

European Update

EMCDDA

New EMCDDA policy briefing underlines need for enforceable and evidence-based laws. Many of the accidents and deaths that occur on European roads are caused by drivers whose performance is impaired by a psychoactive substance. Alcohol alone is estimated to account for up to 10 000 road deaths a year in the EU, one quarter of all road deaths. But, says the EMCDDA, no comparable figures are available for road accidents relating to illicit drugs and psychoactive medicines. This means that, with no clear picture of the problem, tailoring responses will prove difficult.

<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/drugs-in-focus/driving>

EMCDDA

The EU drugs agency, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), moved to new premises in the Portuguese capital. From now on, it can be contacted at the following address:

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)

Cais do Sodré, 1249-289 Lisbon, Portugal

Tel. (351) 211 21 02 00 — Fax (351) 218 13 17 11

<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/>

Europe, North America and Australasia

‘Comparing the drug situation across countries: Problems, Pitfalls and Possibilities.’ This briefing paper seeks to compare the drugs situation in a number of developed countries. Data from six European countries, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are included.

<http://www.idpc.net/sites/default/files/library/Beckley%20Briefing%2019.pdf>

Ireland

National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016.

A key finding from the review is that the current approach to tackling problem drug use in Ireland – which has developed around the five pillars of supply reduction, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and research – continues to be relevant and appropriate.

<http://www.pobail.ie/en/NationalDrugsStrategy/LaunchoftheNationalDrugsStrategy2009-2016/file.9964.en.pdf>

Italy

Italian police detained the businessman at the center of a prostitution scandal surrounding Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on charges related to drug dealing.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE58H4DE20090918>

Portugal

How has decriminalization fared in Portugal?

In 2001 Portugal made the decision to eliminate penalties for the personal use and possession of heroin, cocaine, and marijuana. Dire predictions were heard on all sides. The Portuguese were said to be fearful that holiday resorts would become dumping-grounds for drug tourists. <http://addiction-dirkh.blogspot.com/2009/09/portuguese-experiment.html>

United Kingdom

UK Border Agency officers at Heathrow Airport have made what's thought to be their biggest ever seizure of heroin, and sparked an investigation into an international drugs gang. Around 165 kilos of the class A drug, with an estimated street value of £8 million, was discovered by UK Border Agency detection teams hidden in a consignment of souvenirs from South Africa.

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=406760&SubjectId=2>

United Kingdom

A downward trend in the quality of illegal drugs on the UK's street drug market could be driving changes in patterns of drug use, with users increasingly interchanging or combining a range of low quality drugs, according to DrugScope's 2009 Street Drug Trends Survey.

http://www.drugscope.org.uk/ourwork/pressoffice/pressreleases/Street_drug_trends_2009.htm

United Kingdom

New advice on over-the-counter (OTC) medicines containing codeine and dihydrocodeine (DHC) to minimise the risk of overuse and addiction.

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/NewsCentre/Pressreleases/CO N057115>

United Kingdom

A new report by the UK Drug Policy Commission is now available online. ‘REFOCUSING DRUG-RELATED LAW ENFORCEMENT TO ADDRESS HARMS’

It must not be assumed that arrests of dealers and traffickers and drug seizures will automatically have a positive impact on communities. Although drug laws reinforced by a level of enforcement appear to have contained the illicit drug market to some degree, ‘more’ enforcement generally does not lead to ‘less’ availability because established drug markets are too resilient and adaptable.

However, there is an opportunity for enforcement to impact on reducing drug-related harms even when drug markets are entrenched and no reduction in supply is observed. <http://www.ukdpc.org.uk/publications.shtml>

World Update

UNODC

New UNODC office opens in Panama. It will implement regional programmes in coordination with States members of the Central American Integration System and key partners to fight drug trafficking and organized crime and to strengthen the rule of law in the region.

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2009/September/new-unodc-office-opens-in-panama.html>

UNODC

How many lives would have been lost if we didn't have controls on drugs? Decriminalisation would be disaster for poor countries. We need a balanced approach covering health, development and security - Antonio Maria Costa.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/sep/20/drugs-decriminalisation>

Afghanistan

Afghanistan, besieged by decades of war, is fighting another battle — a spiraling epidemic of heroin addiction in the country that is the world's largest producer of opium, which is used to make heroin. Some Afghan officials worry these drug addicts could pose a threat to the country's security.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-09-17-afghanheroin_N.htm

Afghanistan

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is down 22 per cent, opium production is down 10 per cent, while prices are at a 10-year low. The number of opium poppy-free provinces has increased from 18 to 20 out of a total number of 34, and more drugs are being seized as a result of more robust counter-narcotics operations by Afghan and NATO forces. Findings in the of the *Afghan Opium Survey 2009*.

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drugs/afghan-opium-survey.html>

Argentina

Argentina's Supreme Court largely decriminalized possession of small quantities of marijuana, part of a Latin American trend toward easing sanctions on personal drug use.

<http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v09.n815.a06.html>

Australia

More Melburnians are overdosing on heroin despite police efforts to crush illegal drug imports. Drug agency Turning Point revealed that paramedics treated up to 110 people in Melbourne's metropolitan area who overdosed on heroin each month between December last year and March, with that figure expected to increase.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/heroin-floods-streets-of-melbourne/story-e6frf7jo-1225775278315>

Colombia

Colombia's Supreme Court ruled that possession of illegal drugs for personal use is not a criminal offense, citing

a 1994 decision by the country's Constitutional Court. <http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=343393&CategoryId=12393>

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is the latest State to have joined the Container Control Programme after signing a memorandum of understanding with UNODC. The Programme is to assist Governments by providing training and equipment at selected seaports to minimize the risk of maritime containers being used for drug and human trafficking.

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2009/August/costa-rica-signs-up-to-improve-security-in-ports.html>

Guinea

Cocaine smuggling in Guinea has become a major concern, both in terms of the supply to Europe and the corrupting impact it has on Guinea's governance and law enforcement agencies. The growth of trafficking in Guinea and neighbouring west African states such as Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone began around four years ago, when smuggling direct to Europe across the Atlantic became harder in the wake of increased maritime security. Latino cartels, facing an already saturated market in the US, used Nigerian middlemen to scout for contacts region-wide, and found perfect business partners in the politicians, police and generals of West Africa's bankrupt, war-ravaged coastal capitals.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandin-dianocean/guinea/6180260/African-ruler-grills-his-people-on-live-television-about-cocaine.html>

Mexico

Gunmen have carried out another attack on a drugs rehabilitation centre in the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez, killing 10 people and injuring two others. The shooting follows the deaths of 18 people in an attack on a separate rehab centre in the same city this month.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/8259972.stm>

Panama

A major investigation led by INTERPOL'S National Central Bureaus (NCBs) in Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Washington has led to the arrest of senior drug cartel member William Cobo Idrobo at Panama's Tocumen International airport. He was wanted by Peru for serious drug offences.

<http://www.interpol.int/Public/News/2009/ColombianFugitive20090911.asp>

Venezuela

Venezuela's top anti-drugs official has roundly rejected recent US criticism that his country is failing to tackle international drug trafficking.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/8248054.stm>

Drug Update

Conferences

The European Science Foundation (ESF) and the University of Linköping will be organising a major conference on khat from 5-9 October in Linköping, Sweden. 'The changing use and misuse of Catha Edulis (khat) in a changing world: tradition, trade and tragedy'. The conference will present current research on the substance. Topics will include: economic, ecological and political issues of khat use; the changing culture of us; medical, pharmacological and psychological issues; and related legislation, regulation and international scheduling. For further details www.esf.org/conferences/09274

DrugScope annual conference 2009. London, Wednesday 28th October

Drug Treatment at the Crossroads: where next for the recovery agenda?

The idea of recovery is now central for drug policy. It is an idea with the potential to inspire a leap forward in our aspirations and ambitions for people who have experienced serious drug problems. The DrugScope 2009 annual conference, held in London on 28th October, will focus on:

- the stories of people who have experienced serious drug problems, what recovery means to them and what has helped them;
- learning from and engaging with the experience of other sectors, particularly mental health;
- debating the implications of recovery for the way we think about drug policy and service configuration;
- linking recovery to the debate about 'complex need' - for example, by asking how valuable and sustainable a positive drug outcome is (whether stabilising on a script or abstinence) if it is not matched by recovery in a fuller sense - recovery of what has been lost or damaged.

<http://www.drugscope.org.uk/Resources/Drugscope/Documents/PDF/Events/dsconfbrochure09.pdf>

Web Watch

A new daily drug bulletin has recently been launched by a UK NGO 'DrugScope'. It is edited by Jim Young, formerly of Daily Dose. See: <http://www.dsdaily.org.uk/>

The news page *DrugWorld* is updated on a regular basis with items from all around the world. You can access it at www.drugworld.co.uk/news.php Add it to your Favourites or Bookmarks for ease of access.

Future Issues

Items for inclusion in future issues should be forwarded to paul@paul-cook.net

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Paul Cook

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