ECAD NEWSLETTER

European Cities Against Drugs www.ecad.net

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Wintry Warsaw welcomed ECAD Advisory Board

Warsaw, the latest member at ECAD Advisory Board, hosted this year's first meeting of the Board last weekend of February. Beside customary budget proposals and scheduling of activities for 2007, the decision to launch a new Balkan office in Bourgas this year was approved. Preparations for opening the office started already in 2006, after the IV Balkan Conference in Bourgas. The office will be supported by the municipality of Bourgas in much the same way Stockholm supports ECAD Head office.

Planning of the Mayors` Conference in Istanbul on May 10-12 has reached its final stages. Already now it is clear that the speakers will be on the highest level. The President of Iceland has announced his participance, as have the UN`s highest anti-drug combatant Antonio Maria Costa and the US "drug tsar" John P. Walters. We are expecting some 400 delegates, and advise our members to book as soon as the registration forms appear on ***www.ecad.net***.

ECAD biggest project Youth in Europe will collect its researchers, coordinators and all interested on the day before the Mayors` Conference, namely on May 9. Results of the first completed questionnaires will be accounted for by nine cities; discussions on how the cities will work with mobilizing societies will follow.

Warsaw authorities invited the Board to visit two day-care centres for the young with substance abuse problems. The city has a well-functioning network of outpatient care centres. The growing number of substance abusers together with low street prices on drugs make Polish authorities to view the issue most seriously. There are around 1,7 million inhabitants in Warsaw, over 100 000 of them smoke cannabis from time to time, 8% of 15-16 year-olds have smoked cannabis during the last month. One gram cannabis costs as much as a Big Mac, and one ecstasy tablet is as expensive as a cheeseburger. The number of HIV positive addicts is relatively low compared to other countries. Only 40 to 50 cases of HIV get recorded in Poland during one year.

It is exactly this kind of meetings that were among the reasons for Warsaw joining ECAD, remarked city's vice Mayor Wlodzimierz Paszynski. Possibility of comparing working methods for treating addicts and different kinds of prevention measures, as well as opportunities to take part in international cooperation projects were the grounds to Warsaw's signing the Stockholm resolution in 1994.

USA: Teens turn away from street drugs, move to prescription drugs

Director of National Drug Control Policy John P. Walters released on February 14, 2007 a new White House analysis that shows alarming trends in teen abuse of prescription drugs and cough and cold medicines to get high. The report shows that teens are turning away from street drugs, like marijuana and cocaine, and are now abusing prescription drugs to get high.

New users of prescription drugs have now caught up with new users of marijuana. Prescription drugs are now the second most commonly used illegal drug by teens to get high**.** The report, **"Teens and Prescription Drugs: An Analysis of Recent Trends on the Emerging Drug Threat,"** released by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), also shows that the majority of teens, who use these products, are getting them easily and for free.

Although illicit drug use among teens has dropped by 23 percent over the last five years, ONDCP and other experts warned parents at a press conference on February 14 in New York City that teens are intentionally abusing prescription drugs to get high, wrongly believing that they are safer than street drugs. In addition, teens are getting prescription drugs for free and have easy access to them - taking them from friends or relatives without their knowledge.

Unfortunately, most parents are not talking to their teens about the dangers of abusing prescription drugs. More than a third of teens believe that prescription drugs are much safer to use than illegal drugs because they are prescribed by a doctor, according to teens who responded to surveys on prescription drugs. And about seven million teens believe there's "nothing wrong" with using prescription drugs without a prescription "once in a while."

Continued on page 3

New codes of behaviour for the Dutch military

Every year hundreds of soldiers have to appear in court for misdemeanour. The usual culprit is criminal activities; crimes in connection with drug abuse are committed more and more often.

Last year, 1400 soldiers were prosecuted, an obvious increase compared to the previous year. The amount of drug related crimes such as trafficking and substance abuse has increased from 97 to 136. In order to shed the light to this upsetting tendency the *Staal committee* in the Netherlands has published a report, defining the need for stricter code of behaviour for the military.

Commander of the Defence in the Netherlands, General Dick Berlijn has employed this new code of behaviour in action exemplary promptly. The new code obliges a soldier to behave himself, both in leisure hours and at service. Drug abuse is absolutely unconceivable and a minimum of alcohol is allowed.

Code-breaking (excessive use of drugs) leads to a loss of the job. Other misbehaviour can lead to a degraded military rank.

The code also implies that everybody should be treated with respect, discrimination is forbidden and sexually intimidation is not allowed; special measures to provide safety at work place are to be implemented, no drugs at work place are allowed.

These rules are absolutely indispensable at military service, where weapons and heavy ammunition are at use and training and various task operations under physical and mental pressure, often lasting for 24 hours, require discipline and full commitment.

General Berlijn

A soldier is at the service 24 hours per day, 7 days of the week and his/her drug use endangers our safety, that is why drug use is out of question. The new code of behaviour is a follow-up of earlier drug policies, which were started in November 2006, obliging soldiers to go through the unexpected urine test. Dutch Ministry of Defence executes now a zero-tolerant policy with regard to possessing or abusing drugs.

NEW ECAD MEMBER!

Wellcome, Härryda, Sweden!

ECAD office in Bulgaria

In October last year ECAD held IV Balkan Conference in Bourgas, where the idea of launching ECAD Balkan Office was evaluated by several cities. The idea came initially from Bourgas, and on the 1st of March the new office will open its doors to the public. Early this year ECAD director Tomas Hallberg met the new ECAD Balkan Office director Dr. Ivailo Dimitrov for an interview.

-Hello, Dr. Dimitrov, do you have any plans for the new office that is to open on 1 March?

Dr. Ivailo Dimitrov

- Hello! My first intention is to go on a training course at the Head Office in Stockholm, and then visit ECAD Russian Office in S:t Petersburg to see how the work is structured. It will be interesting for me to meet representatives from other NGOs and local authorities that work with drug policies, both in Russia and in Sweden.

We are planning to create our own ECAD homepage in Bulgarian, so there is a great deal of for me to learn about how other webpages function. To spare the time we have already started with some practical aspects in Bourgas.

Our next regional conference will take place in Sarajevo this autumn. There are also some local seminars on our agenda in Bourgas and we will continue working to extend the number of Balkan cities in the Network. The first ECAD Newsletter in Bulgarian will be brought out soon.

- You are a psychiatrist and you have been working with drug issues for a long time, what do you expect from your new position?

- The ways of dealing with drug issues are abundant, experiences of solving drug problems are profuse in today's Europe. I will try to choose the best methods in my professional opinion, and spread them further in my own region.

At the same time my goal is to bring forth the knowledge of how we work with drug policies in Bourgas to other countries. It will also be fascinating to cooperate with other Balkan countries on such an important issue.

Nederwiet will come from Belgium?

As a result of harder policies in the Netherlands concerning ***Nederwiet*** its cultivation is moving to neighbouring countries. During the last two years the number of illegal wiet-nurseries in Belgium has increased five fold.

Some background facts:

*The origin of the **Nederwiet** is Westland, an area close to Hague, also called the Glass city. Eighty percent of cut-flowers all over the world come from there. Since 1985 the expertise of these world-famous growers has been used for the purpose of cultivating illegal drugs, especially cannabis. This home-grown cannabis, called **Nederwiet**, was later purified. Cannabis sativa and indica were crossed and a variety called "skunk" became a product of it. "Skunk" is grown indoors. Six crops a year can give a yield of 2,400 grams of cannabis. The Nederwiet variety "skunk" is more potent than any other imported variety of cannabis. It can contain 30 or even 40 % of THC (delta 9 tetrahydrocannabinol), the active compound of cannabis.*

According to the federal police in Belgium there is a close connection between Belgium and the Netherlands as far as the *wiet*-nurseries are concerned. The connection involves personal ties between the arrested people in two countries, necessary equipment and the flow of money. Dutch police had pulled down 50 plants in 2004. In 2006 the number of the dismantled nurseries has reached 241. At present Belgium complains about rigorous measures taken against wiet-nurseries in the Netherlands, especially against the hi-tech nurseries supported by the Dutch specialists.

There is a need to focus on wiet-cultivation in sheds or remote farmsteads. Most often the discovered plants were grown on the frontier between the Netherlands and Belgium. According to *wiet*-specialists, Dutch cultivators transport their plants even to Germany and Poland. The reason is harsh policies exercised by the Dutch authorities against wiet-cultivators, explains Tim Boekhout, criminologist.

According to Mr. Van Beek, a member of the Platform for Cannabis Enterprises (PCN), Dutch coffee-shops are provided today with wiet from Germany, Belgium or France.

Klaas Valk of the National Network Drug expertise (NND) of the police, blames Dutch growers for this cultivation trend in Germany. German criminal police has to combat German wiet abuse as a consequence of that.

6 Million for Drug-free communities

In February the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced the availability of new, Drug-Free Communities (DFC) support program grants.

The deadline to submit applications for Drug-Free Communities grants is Tuesday, April 17, 2007. ONDCP expects to award approximately 60 new grants, totalling approximately $6 million, bringing the number of Federally funded Drug Free Community coalitions to nearly 750.

The Drug-Free Communities program is a collaborative Federal program sponsored by ONDCP and administered in partnership with SAMHSA, that aims to establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, private non-profit agencies, and Federal, State, local and Tribal governments to support the efforts of community coalitions to prevent and reduce substance abuse.

"Youth substance abuse is at its lowest point in more than a decade, thanks in large measure to the concerted efforts of dedicated men and women working in prevention, treatment, and enforcement at the local level," said John P. Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy. "The DFC program leverages their collaborative work with Federal support to develop effective ways to push back against local drug threats. A balanced, community-based approach will help ensure continued progress reducing substance abuse throughout our Nation."

NEW GRANTS

The DFC program was created in 1997 under the Drug-Free Communities Act, and was reauthorized in 2001 and 2006. The latest reauthorization extends the DFC program for an additional five years, until 2012. Since 1998, ONDCP has awarded approximately 1,200 Drug-Free Communities grants in all 50 states. Each successful DFC grantee is provided up to $100,000 per year over a 5-year cycle to support community-based substance abuse prevention and reduction efforts. ONDCP partners with SAMHSA, the Coalition Institute, and the Battelle Memorial Institute to coordinate and measure the DFC program.

SAMHSA Administrator Terry Cline, PhD said, "The Drug-Free Communities grant program provides the foundation for the Nation's substance abuse prevention efforts. These new grant funds will help even more communities across the country to mobilize effective strategies to prevent youth drug use and promote a more hopeful and healthy Nation."

To learn more about the Drug-Free Communities Support Program, or the upcoming grant application deadline, please visit http://www.ondcp.gov/dfc/

Source: www. Samhsa.gov

USA: Teens turn away from street drugs...

From page 1

Although millions of Americans benefit from the proper use of prescription drugs, they can be dangerous and even lethal when taken without medical supervision or mixed with other drugs or alcohol. Teens who abuse prescription drugs to get high can suffer serious consequences including addiction, strokes, addiction, seizures, comas, and even death.

"The explosion in the prescription of addictive opioids, depressants and stimulants has, for many children, made their parents' medicine cabinet a greater temptation and threat than a street drug dealer," said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Chairman and President, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.

THE REPORT SHOWS SOME TRENDS:

- **New abusers of prescription drugs have caught up with new users of marijuana;**
- **Pain relievers, such as OxyContin and Vicodin, are the most commonly abused prescription drugs by teens;**
- **One third of all new abusers of prescription drugs in 2005 were 12-17-year olds;**
- **Prescription drugs are the drug of choice among 12- and 13-year olds;**
- **Girls are more likely than boys to intentionally abuse prescription drugs to get high;**
- **The majority of teens (57%), who use these products, say they get prescription drugs for free from a relative or friend (47%), or take them from a relative or friend (10%), without asking. An additional 10 percent buy pain relievers from a friend or relative; and**
- **Adolescents are more likely than young adults to become dependent on prescription medication.**

"Between adolescence and young adulthood, teens are trying to discover who they are and find where they fit in, which can make them vulnerable to peer pressure, including abusing prescription drugs. *Seventeen* wants to inform our 13 million readers and their parents about this dangerous trend on the rise—why they should resist the peer pressure and how to get help if they are already struggling with addiction," said Ann Shoket, editor-in-chief, *Seventeen* magazine.

ONDCP is calling on parents to educate themselves about the dangers of prescription drug abuse and talk to their teen about the risks. They can also take some concrete steps to protect their teen from prescription drug abuse:

- Keep track of quantities of prescription drugs in your own home, and the homes of relatives;
- Talk to the parents of your teen's friends and ensure they have the same policy in their home;
- Discard old and unused prescriptions;
- Set and enforce clear rules about drug use, including prescription drug abuse, and establish consequences; and
- Be observant and look for indications that your child may be abusing prescription drugs.

For more information about what parents can do and should know about prescription drug abuse, they can visit the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's Web site for parents: www.TheAntiDrug.com. The full report on "Teens and Prescription Drugs..." can be accessed at http://www.mediacampaign.org/teens/.

ENGLAND: Heroin on the NHS in effort to cut crime

Heroin is to be prescribed on the NHS to hard-core drug addicts under secret plans being prepared by the Government.

The move to use injectable heroin follows the success of trials in London, Brighton and the North-east on drug users who fail to respond to treatment and who commit crimes to finance their habit.

The proposal follows a recommendation in a restricted Home Office report on crime, which proposes prescribing heroin to addicts and licensing sales of heroin and crack cocaine.

The paper, drawn up by the Home Office strategic policy team, a copy of which has been obtained by *The Independent on Sunday*, says: "The Home Office should consider wider rolling out of injectable heroin prescription for highly dependent users through the NHS."

It adds: "Given the failure of supply-side interventions to have any significant effect on the drugs market, it is worth considering a greater management of the market by wider rolling out of injectable heroin prescription for highly dependent users through the NHS."

Civil servants say that in Switzerland, where doctors prescribe heroin rather than methadone to "recidivist veteran users", 26 per cent have given it up, and criminality and unemployment have been reduced.

The Home Office document, marked "Restricted Policy", says: "Contrary to popular belief, there is evidence that heroin does not necessarily intoxicate the user - it can be stabilised with people living relatively normal lives."

Home Office sources said yesterday that three trials of heroin prescription have produced positive preliminary results. The NHS prescriptions are likely to be made available to hard-core users across the country next year. The Home Office said that only persistent users who have failed to respond to methadone would qualify.

"It is only going to apply to a small number of people," said a Home Office spokesman. The scheme would cost an estimated £12,000 a year per addict, but could save thousands more on the cost of prison, court and police time.

The review warns that the Government is fighting a losing battle against drug smugglers. "There is mounting evidence of the impossibility of winning the war against drugs supply," it says. It suggests legalising the supply of drugs and licensing their distribution or supplying them "over the counter" to combat crime.

"A system of controlled availability of drugs would allow the Government to exert a much greater degree of influence over the way in which substances are used than is currently possible," says the report, which was scrutinised by Downing Street.

Source: "The Independent", 25 February 2007, by Marie Woolf, political editor

REMARK

"The medical profession and the addicted community has a complex, symbiotic, mutually dependent relationship that does none of us any good. Basically they pretend to be ill and we pretend to treat them. And thousands of public employees make a good living out of it. Prescribing for opiate addicts is like throwing petrol on a fire; pointless, counterproductive, stupid, self-defeating. And yet we keep doing it. I have a radical and potentially unpopular suggestion...Let's just stop".

(Dr Phil Peverley, 'PULSE')

ITALY: Alarm over cocaine use

Italy is becoming a nation of cocaine users, according to a senior government minister. Interior Minister Giuliano Amato said Italians are consuming a gigantic amount of cocaine because blue-collar workers and the middle class have joined the rich in snorting the white powder.

"There is a frightening demand for the drug," Amato told reporters on a recent trip to crime-ridden Naples. "The phenomenon can't be fought by the authorities alone if it is a demand that comes from families, youths and adults -- that is, from across all segments of society." - Italian newspapers called Amato's comments a cause for nationwide alarm and said the drug had become a "mass market" product.

Cocaine use in Italy has more than doubled in the past five years and about 7 percent of Italians snort it, according to some estimates. In the wealthy business center of Milan, one in 10 people are said to use it.

Italian police seized more than four tons of cocaine last year. One ton came from the shipping and port region of Campania, of which Naples is the capital.

Although top models and businessmen shell out as much as 300 euros ($390) for a gram, cocaine cut for consumption by less well-heeled young people and students costs less than 40 euros per gram on the street, Rigoldi said.

Italy's drug woes are part of a wider problem in Europe. The EU's executive commission last year said drug abuse in the 27-nation bloc and the deaths it causes had reached unprecedented levels.

/By: Deepa Babington for Reuters

ECAD is Europe's leading organization 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 legalization and promote policies to eradicate drug abuse worldwide.
Has your city joined ECAD?

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