



## Does the EU drugs agency finally face reality?



Lisbon

*In an interview to AFP the head of the EU drugs agency expresses grave concern about the block's ability to deal with the trafficking and abuse of drugs, saying it is badly prepared for the challenges presented by enlargement.*

It is interesting to note that the concern is expressed by EMCDDA (European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction), the organisation, which since its coming into the branch has worked for so called "harm reduction" policy which, judging by its results in many countries, should have been called "harm production" policy. There is no reason to be surprised that the EMCDDA's policy has caused an increase of drug problems within the EU more than decrease. For years, the EMCDDA has paved the way for a more tolerant, or harm produc-

tive, way to handle the drug problem. Result: the drug problem within the EU has increased and has become worse over the last few years.

In an interview with AFP Georges Estievenart said "Faced with the real challenge of enlargement the European Union still only has diffuse, fragmented and weak competence..."

And this we have to hear from a person who has been the head of EMCDDA for many a year! In what reality has the director been living in the last 10 years?

What Estievenart doesn't mention in his interview is that the EMCDDA is part of creating "diffuse, fragmented and weak competence", and hence the EMCDDA is also a part of the drug problem rather than a part of a solution to the drug problem.

The EMCDDA itself contributed to EU's (lack of) ability to deal with trafficking and abuse of drugs by not only promoting but also supporting harm production measures through uncontrolled needle exchange programmes, distribution of heroin to heroin addicts, municipal drug dens where drug addicts can use their drug of choice etc, etc.

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## Denmark ready to sharpen the legislation for possession and sale of hash

Judging from the March discussions in the Danish Parliament, a more stringent law for possession and trade with hash will indeed become a reality in Denmark. The government's bill, proposing toughening of the punishments for this type of crime, successfully went through the first hearing in the Parliament.

A tougher punishment implies, in the Danish case, that a fine will be issued even for the first-time infringers, instead of a warn-

ing as a practice is now.

The proposed bill will also give right to



personnel of correctional institutions to demand urine proves of the internees.

This bill is a part of a proposition that also includes steps towards the improvement of preventive measures in anti-drug fieldwork.

## Berlin: "bowing to reality"

The city of Berlin is moving quickly to decriminalise possession of small amounts of cannabis in what is called "bowing to reality", even as federal law in Germany still outlaws production or sale of the drug, Expatica news informs.

The legislation to permit possession of up to 15 grams of marijuana or hashish "for personal use" is backed by the overwhelming majority of lawmakers in the city council chambers. A broad coalition of civil libertarian Free Democrats favour the bill, along with the city's ruling majority of leftist Social Democrats and Greens and far-left Socialists, remnants of the one-time East German Communist Party.

When the law comes into effect, possibly in a matter of weeks, it will put Berliners in the odd position of living in a city where cannabis is legal, and in the capital of a nation where it is not.

Berlin is considered the marijuana and hashish capital of Germany, not just its political capital. In just the past three years police have completely lost track of the cannabis market in Berlin, according to a report in Berliner Zeitung newspaper.

There is hardly a club or disco, a cafe or gallery opening where with-it Berliners are not smoking joints. And that is just the public aspect of the drug which is clearly obvious to all. Consumption of marijuana at private parties is ubiquitous.

The centrist FDP is sponsoring the legislation, saying it is high time for the government to get its nose out of the affairs of otherwise law-abiding people when consumption of cannabis has not been proven to be more harmful than alcohol or cigarettes.

That is the ostensible reason. The real reason is that authorities in Berlin have given up trying to police the cannabis possession problem.

## Does the EU drugs agency finally face reality?

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UN Office in Vienna

In the Council's Decree nr 302/93 from February 8, 1993 on establishing of a European centre for control of drugs and drug abuse it is stated clearly that the goal with the establishing of the centre is to within the area defined in the article 4 provide the community and its member states with objective, reliable and comparable information on the European level about drugs, drug abuse and consequences of these.

Has EMCDDA achieved this goal after 11 years? The answer is unequivocally no. The information that comes from Lisbon is neither objective nor reliable, and is long from being comparable. The Centre costs European tax-payers big money which with no doubt could have been used in a better way. Taken into account the fact that the drug problem is a global concern which cannot be solved from a solely European perspective, would it not have been better to close the centre in Lisbon and to direct the resources to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna instead?

George Estievenart's comments come less than a month ahead of the EU enlargement.

He states that "The situation in the bloc is not good. The new members are showing worrying signs of catching up with methods of western consumption. The situation in Russia, in Ukraine and Belarus is explosive. And

what is our response? At best it is weak."

He continues criticising that changes in the trafficking and use of drugs in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia and Ukraine are a "time bomb" for both eastern and central European countries and current EU members.

### ★ COMMENTARY

Estievenart also warned that the removal of border controls as a result of enlargement could help traffickers move from country to country, make it easier to find substances to manufacture drugs and facilitate laundering of the money earned through drugs trafficking.

Is Mr Estievenart and the EMCDDA finally facing reality and the disastrous consequences of drugs that are emerging in most areas under the "supervision" of EMCDDA? Don't be too sure?

HNN

## Cabinet moves to ban super-strong cannabis

The Dutch cabinet decided on 9 April to ban the sale of super-strong homegrown cannabis if a commissioned study reveals that the soft drug has become too powerful.

Research by the Trimbos Institute for Addiction indicates that the THC level – the workable agent in cannabis and hash – has increased significantly over the years, meaning that Dutch-grown marijuana, Nederwiet, could now be considered a hard drug.

Nederwiet is an extra-strong variant of marijuana. It is grown in professionally-equipped greenhouses and is often referred to as skunk. It is much in demand in Dutch

coffee-shops. In its annual Drugs Monitor report, the institute said last month that the THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) level in Nederwiet has increased to 15 percent compared with 9 percent in 1999. The increase is due to professional growing techniques.

Justice Minister Piet Hein Donner, Interior Minister Johan Remkes and Health Minister Hans Hoogervorst urged the cabinet to conduct further research into THC levels and investigate a possible ban on the sale of strong cannabis.

/Expatica News

## India: a new export market?

*Once considered an island between the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle, the two hubs of international drug trade, India has now developed into an export market for illicit drugs, The Times of India informs.*

According to officials, the leeway granted under the UN Convention on Drugs to India to legally generate about 1,200 metric tonnes of opium annually for pharmaceutical requirements, has been utilised by international drug rings to turn Indian poppy cultivators into seasoned smugglers. Poppy growers in the country are diverting their produce increasingly to the black market. Opium, which is the essential ingredient for making heroin, fetches 25 times more than the price offered by government procurement. During 2002, the illicit cultivation in the country seemed to have crossed all limits. Even though authorities detected and destroyed nearly 550 acres of the crop, which was being grown illegally in the Rajasthan-Madhya Pradesh belt, about 1,150 kg of opium generated in 2002 harvest was seized during 2003.

### ★ ECAD NEWS

## New Member States:

*a new final destination for drugs?*

*Many experts argue that fears of an explosion of organised crime sparked off by enlargement are exaggerated.*

"People have this vision of criminals sitting in their Mercedes waiting for the borders to open on May 1 in order to drive west," a police official said to the Financial Times. "The truth is that crime rarely waits for borders to open and that the real division of Europe's criminal market between western and eastern criminals took place shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain."

However, there is a serious danger of organised crime flourishing in the new countries themselves, as enlargement brings prosperity through foreign investment and EU funding. Particularly, experts warn that drug consumption might be on the rise, transforming the new Member States from mere transit regions into lucrative end-user-markets.

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## Afghan farmers turn to saffron

*Saffron - one of the most expensive spices in the world - could become an antidote to Afghanistan's opium production.*

About 400 farmers in the western province of Herat have begun to grow the spice as a substitute crop for poppies, the opium sap of which produces heroin. When the saffron is harvested in the autumn, the farmers can expect to reap about \$200 a kilogram (2.2lb). While less than the \$300 they would make from a kilogram of illegally grown poppies, it is 100 times more than they would make from wheat, corn or oranges.

The aim of the local project, which was inspired by the country's agriculture ministry, is to dent an opium industry.

This year, the poppy farmers are looking

forward to a record crop after spring came early and brought forward the planting season. The Taliban clamped down on the trade but since the regime was toppled in 2001, farmers have grown poppies with renewed vigour.

The saffron project is one of the schemes being considered by a three-strong team of British advisers sent to Afghanistan to help find solutions to the drug problem. Britain has invested £70 million over three years in counter-narcotics projects, trying to block both the flow of heroin and the profits skimmed off to fund terrorist activities.

*/Telegraph co uk*



*Saffron's peppery, honeyed fragrance has flavoured foods for more than 4,000 years. The spice is mainly grown in Greece, Spain, Turkey, Iran and Morocco. It is extracted from the stigma of the saffron crocus, reddish-gold filaments an inch long that are plucked by hand from the centre of dried crocus blossoms.*

More than nine tonnes of smuggled drugs have been confiscated along the Tajik-Afghan frontier since the year's start, Amirkul Azimov, Tajikistan's national Security Council Secretary, announced to the media.

Mr. Azimov chairs the Secretarial Committee of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, which brings together Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

*/RIAN*

## Smoking, Drinking and Drugs Survey 2003 UK

Drug use, smoking and drinking among young people in England in 2003  
Headline Figures National Centre for Social Research/National Foundation for Educational Research

### Summary

This document contains headline results from a major national survey of secondary schoolchildren aged 11-15 published April 4, 2004 by the Department of Health.

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) carried out the survey for the Department of Health.

Over 10,000 pupils in 321 schools in England completed questionnaires in the 2003 autumn term. The main report on the survey will be published in autumn 2004. The preliminary key findings for 2003 data are set out below.

- Twenty-one percent of pupils said they had taken drugs in the last year (2003) as compare to 20% in 2002 and 2001;
- Twelve percent of pupils said they had taken drugs in the last month (2003) the same proportion as in 2002 and 2001.
- Nine percent of pupils aged 11-15 were regular smokers in 2003, as compare to 10% in 2002.
- The proportion of pupils who drank in the last week was 25% in 2003, there was no significant change from last year (24% in 2002).

*Full analysis tables and charts in PDF are available at [www.publications.doh.gov.uk/public/sddsurvey2003.pdf](http://www.publications.doh.gov.uk/public/sddsurvey2003.pdf)*

## Ireland:

*A new study*

A study on the prevalence of drugs in Ireland has uncovered widespread use of hard drugs like heroin and cocaine throughout the country. Ireland On-line reports, a study released April 20<sup>th</sup> came as a chock. Drugs like heroin, cocaine and even crack cocaine had spread into areas that were previously only affected by soft drugs like cannabis and ecstasy. The 2002/2003 study was commissioned by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs and the Drug and Alcohol Information and Research Unit in the North.

## Spread of narcotic drugs in Russia:

*"a sort of stagnation is obvious at present "*

The Russian Health Ministry has reported that 16 percent of the Russian schoolchildren have used illicit drugs at least once.

Deputy director of the Federal Drug Control Service Alexander Mikhailov said at a press conference in Moscow on 13 April that another eight percent of students belong to a potential risk group and 3.1 percent of school students are drug dependent.

He said 24 percent of vocational school students have tried narcotic drugs, 4 percent are drug dependent and 25 percent belong to high-risk groups.

As regards higher school students, 20 percent of them have abused drugs, 20 percent belong to risk groups and 4.8

percent depend on drugs.

On the whole, 22 percent of the young people aged between 12 and 20 have used illicit drugs, according to the health ministry data. 23 percent have tested narcotic drugs from one to three times in their lives.

He expressed grave concern about the fact that small provincial towns have now become centres for the spread of illicit drugs. The number of drug addicts in these cities have increased significantly.

As regards the situation in the country as a whole, Mikhailov noted that a sort of stagnation is obvious at present.

*/Itar-Tass*

## Sweden: "Easy to get drugs"

Spring 2003, the Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and other Drugs, CAN, carried out a survey on Swedish young people's alcohol and drug usage. Three thousand randomly selected respondents, aged 16-24, answered questions in a telephone interview.

The survey shows that the perceptible accessibility of drugs is high. 54% of youngsters said that it is easy to get drugs in their

close environment and 47% said that they know someone who uses drugs.

In all, 17% answered that they have used drugs themselves. Difference in answers on this question is great in regard to type of settlement. 23% of the respondents living in big cities said that they have tried drugs, compared with 9% of the respondents from thinly-populated areas.

7% have used drugs in the last 12

month before the interview, and 2% in the last 30 days.

Drug usage questions were included in the questionnaire in 1994. Then, altogether 4% answered that they have tried drugs.

CAN concludes that during the last ten years there was a fair increase in drug experience among this specific age group of young people in Sweden.

## Connection between high alcohol consumption and drugs

Alcohol consumption has increased significantly among the Swedish young people aged 16-24. This is shown in "relatively comparable" questionnaires for the period 1994-2003. There is also a correlation between alcohol and drugs among the high consumers of alcohol.

Converted into pure alcohol, the young men's consumption increased from 5,7 litres per year in 1994 to 7,1 litres in 2003.

Young women raised their consumption from 2,7 litres to 3,3 litres pure alcohol under the same period. The majority of those questioned responded that they drink alcohol

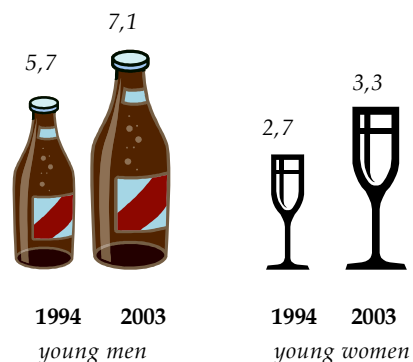
fairly regularly. Young men drink double as much as young women, they consume in especially big amounts strong beer, while women drink more wine. Consumption increases with the increasing age from 16 to 22 and then levels.

CAN's report shows also a strong correlation between consumption of alcohol and drugs. Among the high consumers (8 litres pure alcohol per year and more) 35% had taken drugs at least once, 18% in the last 12 months. Among the low consumers 5% had taken drugs at least once and 1% in the last 12 months.

Detailed information may be obtained from Ulf Guttormsson +46 8 412 4619, can@can.se

## ★ ECAD RESEARCH

### Alcohol consumption among the Swedish young people aged 16-24 (converted into pure alcohol, litres per year)



## New Member States...

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Although the EU has anticipated this problem by the funding programme for candidate countries ahead of enlargement and close police co-operation, the security of the new 4,000 km long Eastern border is expected to cause major problems.

/EurActive.com

## France:

Young people are getting more used to drugs

Young French aged 16-18 are getting more and more used to taking drugs, according to the available statistics. Recent surveys show that every fifth teenager smokes cigarettes made from plants containing narcotic components. Further, a half of the young men and 41% young women have tried drugs.

## ★ CLEAR SIGHT

He said – There is my country.  
She said – There is my Europe.

## ★ SHARP TURN

He said – The experts have analyzed it.  
She said – Good, we can analyze the experts.

Our European societies have experimented and evaluated both tolerance and intolerance to illicit drug use and drug abuse. It is our reflection upon this which guides us towards non-use. This in regard to our **communities'** well being.



**ECAD** is Europe's leading organisation promoting a drug free Europe and representing millions of European citizens. Drug dealing and drug abuse cause enormous problems in Europe. Nations and their citizens are affected by the consequences of drug abuse. ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives and efforts against drug abuse supporting the United Nations Conventions which oppose legalisation and promote policies to eradicate drug abuse worldwide. Has your city joined ECAD?

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