namely: EU enlargement; and defining the key elements of the new EU strategy for 2000–4.

Margareta Nilson

*** 'Drug tsar' is the term used for an anti-drugs co-ordinator. Keith Hellawell was appointed under the UK Presidency with responsibility for drawing together governmental action at both national and international level. A senior police officer, he chairs the drug sub-committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), UK.**

Seminar: 'Drug-use Research, Policy and Dynamic Modelling'

Around 50 experts in dynamic modelling and drug use research met from 7–9 May in Lisbon at a seminar on 'Drug-use Research, Policy and Dynamic Modelling' organised by the EMCDDA and the University of York.* Building on a 1997 review project the seminar was held to: discuss the potential uses of dynamic modelling in the drugs research and policy-making field; generate new ideas and initiatives; and facilitate networking between modellers and non-modellers in future projects.

Collaboration between modellers and non-modellers proved a key challenge, with interesting discussions on the limitations of existing data and theoretical knowledge of the drugs phenomenon. The importance of presenting modelling results in an accessible and non-technical way was underlined.

Seminar workshops were held in the six areas proposed in the review project, namely: incidence/time trends; geographic spread; hepatitis/HIV; costs/cost-benefits; economic markets; and social processes/initiation. These led to numerous proposals for work priorities such as: focusing on interventions and understanding the spread of hepatitis/HIV studies; collaborating with other ongoing projects on costs; and analysing the structures of economic markets at different levels.

The EMCDDA has commissioned projects to study the temporary and spatial dynamics of drug use using modelling techniques. These projects will be developed in small networks of experts. Moreover, a proposal has been accepted by the European Commission's DG XII (Science, Research and Development) to support further work by these networks, together with prevalence estimation of problem drug use. The review papers of the 1997 project are currently being prepared for publication as an EMCDDA Scientific Monograph and will include the results of the dynamic modelling seminar.

Lucas Wiessing

*** Dynamic modelling is a technical way of simplifying complex processes. This is mostly achieved on a computer or with mathematical formulae, by describing the components of the process and the relationships between them in a formal or quantitative way. The result is called a 'model'. By manipulating or experimenting with the model, conclusions can be drawn that cannot be found by direct observation of drug users. Dynamic models can be used to generate estimates where data are sparse or to test hypotheses about drug use in so-called 'mind experiments'or 'what if?'studies. The simple act of building a model forces a researcher to make explicit statements about the process being studied, which usually leads to discussion and improved insight.**

US Drug Tsar to visit EMCDDA

Director of the US Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), General Barry R. McCaffrey, visits the EMCDDA on 17 July following meetings with drug officials, health-care professionals, law-enforcement personnel and drug counsellors in Vienna, Zurich and Amsterdam.

The objectives of this European tour are to: visit the UNDCP and review its initiatives (as a follow-up to the issues discussed at the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs); learn more about European drug control; expand US–European dialogue and co-operation involving illicit drug issues; and explain publicly the goals and objectives of the US 1998 Drug Control Strategy.

At the EMCDDA, McCaffrey will hear presentations by the various departments on the work of the agency and participate in an informal drug forum with high-level officials on mutual US–EU drug issues.

See next issue of *DrugNet Europe* for further information.

BOOKSHELF

Characteristics and Social Representation of Ecstasy in Europe

This work is the result of a European Commission-funded research project carried out by the European network IREFREA to compare and evaluate the phenomenon of ecstasy and its diffusion in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Undertaken in five European cities with a sample of 1,627 young people, the project examines the different motives and attitudes surrounding synthetic drug use, in relation to the use of harder drugs, and highlights the clear need for programme-planning and prevention strategies targeted at young users.

Characteristics and Social Representation of Ecstasy in Europe includes 12 sections featuring: the characteristics of ecstasy use; the socio-demographic background; social representation; and experiences with ecstasy prevention campaigns in Europe.

Published by: IREFREA and the European Commission. **Authors:** Various. **Date:** 1998. **Language:** English. **Price:** Free. **ISBN:** 84-605-7393-1.

For further information, please contact:
Amador Calafat or Maria Pau Sureda, IREFREA ESPAÑA, Rambla No. 15–2º, 3ª, 07003 Palma de Mallorca, Spain.
Tel: ++ 34 971 727 434. Fax: ++ 34 971 718 073.
E-mail: irefrea@telprof.eurociber.es
or irefrea@correo.cop.es

IREFREA promotes and investigates the primary prevention of different forms of juvenile malaise and the study of associated protective and risk factors.

The EMCDDAis responsible for the selection of materials for the Bookshelf and for the text presented. However, responsibility for the content of these books and the opinions expressed therein lies with the authors themselves.

THE EMCDDA AND ITS PARTNERS

Phare Project on Technical Assistance to Drug Demand Reduction

The EMCDDA attended the first regional seminar of the Phare Project on Technical Assistance to Drug Demand Reduction in Warsaw from 16–18 April in its capacity as one of the Project evaluators. The Project, which includes four sub-regional programmes, has three main objectives:

- network strengthening (first by creating sub-regional demand-reduction networks on community prevention, outpatient treatment, harm reduction and innovative training methodology; and second by establishing resource centres in these areas);
- policy and strategy development to adapt to the changing political and economic situation of the countries involved;
- capacity development through designing, implementing, managing and evaluating projects on drug demand reduction in the identified priority areas.

In evaluating these objectives, the group requested that the sub-regional programmes use the EMCDDA's *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Drug Prevention* for documentation and evaluation activities. It also evaluated policy and strategy development through interviews with policy-makers about the overall impact of the Project; and designed questionnaires to measure capacity development among the key people working on the programmes. A special training session on the use of the *Guidelines* was held at the project's methodological seminar in Sofia (Bulgaria) from 26–30 May.

Given the decentralised, participatory and flexible nature of the Project, the evaluation group avoided imposing any rigid structure. Instead, the group intends to build up self-evaluation capacities among the Project members and to supervise, guide and provide feedback to them.

Margareta Nilson

CEEC Focal Points all set to work with Centre

The Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) involved in the Phare Project on Drug Information Systems (DIS) have been actively co-ordinating their activities with those of the EMCDDA and the REITOX Focal Points in this final phase of the Project. By September 1998, the EMCDDA will play an increasingly active role in the Project, paving the way for a direct working relationship between it and the CEECs.

Like their EU counterparts, the CEEC Focal Points will have the core task of compiling *National Reports* in preparation for the EMCDDA's 1998 *Annual Report on the State of the Drugs Problem in the European Union.* Their contributions will significantly broaden the geographical scope of the *Report* on which the CEEC and EU Focal Points will be collaborating for the first time.

Further sub-regional reports, as well as a report on the Central and Eastern European region as a whole, will also be drawn up and guided by the Dutch, French, German and Swedish Focal Points. The CEECs have also been updating *Information Maps,** and national experts are becoming more involved in the EMCDDA's seminars and projects.

During the final phase of the Project,** the co-ordinating body (eesv MSDP) will create a database containing information provided by the *National Reports*, as well as an interactive discussion forum on drugs. The homepage and e-mail facility (fad.phare.org) is also being developed further.

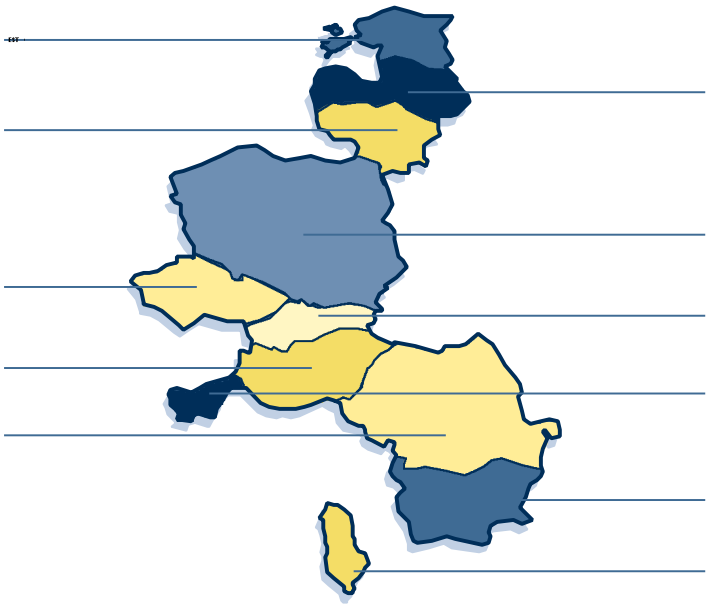
Finally, a major challenge for the project will be obtaining recognition of the CEEC Focal Points at high political level in order to render them sustainable. Although these centres already function (some having a legal basis), the EMCDDA's closer involvement in the DIS Project and its forthcoming guidelines on the role and tasks of a Focal Point will substantially assist the process.

For further information, please contact: Ann Mennens, Project Co-ordinator, eesv MSDP, Prinshendrik Laan, 23, 1075 AZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Tel: ++ 31 20 675 0415. Fax: ++ 31 20 675 6986.

*** An exercise first undertaken in 1996, the *Information Map* is an instrument developed by the EMCDDA to describe systematically existing information sources, the type of data available and the information flows in a country.**

**** Besides building on the achievements of the previous phases, the current phase introduces further activities, including a 'Catch-Up' Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The 'Catch-Up' Programme will include identifying key experts, a National Training Programme, delivering technical equipment and connection to the fad.phare.org technical network.**

Katrina Donnelly



WHO Donor's Meeting

A meeting of donors and other interested partners of the World Health Organisation's Programme for Substance Abuse (WHO/PSA) took place in Geneva on 8 April attended by representatives of governments, NGOs and international organisations. The EMCDDA participated for the first time as a result of its newborn co-operation with the WHO in the field of treatment evaluation. The countries represented were: Australia, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. The aim of the meeting, chaired by Australia, was to introduce the participating partners to the work programme of the PSA and to report on progress achieved in 1997. Mr Costa Silva, Director of the Mental Health Division, expressed his wish to involve the donors actively in the work of the WHO/PSA.

Petra Paula Merino

Pompidou Group Meeting of Permanent Correspondents

The EMCDDA participated as an observer in the 41st meeting of the Permanent Correspondents of the Pompidou Group from 5–7 May at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The discussion focused on the work of the Epidemiology Sub-Group and its future, particularly on how to avoid overlaps with the work of the EMCDDA in the field. The EMCDDA and the Pompidou Group are currently drafting a Memorandum of Understanding which determines areas of collaboration and defines the field of study for each organisation in order to achieve better complementarity in the study of the drug problem.*

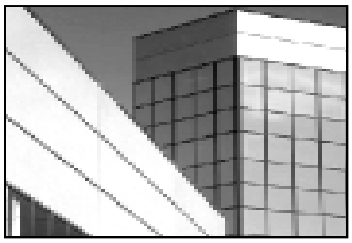
*** A Memorandum of Understanding between the EMCDDAand the UNDCPwas signed on 13 March 1998. See *DrugNet Europe* No. 11.**

Chloé Carpentier

New Version of the Pompidou Group City Report Guidelines

A Pompidou Group expert group has recently been revising and updating the city-report guidelines which are used as a basis for its 'Multi-city Study on Drug Misuse Trends'. Every five years this Multi-city Study offers a detailed analysis of the drug situation in a network of cities in the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe. Most participants are large cities that do not claim to represent their countries, but nevertheless provide an insight into the national drug problem thanks to an integrated analysis of different indicators at local level. The EMCDDA has been actively participating in the revision process of these city-report guidelines in order to improve their compatibility with the guidelines for the EMCDDA/REITOX *National Reports*.

Julian Vicente



Belgian Minister visits Centre

Belgian Minister responsible for Health for the Brussels region, Eric Tomas, visited the EMCDDA on 18 May for a fact-finding session on the agency's activities. This visit was a follow-up to the Egmont seminar organised at the request of the Minister by the Belgian NGO Alizés in Brussels in February 1998 in which the EMCDDA actively participated.* The seminar focused, among others, on data collection in the drugs field at Belgian and EU level.

The Minister expressed keen interest in the activities of the Centre and its achievements as well as his hope to act as a link between it and his colleagues responsible for health at federal and Community level in order to improve the Belgian contribution to the Centre's work. In particular, he requested information on the methods used for collecting drug-related data from the EU Member States in order to gain an insight into how information from different sources could be better centralised at regional and national level. The Minister considered that the Member States should benefit from a harmonised data-collection system at national and European level to help the EMCDDA accomplish its tasks fully, and that policy-makers in Member States be provided with more comparable information to draft policies.

Kathleen Hernalsteen

*** Seminar 'Knowing the Facts to Develop a Global Policy', Egmont Palace, Brussels, 13–14 February 1998.**

EMCDDA STATUTORY BODIES

Management Board Working Group on National Focal Points

The working group set up at the 12th meeting of the EMCDDA Management Board in January 1998 to discuss the role and financing of the National Focal Points and their responsibilities in the framework of the Early-warning System on New Synthetic Drugs held its third meeting in Strasbourg on 7 May.* The main aim of the group is to draw up a working paper on these issues in the general framework of an ongoing examination of 'The Role of the National Focal Points' initiated in December 1996. It is expected that a final paper on the role of these national centres will be adopted by the Management Board in the course of the year.

During the three meetings held by the group to date, the tasks, structure, funding, organisation and functioning of the National Focal Points as part of the REITOX network were discussed in depth. It was considered that comparable and high-quality data were needed on a limited number of key indicators. While the group drew up a preliminary working paper for the meeting of the Management Board on 2–3 July, its members were not yet in a position to agree on the final document, pending clarification of some important aspects of the REITOX 'core tasks' and funding. This will be submitted for a Management Board decision in October 1998.

Kathleen Hernalsteen

*** The working group, which met in February and March in Lisbon, is composed of the EMCDDABureau members and the Management Board representatives of Denmark, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK.**

Scientific Committee and Steering Group on New Synthetic Drugs

The Steering Group set up by the 8th meeting of the EMCDDA Scientific Committee in November 1997 to draw up risk-assessment guidelines in the context of the Joint Action on New Synthetic Drugs held its first meeting at the EMCDDA on 16 April. The meeting stressed the need to distinguish between the general risk-assessment guidelines and the more specific guidelines to evaluate the risks of MBDB recently referred to the EMCDDA by the UK Presidency. The Steering Group members agreed on a structure for the preliminary draft guidelines which, along with a calendar for the risk-assessment procedure on MBDB, were adopted at the 9th meeting of the Scientific Committee the following day.

At this meeting, Dr Desmond Corrigan (Ireland) and Dr Salme Ahlström (Finland) were elected as Chair and Vice-chair for the next three-year term. Discussions took place on the implementation of the Joint Action on New Synthetic Drugs in general and on the work of the Steering Group in particular. In discussing the evaluation of quality criteria of the National Focal Points, the importance of the data quality provided by the national centres was underlined.

A second meeting of the Steering Group took place on 15 May and aimed to discuss a more developed version of the preliminary draft guidelines. Reflections were made on the structure of the risk-assessment protocol and the assessment methodology to be taken. The text resulting from these discussions will be presented to the next Scientific Committee meeting, taking into account comments from the members and external risk-assessment experts.

The Steering Group and Scientific Committee will next meet on 30 September and 1 October respectively. At the latter meeting, a final draft of the risk-assessment guidelines will be discussed and presented for adoption at a special risk-assessment meeting of the Scientific Committee early in November.*

Lena Westberg

*** This will be attended by Scientific Committee members, experts from the Members States, representatives of the European Commission, the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products and the Europol Drugs Unit.**

FORUM

News on drugs from around the European Union

ERIT, the European Federation of Organisations Working on Drug Addiction, has recently published two titles: *Evaluating the Results of the Medical, Psychological and Socio-economic Treatment of Drug Users in Europe* and *Therapeutic Communities of Europe: Indicators and Qualitative Norms*. In the framework of these projects, a Declaration on Indicators and Qualitative Norms in the Therapeutic Community has been drawn up in six languages.

More details from: Luís Patricio, President of ERIT, CAT das Taipas, Rua das Taipas 20, Lisbon, Portugal. E-mail: Dr Luís Patricio@hotmail.com/.

For further details on ERIT, please consult the web site: http://www.erit.org

The organisation **European Cities on Drug Policy** (ECDP) has recently produced, with the support of the European Commission's DG V, an updatable 'City Reader' presenting portraits of 16 European cities, their situation and policies regarding the use and trafficking of illicit drugs. The 'Reader' sets city data in the context of the national policy and legal framework and is designed as an information source for local and European politicians.

More details from: ECDP Co-ordination Bureau, Niddastrasse 64, D–60329 Frankfurt a.M., Germany. Tel: ++ 49 69 233 013/233 190. Fax: ++ 49 69 239 478. E-mail: ecdp@oeko-net.de web site http://www.oeko-net.de/ecdp/.

Contributions to the Forum section should be sent to the editor of *DrugNet Europe*, K. Robertson.

DRUGS-LEX

APPLICATION OF DRUGS LAWS

Belgium softens policy on cannabis users

The use, possession and cultivation of cannabis for personal use are less likely to be punished by penal sanctions in Belgium in the future due to a Joint Directive presented on 17 April by the College of Public Prosecutors and the Ministry of Justice. Although the Directive does not alter the penal code, which still outlaws the marketing and trafficking of cannabis, public prosecutors are being asked to apply the 'lowest judicial priorities' to bringing charges against those in possession of small quantities of the drug. In practice, this means that the majority of arrests will not be followed up by the prosecutors and that police will now direct offenders towards 'assistance' rather than punishment.

This initiative, while rejecting legalisation, reaffirms the philosophy applied in other EU Member States that the consumption of cannabis should be tackled by other measures than the penal system and that justice should not be the only mechanism of social control for drug use. The Directive proposes that users who have not committed any other offence than possession should not be imprisoned, but that imprisonment should be a 'last resort'.

EMCDDA studies policies on the possession of small quantities of drugs

The EMCDDA is currently developing a study aimed at establishing the factors involved (and their relevance) in distinguishing whether the possession of a drug is for personal use or for trafficking in each of the 15 EU Member States. This study follows on from a workshop held in Brussels in March 1996 on the application of drugs legislation.

The EU Member States have very different approaches to this subject. Generally speaking, however, the possession of small quantities of a drug is considered as being for personal consumption and thus is seen as a minor offence with minor consequences. In most cases, no real rules exist and a system of discretionary prosecution operates.

With this study, due for completion in late 1998, the Centre hopes to increase understanding and knowledge of the role played by the police and the criminal-justice system in this matter and to describe more accurately how the law is applied and where similarities or differences exist between Member States. Member States will be contacted during the study which will be co-ordinated with international organisations such as the Pompidou Group and the UNDCP.

Danilo Ballotta and Inês Pinto

EMCDDA PUBLICATIONS

Centre produces first CD-ROM

***European Union Legal Texts on Drugs* is the title of the EMCDDA's first CD-ROM, a user-friendly resource containing over 300 legal and political acts issued by the European Union institutions in relation to drugs. This unique database responds to a growing interest in drug legislation and policies in Europe and provides the EU Member States, third countries, institutions, professionals, journalists and the general public with a practical overview of European Community strategies and policies on drugs undertaken in recent years.**

Included in the CD-ROM are: Regulations, Directives, Decisions, Resolutions, Joint Actions, Conventions, Agreements and Parliamentary questions, all directly or indirectly concerning the drug problem in Europe. In addition to EU legal texts on drugs (covering health, prevention, drug trafficking, money laundering, precursors, etc.), the CD-ROM carries a short section on the EMCDDA and a brief historical overview of the European fight against drugs.

Available this summer in English. Price ECU 70.

New EMCDDA Publications

- *General Report of Activities 1997* (English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish versions)
- EMCDDA publicity flyer prepared for EXPO '98 (trilingual publication: English, Portuguese and Spanish)
- EMCDDA Publications Catalogue

Coming soon…

- 10 language versions of the 1997 *Annual Report*: Portuguese (July); Danish; French; German; Greek (August); Finnish; Italian; Spanish; Swedish (September); Dutch (October)
- First *Report on European Union Drug Information Structures and Sources* (Summer 1998)
- EMCDDA Presentation Brochure in 11 EU languages

A Glimpse at a National Focal Point

BELGIUM

The National Focal Point for Belgium is located at the Epidemiology Department of the Scientific Institute of Public Health – Louis Pasteur, Brussels. This Institute is part of the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Public Health and the Environment and is also run by the Belgian Community Ministries responsible for health matters.

The Focal Point works in association with four sub-Focal Points situated in the country's French, Flemish and German-speaking communities and in the Brussels region.* Together the Focal Point and these four partners form the Belgian Information REITOX Network (BIRN) which was officially inaugurated in March 1995.

The Focal Point's mission is to: respond to queries from the EMCDDA; participate in the activities of the BIRN; and ensure dissemination of information both between the Belgian partners, and between these partners and the EMCDDA.

EMCDDA Calendar

2–3 July – EMCDDA Management Board, Lisbon.

6–7 July – EMCDDA seminar on Treatment Indicators, Lisbon.

13 July – Meeting of the Directors of the EU agencies, Lisbon.

17 July – Visit of General Barry McCaffrey to the EMCDDA, Lisbon.

21–23 July – International Epidemiology Working Group, Lisbon

24–26 August – Participation in 'Addiction concepts and their impact on prevention and treatment', Zurich.

26–28 August – Participation in 'Nordic Drug Conference', Copenhagen.

Selected EU Meetings

10 July – Horizontal Drugs Group, Brussels.

24 July – Horizontal Drugs Group, Brussels.

The sub-Focal Points are community or regional organisations and have specific tasks. These include: co-ordinating prevention programmes; documentation; and collecting epidemiological data on the drugs problem. These centres are also responsible for co-ordinating REITOX tasks within their own community or region.

The key objectives of the BIRN are:

- to develop networking in Belgium;
- to establish and maintain a permanent link between the EMCDDA and the Belgian network;
- to implement the 1997–98 REITOX Programme; and
- to implement the Early-warning System on New Synthetic Drugs in the framework of the Joint Action of 16 June 1997 related to the exchange of information, risk assessment and control of these substances.

The sub-Focal Points are involved in drug-demand reduction and co-ordinate, at the community or regional level, a local network in direct contact with drug users. They also: organise the collection and diffusion of information; collect and synthesise available data; and initiate and manage projects in the field of prevention and social reintegration. While their role is mainly local, they also function at inter-regional and European level.

The Belgian Focal Point, in association with the sub-Focal Points, provides the EMCDDA with information to give a complete and clear picture of the drug situation in Belgium. These summaries depend partly on the comparability of the information and databases in the various regions. Achieving this is among the main challenges of the network and its partners. To carry out the various EMCDDA tasks, the Focal Point employs one full-time staff member.

*** These organisations are: Comité de Concertation sur l'Alcool et les autres Drogues (CCAD) in the French Community; Vereniging voor Alcohol- en andere Drugproblemen (VAD) in the Flemish Community; Arbeitgemeinschaft für Suchtvorbeugung und Lebensbewältigung (ASL) in the German Community; and Concertation Toxicomanies Bruxelles/Overleg Druggebruik Brussel (CTB/ODB) in the Brussels region.**

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Implementing Joint Action on New Synthetic Drugs

In the framework of the Joint Action on New Synthetic Drugs adopted by the Council of the European Union in June 1997, the UK Presidency formally requested the EMCDDA in February 1998 to carry out a risk assessment of the new synthetic drug, MBDB. Following this request, the EMCDDA has taken a number of measures to ensure the full implementation of the Joint Action.

On 20 May a progress report drawn up by the EMCDDA and the Europol Drugs Unit (EDU) was presented to the Horizontal Drugs Group of the Council.* This joint report described the state of implementation of the Joint Action and provided preliminary information on MBDB collected and exchanged under Article 3 of the agreement (information exchange). A joint EMCDDA–EDU document on improving the mechanisms for implementing Article 3 was submitted to the Horizontal Drugs Group on 22 June.

In the meantime, the EMCDDA is providing technical support to the Scientific Committee for the risk-assessment procedure (Article 4), including the launch of rapid *ad hoc* studies and the organisation of high-level expert workshops. Information collection through the REITOX National Focal Points is also continuing in order to provide more data for this procedure.

*** See *DrugNet Europe* No. 11.**

The EMCDDA welcomes any suggestions on the content of this newsletter and looks forward to your contributions. The newsletter is available in English, French, German and Portuguese.

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