

### July–September 2016

**In this issue:** European Drug Report 2016 highlights | Return of MDMA | Rises in overdose deaths | Health responses to new psychoactive substances | Gold medal for EMCDDA | World hepatitis day | New EMCDDA products and services | 2016 EMCDDA scientific paper award

# 95

## Report highlights new health risks as products and patterns of use change



Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos: 'The European Drug Report 2016 is an important addition to our evidence base on the drugs problem and a helpful tool for European policymakers to shape policies and actions to address it'.

The health risks of high-potency products, the continued emergence of new substances and changing patterns of drug use are among the issues in focus in the *European Drug Report 2016: Trends and Developments* launched on 31 May in Lisbon <sup>(1)</sup>. The EMCDDA's annual review of Europe's drug situation also expresses concern over rises in overdose deaths in some countries and the threats posed by internet drug markets. 'This new analysis highlights the need for Europe's drug policy agenda to embrace a broader and more complicated set of policy issues than in the past', states the report.

Dimitris Avramopoulos, European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, said: 'Europe faces a growing problem with drugs. New psychoactive substances, stimulants, heroin and other opioids continue to be in high demand and

supply, with major impacts on public health. That is why the European Drug Report 2016 is an important addition to our evidence base on the drugs problem and a helpful tool for European policymakers to shape policies and actions to address it. With this knowledge in hand, we will continue to call on EU Member State authorities, third countries, internet companies and civil society to redouble cooperation in fighting this global challenge'.

Speaking at a press conference presenting the report, the Commissioner expressed concern over the online supply of drugs, calling for a 'more systematic and more sophisticated' monitoring of internet drug markets. He also called for the EU Early Warning System on new drugs to be strengthened and for a coordinated approach to the criminals involved in the drug trade. 'Our fight against organised crime can only be effective if it is smart, multi-faceted and comprehensive', he said.

Chair of the EMCDDA Management Board Laura d'Arrigo said: 'Just a few weeks after the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on drugs, this report demonstrates the longstanding commitment of the European Union to an evidence-based approach to drug policy. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the latest tendencies across the 28 EU Member States, Turkey and Norway. It reminds us that, while some of the problems of the past remain firmly with us, new threats continue to emerge, in particular the development of the

synthetic drugs market. I am convinced that such a report is a way to share the knowledge on the drug situation in Europe and to build together new responses to these challenges'.

Describing today's drug situation as 'resilient', EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel presented the main findings of the report, covering drug use prevalence and trends, drug-related harms and responses and drug supply and the market. The Director emphasised: the public health risks relating to high-potency products; rises in fatal overdoses in some parts of Europe; the use of synthetic opioids; and the rising demand for treatment for problems relating to amphetamines and cannabis. He also expressed concern over the availability of, and harms relating to, new psychoactive substances. Echoing the comments of the Commissioner, he concluded: 'It is important to adapt our responses in Europe to these drugs. New legislative proposals will help us deal with these substances in a more efficient way' <sup>(2)</sup>.

**Our fight against organised crime can only be effective if it is smart, multi-faceted and comprehensive**

<sup>(1)</sup> For more, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/edr2016](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/edr2016)

<sup>(2)</sup> The current EU legal mechanism for monitoring and taking action on NPS (Council Decision 2005/387/JHA of 10 May 2005) is under review. Negotiations are ongoing in the Council and the European Parliament on the basis of proposals from the European Commission.

## EUROPEAN DRUG REPORT 2016

## MDMA

## The return of MDMA: rising use and high-dose products



Alexis Goosdeel: 'The revival of MDMA brings with it the need to rethink existing prevention and harm-reduction responses.'

The *European Drug Report 2016* confirms the return of MDMA (often sold as 'ecstasy') as a stimulant drug of choice for young people in Europe, citing 'indications that MDMA is becoming more popular, both with established stimulant consumers and with a new generation of young users'.

Around 2.1 million young adults (15–34 years) report having used MDMA in the last year. While, until recently, MDMA use had been in decline — following peak levels in the early to mid-2000s — latest survey data point to increased use in Europe. Nine out of 12 reporting countries presented higher estimates of use among young adults in new surveys than in the previous comparable survey. There are also signs that MDMA is no longer a niche or sub-cultural drug used in dance clubs, but is now being used by a wider range of young people in more mainstream nightlife settings, such as bars and parties.

Complementing survey data, a 2015 multi-city study found residues of MDMA in municipal wastewater to be higher in 2015 than in 2011, with sharp increases in some cities. This may be related to higher purity of MDMA and/or increased availability and use of the drug.

The MDMA revival is associated with 'innovation in sourcing MDMA precursors, new production techniques and online supply', states the report, which also reveals signs of resurging production, after a decline in the last decade.

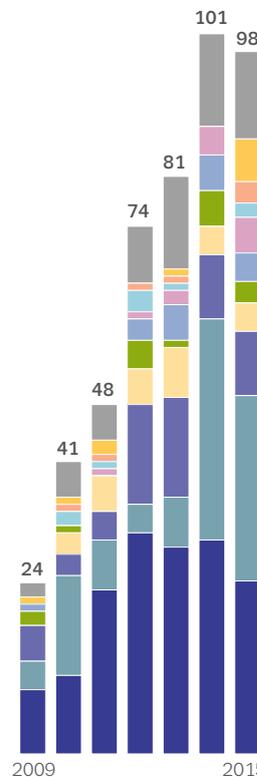
The availability of products with a high MDMA content prompted EMCDDA–Europol public health alerts in 2014. Powders, crystals and tablets containing high doses of MDMA are now more commonly available, with tablets sometimes promoted through sophisticated and targeted marketing techniques. This is thought to be a deliberate strategy by producers to boost the reputation of MDMA, after a period in which poor-quality products resulted in a decline in use.

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel said: 'The revival of MDMA brings with it the need to rethink existing prevention and harm-reduction responses to target and support a new population of users who may be using high-dose products, without fully understanding the risks involved. Intoxications and even deaths associated with this drug are highlighted in our new report. This is particularly worrying since MDMA is moving into more mainstream social settings and is increasingly available via online markets.'

For more, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/rapid-communications/2016/mdma](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/rapid-communications/2016/mdma) and [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/insights/assessing-drugs-in-wastewater](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/insights/assessing-drugs-in-wastewater)

## NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

## NPS: new harms and health alerts



Harms related to new drugs in Europe are monitored via the EU Early Warning System (EWS) on new psychoactive substances (NPS). These harms vary in nature but can be serious, including acute poisonings and even deaths. The EMCDDA has issued 34 public health alerts to the Member States relating to the use of NPS since 2014 alone.

The number, type and availability of NPS on the European market continue to grow, with over 560 NPS now monitored by the agency. In 2015, 98 new substances were reported for the first time (101 in 2014). Once again, the list of new substances reported was dominated by synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones. Together, these two groups accounted for almost 80% of the 50 000 NPS seizures in 2014 and over 60% of the 4 tonnes seized.

**In 2015, 98 new psychoactive substances were reported for the first time in Europe**

Responding effectively and rapidly to the sale of NPS, some of which are found to be highly toxic, is a major challenge. 'Young

consumers may unwittingly be acting as human guinea pigs for substances for which the potential health risks are largely unknown', states the report.

Synthetic cannabinoids, sold as 'legal' replacements for cannabis, can be highly toxic, and mass poisonings have been reported (e.g. in Poland). In February 2016, the EMCDDA issued a warning concerning MDMB-CHMICA, a synthetic cannabinoid associated with 13 deaths and 23 non-fatal intoxications in Europe since 2014. Synthetic cathinones are sold as 'legal' replacements for stimulants, such as amphetamine, MDMA and cocaine. The synthetic cathinone alpha-PVP <sup>(1)</sup>, a potent stimulant, has been linked to almost 200 acute intoxications and over 100 deaths since 2011.

The report describes how NPS producers may now be targeting more chronic and problematic drug users. Here concerns are growing over the number of new synthetic opioids detected. Many fentanyl derivatives are highly potent and may be sold as heroin to unsuspecting users, posing a risk of overdose. In 2015, 32 deaths in Europe were linked to the synthetic opioid acetylfentanyl, leading to an EMCDDA–Europol analysis <sup>(2)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-reports/alpha-pvp](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-reports/alpha-pvp)

<sup>(2)</sup> [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications) (Joint Report — see page 7).

## EUROPEAN DRUG REPORT 2016

## OPIOIDS

## Rises in overdose deaths



At least 6 800 overdose deaths, mainly related to heroin and other opioids, are estimated to have occurred in the EU in 2014, slightly up on the previous year's figure. Worrying rises in these deaths are reported in some

countries with long-established opioid problems (e.g. Ireland, Lithuania, Sweden and the United Kingdom).

The reasons behind these rises in fatal overdoses are unclear, but a number of factors may be involved, including: increased heroin availability, higher purity, ageing users and changing consumption patterns, including the use of synthetic opioids and medicines. Overdoses are most commonly reported among older opioid users (35–50 years), but increases in overdose deaths are also seen among the under-25s in some countries (e.g. Sweden), warranting closer scrutiny. A number of countries now provide the overdose-reversal drug naloxone to opioid users via community schemes (1).

**While heroin remains the most commonly used opioid, synthetic opioids are increasingly misused**

While heroin remains the most commonly used opioid, synthetic opioids are increasingly misused and there has been a rise in the number of

countries reporting synthetic opioids as the primary drug used by those entering treatment. Synthetic opioids used in substitution treatment (e.g. methadone, buprenorphine) are also regularly found in toxicology reports and these substances are associated with a substantial share of drug-related deaths in some countries (e.g. Ireland, France, Finland, UK). Strategies to prevent the diversion of opioid substitution treatment medications are analysed in a new EMCDDA analysis (2).

The report is enriched by new city-level data from a selection of hospital emergency rooms across Europe. While heroin is the illicit drug most commonly reported in emergencies, cocaine, other stimulants and cannabis feature prominently in some areas (3).

An estimated 1.2 million people received treatment for illicit drug use in the European Union in 2014 (1.5 million including Norway and Turkey). Some 644 000 opioid users received substitution treatment in the EU in 2014 (680 000 including Norway and Turkey). The co-occurrence of substance use and mental health disorders (comorbidity) continues to challenge treatment providers and is explored in a new EMCDDA review (4).

(1) [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/insights/take-home-naloxone](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/insights/take-home-naloxone)

(2) Perspectives on Drugs (PODs) available at [www.emcdda.europa.eu/edr2016](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/edr2016) — see page 7.

(3) [www.emcdda.europa.eu/activities/emergencies](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/activities/emergencies)

(4) For more, see POD, page 7.

## STIMULANTS

## Stimulant-related problems 'becoming more visible'

Recent findings from wastewater analysis and seizure and survey data highlight regional differences in stimulant patterns of use across Europe. Cocaine use is higher in western and southern European countries — reflecting ports of entry and trafficking routes — while use of amphetamines (amphetamine and methamphetamine) is more prominent in northern and eastern Europe.

**Despite drug injecting having declined in Europe overall, stimulant injecting is now a concern**

The report describes how 'stimulant-related problems are now becoming more visible'. In some countries, there are concerns over the

rising number of new demands for treatment for problems relating to amphetamines, despite relatively stable levels of use. Overall, in the last decade, Europe has seen a 50% rise in the number of clients entering treatment for the first time, with amphetamines as their primary drug.

Despite drug injecting having declined in Europe overall, stimulant injecting is now a concern. Nearly half (47%) of new clients entering treatment in 2014 with amphetamines as their primary drug reported injecting as their main route of administration. A number of countries also report the injection of methamphetamine and cathinones with other drugs (e.g. GHB) among small groups of men who have sex with men. These so-called 'slamming' practices are associated with high levels of sexual risk-taking behaviours, pointing to the need for increased cooperation between drug treatment and sexual health services.

The long-term decline in the number of new HIV diagnoses among people who inject drugs (PWID) in the EU continues. In 2014, newly reported HIV diagnoses among injectors totalled 1 236, the lowest number for over a decade. Nevertheless, in 2015, localised outbreaks of HIV were reported in some marginalised populations in Ireland, Luxembourg and the UK (Scotland). Changes in drug use patterns, particularly increased stimulant injecting, were contributing factors in a number of these outbreaks. 'Identifying and responding to localised patterns of stimulant use and related harms needs to be given greater priority', states the report.

Cocaine remains the most commonly used illicit stimulant drug in Europe, with around 2.4 million young adults (15–34 years) reporting to have used it in the last year. Cocaine was cited as the primary drug by 60 000 clients entering specialised drug treatment in 2014 and by 27 000 clients entering treatment for the first time.

Cocaine trafficking to Europe is the subject of a new EMCDDA analysis released on 31 May (1)(2).

(1) For more, see POD, page 7.

(2) For more on these stories, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2016/6/european-drug-report-2016-highlights](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2016/6/european-drug-report-2016-highlights)

## CANNABIS

## Concerns over rises in use, potency and treatment demand



According to the *European Drug Report 2016*, an estimated 16.6 million young Europeans (15–34 years) have used cannabis in the last 12 months. While levels of use differ between countries, overall in Europe they do not appear to be falling and there are signs of some rises. Eight of the 13 countries with recent survey estimates (since 2013), report increases in last-year cannabis use in this age group.

The health and social costs of cannabis use are most pronounced among frequent or long-term users (around 1% of European adults are estimated to be daily or almost-daily cannabis users). Potency levels of herbal cannabis and resin are high by historical standards, which may increase the risks of use.

Data on those entering treatment for cannabis problems can improve understanding of the nature and scale of high-risk use in Europe. The number of those entering treatment for the first time for cannabis problems increased from 45 000 in 2006 to 69 000 in 2014. This rise in demand for treatment has been linked to a number of factors, including changing levels of use and intensive use, availability of more harmful products, different referral practices and greater availability of treatment services.

Cannabis is the most commonly seized drug in Europe, accounting for more than three-quarters of seizures (78%). The number of seizures of herbal cannabis overtook that of cannabis resin in Europe in 2009, and the gap has continued to widen. The quantity of cannabis resin seized in the EU, however, is still much higher than that of herbal cannabis (574 tonnes versus 139 tonnes) and the most recent data show that the quantity of resin seized has risen.

Changes in Europe's cannabis resin market are examined in a new analysis accompanying the report <sup>(1)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> For more, see POD, page 7.

## FEATURE

## New EMCDDA report on health responses to NPS



**The NPS market is complex and the rapid emergence of novel products means that developing supportive health interventions is challenging**

Over the last decade, there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of new drugs appearing on the global market. In Europe, around two new psychoactive substances (NPS) are detected every week, posing a major challenge to drug policy and practice. In a new report, released ahead of International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking (26 June), the EMCDDA presents its first analysis of the health responses to these drugs, often sold as 'legal highs'.

The report — *Health responses to new psychoactive substances* <sup>(1)</sup> — explains that, while NPS use in Europe remains relatively low <sup>(2)</sup>, there are growing concerns over problematic forms of use and harms related to these drugs. It presents recent evidence of the association of NPS with hospital emergencies and

rising demand for specialist drug treatment and describes how, in some countries, new stimulant substances are driving changes in drug injection patterns. The study reviews, for the first time, emerging health- and drug-related responses to these drugs.

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel said: 'The NPS market is complex and the rapid emergence of novel products means that developing supportive health interventions is challenging. Initial responses to new drugs in Europe have largely been regulatory, focusing on legislative tools to tackle supply. But as the phenomenon evolves, it is critical that we formulate and implement effective public health responses to the use of these substances. The significant number of annual detections of these drugs, and associated harms, calls for the continuous assessment and development of appropriate services for users at risk'.

The study explores intervention responses in specific settings where users may seek help. These include: school and family; nightlife venues; sexual health services; hospital emergency departments and clinical services; specialised drug treatment services; low-threshold services; and prisons and custodial facilities. It also looks at drug treatment, harm reduction and prevention activities delivered online.

The report concludes that existing interventions addressing drug use can be adapted to deliver a 'comprehensive health response' to NPS-related harms. The approaches recommended in the study are therefore largely based on existing responses, but adapted to reflect: unique user group needs; the structural, cultural and social contexts of use and new opportunities for engaging recreational NPS user groups. But competence-building among health and drug professionals still represents a key investment priority in the field of health responses to NPS in Europe. Here the report underlines the importance of updating professionals' knowledge and skills on NPS via basic training materials and knowledge-exchange platforms.

Finally, the report stresses the importance of evidence-based responses to drug use and warns that adapting existing interventions to respond to NPS 'must proceed with caution and within a robust evaluative framework'.

### Alessandro Pirona

<sup>(1)</sup> The report is available at [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/ad-hoc/nps-responses](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/ad-hoc/nps-responses). It is accompanied by the latest edition in the Perspectives on Drugs (POD) series, dedicated to the same topic.

<sup>(2)</sup> A 2014 European Commission Flash Eurobarometer survey showed that some 8% of young people aged 15–24 reported having taken 'legal highs' in their lifetime, while 3% reported use in the last year [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_401\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_401_en.pdf)

## INTERNATIONAL

## Support for IPA countries to build national EWS networks

The EMCDDA is currently supporting beneficiary countries of the European Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) in the setting up of national Early Warning Systems (EWS) on new psychoactive substances (NPS)<sup>(1)</sup>. At present, information on NPS in these countries is limited and heterogeneous, underlining the need for harmonised data collection.

Representatives from candidate and potential candidate countries to the EU met in Lisbon from 19–20 May, where they participated as observers in the annual Reitox EWS network meeting. Experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo<sup>(2)</sup>, Montenegro and Serbia shared their achievements to date in monitoring NPS. Serbia and Montenegro reported having started the process to formalise their national EWS networks, while others stated that they were planning to do so in the near future. The discussions revealed a number of common challenges, such as the need to train professionals and to exchange best practice in detecting and controlling NPS.

The EMCDDA project, which runs from July 2016 to June 2017, includes the organisation of national and regional seminars aimed at exchanging best practice with EWS network representatives in the EU Member States. Establishing national EWS networks in the IPA countries would make a major contribution to their monitoring of NPS and related harms and their ability to respond more rapidly to potential threats.

### Ilze Jekabsone

<sup>(1)</sup> The IPA countries are divided into two groups: candidate countries to the EU (Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey) and potential candidate countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99). For more, see [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/funding/ipa/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/ipa/)

<sup>(2)</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

## Gold medal for the EMCDDA for the 'extraordinary relevance' of its work

The EMCDDA has been awarded a Gold Medal of the Order of Merit of the Spanish national plan on drugs in recognition of, and appreciation for, its work over the past 20 years.

The agency was informed of the honour in a letter of 17 May from the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, following publication of the notice in the official state bulletin on 13 May<sup>(1)</sup>. In the communication, the EMCDDA is praised for the 'extraordinary relevance' of its work and its contribution to the adoption of national and EU-level policies based on evidence and scientific knowledge. The medal will be presented in the coming weeks.

<sup>(1)</sup> [www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2016-4606](http://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2016-4606)

## PARTNERS

## EMCDDA to chair JHA agencies' network

From 1 January to 31 December 2017, the EMCDDA will be chairing a network of nine EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies ('JHA network')<sup>(1)</sup>. The network was established in 2006 to foster bilateral and multilateral cooperation between these agencies and to explore and develop synergies in areas of common interest (e.g. operational work, training and external relations).

The JHA agencies have been playing a crucial role in implementing EU priorities and objectives in the fields of migration and security<sup>(2)</sup> and have made an important contribution to decision-making in these areas via strategic analysis and evidence-based inputs. Working within the network, the agencies aim to: promote joint initiatives at operational level; foster inter-agency cooperation; and improve synergy and coherence in JHA activities.



This year, the Vienna-based Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) is chairing the network. The EMCDDA's mandate in 2017 will provide it with an opportunity to present its work and expertise in the EU security area as well as the complementarity of its activities with the rest of the network.

### Klaudia Palczak

<sup>(1)</sup> CEPOL, EASO, EIGE, EMCDDA, eu-LISA, Eurojust, Europol, FRA and Frontex. For more, see brochure and video at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/about/files/jha\\_agencies\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/about/files/jha_agencies_en.pdf) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LppnTJ3eIA>

<sup>(2)</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication\\_on\\_the\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf) [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/basic-documents/docs/eu\\_agenda\\_on\\_security\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/basic-documents/docs/eu_agenda_on_security_en.pdf)

## EMCDDA and DG-HOME sign working arrangements

On 15 June, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG-HOME) and the EMCDDA signed working arrangements on cooperation on external action. The signatories were EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel and Director-General of DG-HOME Matthias Ruete. These arrangements aim to further ensure good coordination between the EMCDDA and DG-HOME in the area of external relations. They provide for an early exchange of information on international cooperation and regular consultation to ensure that the agency's activities fit within the EU's priorities. To this end, an annual meeting is foreseen between DG-HOME and the EMCDDA at director level. The EMCDDA is the first EU home affairs agency to sign such arrangements.

## SPOTLIGHT



## #WorldDrugDay

To commemorate International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking (26 June), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched on 23 June its *World Drug Report 2016*. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the latest developments in the world's illicit drug markets, focusing on the production, trafficking and use of illicit drugs and their health consequences.

The EMCDDA marked the day with an event at its premises on 27 June for the Lisbon diplomatic community and its partners from the Portuguese authorities. It focused on the issue of health responses to new psychoactive substances (see page 4).

For more, see [www.unodc.org/wdr2016](http://www.unodc.org/wdr2016) and [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications)

## #WorldHepDay

Hepatitis C is highly prevalent among people who inject drugs (PWID) in Europe, with national samples in the period 2013–14 showing HCV antibody prevalence of between 15% and 84%. While new medicines for treating hepatitis C are increasingly effective, providing access to diagnosis and treatment remains a key challenge for professionals working with PWID. This year, the EMCDDA will mark World hepatitis day on 28 July with the release of a new Insights report dedicated to hepatitis C treatment for drug users in Europe. From 7–8 September, the EMCDDA will participate in the 5<sup>th</sup> international symposium on hepatitis care in substance users, organised in Oslo by the International Network for Hepatitis in Substance Users (INHSU). Hepatitis C infection is often asymptomatic and can go for years undiagnosed.

For more, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/upcoming](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/upcoming) and [www.inhsu2016.com](http://www.inhsu2016.com)

## NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

## EWS network meeting discusses latest developments on NPS

The latest developments in the area of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in Europe were discussed at the 16<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Reitox Early Warning System (EWS) network, held in Lisbon on 19–20 May. This year, the meeting was held in conjunction with the 5<sup>th</sup> Europol law enforcement expert meeting on new psychoactive substances.

The meeting opened with a summary of the findings of the 2015 EMCDDA–Europol report on the implementation of Council Decision 2005/87/JHA, to be published in the coming weeks <sup>(1)</sup>. The report shows a consistent trend in the number, type and availability of NPS detected in Europe in 2015, with 98 new substances notified for the first time that year.

In the course of 2015, action was taken at EU level on two new NPS posing significant public health concerns <sup>(2)</sup>. The first is  $\alpha$ -PVP, a synthetic cathinone and the second a synthetic opioid acetylfentanyl (see p. 2). Both substances were recently placed under international control. A synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonist, MDMB-CHMICA, is also under

scrutiny following an EMCDDA public health warning in February 2016 <sup>(3)</sup>.

Sessions at the meeting included discussions on: national-level legal changes and NPS market developments; the way forward in strengthening the toxicovigilance component of the EWS (including risk communications); and synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists and new synthetic opioids.

Participants at the meeting also included EU agencies and institutions (Europol, European Medicines Agency, European Commission, Joint Research Centre); the US Drug Enforcement Agency; and academic experts in the field of NPS.

## Ana Gallegos

<sup>(1)</sup> See Implementation reports at [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications)

<sup>(2)</sup> EMCDDA–Europol Joint Reports were prepared on these substances. For more, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-reports/alpha-pvp](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-reports/alpha-pvp) [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-reports/acetylfentanyl](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-reports/acetylfentanyl)

<sup>(3)</sup> See Joint Report at [www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications)

## REITOX

## In memoriam — Franz Trautmann

It was with great sadness that the EMCDDA learned of the sudden passing of Franz Trautmann on 11 June. A valued member of the Dutch national focal point (Trimbos Institute) and of the Reitox network, Franz was involved in the work of the EMCDDA almost from the outset and made a substantial contribution to the EU drug monitoring system.

During his 15 years as Trimbos' Head of unit for international affairs, Franz developed, coordinated and executed an extensive range of international projects focusing on drug demand reduction through prevention, treatment and harm-reduction approaches.

His most recent projects included the: Central Asia Drug Action Programme/ CADAP (European Commission);

HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support in Prison Settings in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNODC) and a study on Global illicit drug markets (European Commission).

He was an active supporter of the EMCDDA's Best Practice Portal, contributing to a common European definition of best practice. From 2008–09, he also participated as an expert in the EMCDDA CARDS technical cooperation project with the candidate and potential candidate countries to the EU.

During the last Reitox meeting, held in Lisbon from 14–16 June, the EMCDDA Director, staff and focal point representatives observed a minute of silence in Franz's memory.

## Gonçalo Felgueiras

## PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

### Perspectives on Drugs

The EMCDDA released alongside the *European Drug Report 2016*, four new editions in its *Perspectives on Drugs* (PODs) series. Outlined below are highlights from these online interactive windows on key aspects of the drug problem.

#### Comorbidity of substance use and mental health disorders

The co-occurrence of substance use and mental health disorders — otherwise known as ‘comorbidity’ or ‘dual diagnosis’ — is an issue which has been on the EMCDDA’s radar for over a decade. As concern around comorbidity grows, this POD shines a spotlight on the issue, exploring implications for drug treatment and care. Psychiatric comorbidity is highly prevalent among substance users and treating the condition is challenging due to its complex nature.

For more, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/pods/comorbidity-substance-use-mental-disorders-europe](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/pods/comorbidity-substance-use-mental-disorders-europe)

#### Strategies to prevent diversion of OST medications

The use of substitution drugs for the treatment of heroin dependence represents a key evidence-based response to heroin problems in Europe. The diversion of these medicines from their intended use in drug treatment to non-medical use and sale on illicit drug markets, however, is a cause for concern. The use of diverted substances has been associated with various harms, including fatal and non-fatal overdoses. This POD explores the context of opioid substitution treatment (OST) in Europe, how OST medications are diverted and the measures in place to address the issue.

For more, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/pods/preventing-diversion-of-opioid-substitution-treatment](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/pods/preventing-diversion-of-opioid-substitution-treatment)

#### Changes in Europe’s cannabis resin market

Since the early 2000s, the dramatic increase in cannabis production inside Europe has led to a shift in the market, with domestically grown herbal cannabis (marijuana) displacing imported (mainly Moroccan) cannabis resin (hashish) in many countries. Nevertheless, the European cannabis resin market remains one of the world’s largest and most profitable today, with an estimated 641 tonnes consumed annually. This POD describes how the supplies of cannabis resin to Europe are changing in response to competition from domestically grown cannabis and other market developments. A number of significant changes to Moroccan resin production are reported, including the cultivation of new hybrid crops, which yield three to five times more hashish than traditional kif plants.

For more, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/pods/cannabis-resin-market-europe](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/pods/cannabis-resin-market-europe)

#### Cocaine trafficking to Europe

Cocaine is produced in South America and trafficked to Europe by both air and sea. This POD provides an insight into the European cocaine market, the wide range of trafficking routes used to bring the drug to Europe and the variety of methods used by organised crime groups (OCG) to transport their products. The analysis shows how OCGs are quick to identify and exploit new opportunities that facilitate trafficking.

For more, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/pods/cocaine-trafficking-to-europe](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/topics/pods/cocaine-trafficking-to-europe)



The full *European Drug Report 2016* package is available at [www.emcdda.europa.eu/edr2016](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/edr2016). The report is accompanied by a *Statistical Bulletin*, containing the full European dataset underpinning the report, and by *Country Overviews*, providing national-level data and analyses. Audiovisual material can be viewed at [youtube.com/user/emcddatube](http://youtube.com/user/emcddatube)

[www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/brochures/edr2016](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/brochures/edr2016)

## JUST PUBLISHED



On 15 June, the EMCDDA released its *General Report of Activities 2015*.

This annual statutory publication provides a detailed progress report of the EMCDDA’s activities over a 12-month period, cataloguing achievements in each area of the annual work programme. The report will be accompanied by a four-page summary *A year in review 2015*.

[www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/gra/2015](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/gra/2015)

#### Acetylfentanyl report

In 2015, deaths in Europe linked to the substance acetylfentanyl prompted the EMCDDA and Europol to produce a Joint Report on this substance, published on 8 June. Many fentanyls are highly potent and may be sold as heroin to unsuspecting users, thus posing a high risk of overdose.

[www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-reports/acetylfentanyl](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-reports/acetylfentanyl)

#### MDMA rapid communication

*Recent changes in Europe’s MDMA/ecstasy market* is the title of the latest EMCDDA rapid communication, released on 3 May. The report, the fruit of a targeted trendspotter meeting, explores the recent resurgence in the use of MDMA in Europe.

[www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/rapid-communications/2016/mdma](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/rapid-communications/2016/mdma)

#### Coming soon

The EMCDDA will release the following titles in the next quarter: Insights 23 on hepatitis C treatment for drug users; EMCDDA–Europol annual report on NPS (implementation report); and a Rapid communication on acute drug toxicity in emergency settings.

[www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/upcoming](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/upcoming)

**EMCDDA meetings**

27 June–8 July:	European drugs summer school (EDSS), Lisbon.
18–19 July:	Visit to the EMCDDA of MEPs from the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), Lisbon.
19–20 September:	Annual expert meeting on the key indicator 'Prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population' (GPS), Lisbon.
20 September:	Launch of the 2016 ESPAD report, Lisbon.
20–21 September:	Annual expert meeting on the key indicator 'Problem drug use' (PDU), Lisbon.
27–28 September:	17 <sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Legal correspondents of the ELDD, Lisbon.
29–30 September:	Annual expert meeting on the key indicator 'Drug-related deaths' (DRD), Lisbon.

**External meetings**

25–27 July:	Annual meeting of the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors (ISAJE), Cumberland Lodge, UK.
28 July:	World hepatitis day.
22–23 September:	European masters in drugs and alcohol studies (EMDAS) meeting and graduation ceremony, Lisbon.

**EU meetings**

11 July:	Presentation of the EDR 2016 to the LIBE Committee, European Parliament.
13 July:	Horizontal working party on drugs, Brussels (Slovakian Presidency).
14 July:	EU–CELAC technical meeting, (Slovakian Presidency).
7 September:	Horizontal working party on drugs, Brussels.
21–22 September:	Horizontal working party on drugs and EU–Russia meeting, Brussels.

**Scientific Committee discusses strategic issues for the EMCDDA**

Preparations for an EMCDDA strategy 2025 and for upcoming Single Programming Documents (SPD) <sup>(1)</sup>, provided the focus of the latest Scientific Committee meeting, held in Lisbon from 11–12 May.

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel updated the Committee on key steps of his mandate and on the preparation of a strategy to guide the work of the agency to 2025. Discussions on the draft EMCDDA SPD for 2017–19 took place in break-out sessions, allowing Committee members to provide input in their area of expertise and to exchange views with EMCDDA scientific staff. Early input was also given for the SPD 2018–20.

Ongoing developments on the risk assessment of new psychoactive substances (NPS) — including the current reporting exercise on MDMB-CHMICA — were also addressed. In addition, the meeting discussed: preparations for contributions to the EU action plan on drugs (2013–16); drug-related research priorities; the scientific evaluation of policies; EMCDDA publications and outputs; and the sixth scientific paper award (see below).

The EMCDDA congratulated Committee member Professor Letizia Paoli on being awarded the 2016 Thorsten Sellin and Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck Award. The award, from the American Society of Criminology (ASC), recognises outstanding scholarship pertaining to problems of crime and justice. Professor Paoli will receive this accolade at the 2016 ASC annual meeting on 16 November in New Orleans.

**Maria Moreira**

<sup>(1)</sup> In response to Article 32 of the EMCDDA Financial Regulation, the EMCDDA's work programmes are now adopted within a Single Programming Document (SPD). Part I presents the three-year work programme, while Part II presents the annual work programme for the year in question.

**2016 scientific paper award**

Meeting in Lisbon on 11 May, the EMCDDA Scientific Committee established a shortlist of articles to be judged for the 2016 scientific paper award. This will be the sixth annual award event organised by the agency, celebrating scientific writing and high-quality research in the field of illicit drugs. Up to five winners will be acknowledged at a ceremony in the autumn coinciding with the next Scientific Committee meeting.

For more, see [www.emcdda.europa.eu/activities/scientific-paper-award](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/activities/scientific-paper-award)

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