



## ECAD IV Balkan Conference in Bourgas



Before the Conference begins (left to right): ECAD director Tomas Hallberg speaking to the conference hosts - Bourgas Vice Mayor, Dr. Atanas Boshev (middle) and Bourgas Mayor, Dr. Ioan Kostadinov (right in the front).

ECAD IV Balkan Network Conference in Bourgas, Bulgaria, has attracted more than 75 specialists from 12 countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Montenegro and Macedonia).

Two conference days, 5 and 6 of October, were filled with interesting reports about prevention practices in different countries, national programs, work of the mass media and many others.

The conference was started with a press briefing at Bourgas City Hall. Journalists from local and national newspapers and TV channels gathered to listen to what ECAD director, Tomas Hallberg and Bourgas vice mayor, Dr. Atanas Boshev had to say about ECAD policy, Bourgas prevention practices and common cooperation in the Balkans.

Balkan cities have traditionally been active in ECAD network and this time they demonstrated their commitment again. Besides overwhelmingly interesting reports, enthusiastic atmosphere at the Compass Hall pro-

duced a decision to launch a new ECAD office in the Balkans.

It was said many times during the conference that Balkans is a very special place, a place where East and West meet. These crossroads is also a vital focal point for ECAD work, which is why ECAD needs a firmer stance for its restrictive policies there. Several Balkan cities, in Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro, have been evaluating the possibility to host ECAD representation office. However, this idea had initially come from Bourgas and almost all municipalities in question consequently approved that this city would become the home base for ECAD Balkan office.

ECAD Advisory Board meeting was held on Saturday, October 7. Besides usual agenda discussions, the Board members came up with plenty of ideas as to how ECAD work could be improved.

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### It is more than possible to cut down the opium cultivation

*Opium poppy cultivation in the Golden Triangle - Laos, Myanmar and Thailand - fell 29 percent in 2006, bringing the total decline in the region since 1998 to 85 percent, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said this month.*

*"This is a remarkable success in the reduction of illicit crops which is so far unmatched anywhere in the world," UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa said. "It represents an important step towards the goal of eliminating the cultivation of illicit crops worldwide."*

*"The Golden Triangle's share of world opium poppy cultivation has fallen from 66% in 1998 to only 12% in 2006. Laos and Thailand are almost opium-free. If the current trend continues, there will soon be only one opium-producing country left in the world - Afghanistan," he added.*

UNODC's 2006 Opium Poppy Cultivation in the Golden Triangle survey showed cultivation in the three countries fell to 24,160 hectares this year from 34,720 in 2005.

This compares with total cultivation of 157,900 hectares in 1998, the year the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs called for a significant reduction in global illicit drug cultivation within 10 years.

The Golden Triangle now produces only about five per cent of the world's opium, down from 33 per cent in 1998. *"It is essential to ensure that the remarkable progress that has been made in this region is maintained," the UNODC chief said. "That will require greater investment in poor and often remote rural communities that have been affected by the elimination of opium poppy crops. Farmers need to feel confident that alternative livelihoods are sustainable. Otherwise, the temptation to return to opium poppy farming will be too great."* /Continued on page 3

## Swedish Örebro takes over after Västerås



The head of ECAD Sweden network, Mats Ericson, who has worked in this capacity for the last five years, is leaving politics and his post in ECAD Swedish network. His duties will be taken over by Carina Dahl, commissioner at Örebro Municipality. The decision was reached as ECAD Sweden concluded its two-day-conference in the city of Örebro.

The conference, which is annual for the representatives of ECAD Sweden member cities, was held at more than 700-years old castle of Örebro on 28-29 of September.

About one hundred participants enjoyed an intensive programme, which included a report from Swedish National Drug policy Coordinator.

Swedish network discussed international perspective and local practical work that has already become a custom for such conferences. One of the questions that caused agitated debate was the attitude of Swedish

ECAD member cities to the practice of injection rooms in Oslo.

The participants were also invited to make some study visits, one of those were to the penal institution of Kumla. Surprisingly enough, visitors discovered that the problems of drug abuse there were minor,

which is rare for the rest of the country's penal institutions.

Conference programme covered many prevention measures, ranging from the message of the Swedish Children's Ombudsman, prevention at schools, work of the police in drug abuse environment, drug-free provisions at school and introduction of compulsory measures for heavy drug addicts.

*Given possibility to compare practical work tasks performed at the municipalities and putting this into the international perspective is of utmost importance for local network of Swedish ECAD cities, emphasizes Mats Ericson.*

*The main problem for us to solve is to respond to the challenge of drug liberals. We must not stop debating about "harm reduction" with them. All people need to understand the social and political implications of the harm-reduction concept. Clarity in this question is crucial, concludes Mats.*

## Does every third MP in Italy use drugs?

- asks Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet in an article dated October 11, 2006.

Italian TV show *The Hyenas* stopped its preparatory filming session only a couple of hours before broadcasting. The programme leaders had invited 50 Italian parliament members to participate in a studio debate. Guests' faces were wiped with special drug-wipes to test their recent drug use, with an excuse of powdering their sweaty foreheads before the cameras were on. The tests were analysed at a laboratory. The results were as follows:

- 32% have used some sort of drugs during the last 36 hours.
- 4 persons have used cocaine. Italian parliamentarians were very much enraged afterwards. *This is interfering into private life*, said former speaker Pierferdinando Casini.



## Afghanistan: warning for heroin overdoses

*The world's health authorities should prepare for a significant increase in the number of deaths from heroin overdoses following a dramatic surge in opium production in Afghanistan this year, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio Maria Costa, warned.*

In a letter sent to nearly 90 health ministers in the beginning of October, he said past experience showed that a sharp rise in the supply of heroin tended to lead to an increase in the purity of the end product rather than lower street prices.

"The abundant supply of Afghan heroin is likely to result in dramatic increases in the purity of street heroin," Mr Costa said. "This, in turn, is likely to prompt a substantial increase in the number of deaths by overdose as addicts are not used to injecting doses containing such high concentrations of the drug.

"UNODC's 2006 Afghan Opium Survey, published last month, showed that illicit opium production in Afghanistan was a record 6,100 tons this year, an increase of 49 per cent on 2005. Afghanistan accounts for 92 per cent of total world supply of opium. Warning that the increase represented a very severe health threat, Mr Costa said: "I therefore strongly encourage you, the local health authorities and the community drug treatment centres in your country to take every possible measure in the period ahead and to alert practitioners to the possible risk increase."

By UNDOC.org



GOOD NEWS

## Senlis Council to leave Afghanistan

According to the British BBC news services, Afghan Minister of Interior has asked Senlis Council to leave to country.

*"They have been making our work more difficult,"* says the minister.

Senlis Council has been tackling legalization issues in many other contexts. It is one of the most powerful proponents of reformation of the UN conventions. It has offices in Brussels, London and Kabul and, according to its own home page on the Internet, it has 37 fellow workers, 14 of these employed in Afghanistan.

## Opium cultivation...

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Laos and Thailand saw increases in opium cultivation in 2006 but these were from a very low base. The two countries have both reached such low levels of cultivation that they are no longer exporters of opium. In Myanmar, cultivation fell 34 per cent to 21,500 hectares, representing a dramatic 83 per cent fall on the 130,300 hectares under cultivation in 1998. But the country remains the world's second largest opium poppy grower after Afghanistan.

Costa said that poor farmers in the region who were forced to stop growing opium were vulnerable to varying degrees of humanitarian crises. "The need to protect the rights of these populations to live in security, freedom and dignity must be an integral part of the enforcement of drug control and opium bans," he added. He also called for the continuation of major development assistance and said the Golden Triangle countries needed to maintain their resolve to turn their back on opium.

*/Source: www.undoc.org*

## Swedish expert on drug policies in the Balkans

*"We should work harder spreading our successful drug policies", - says Sven Persson, an expert in drug prevention from the city of Gävle in Sweden.*

Sven has just returned from the Balkans after a field-study visit, a visit that was made in order to observe Bulgarian drug-fighting trends in the beginning of October and subsidized by ECAD.

-Thanks to the established contacts through ECAD project Youth in Europe, I had already had an approximate picture of the drug situation before I ventured this journey, tells Sven.

-Bulgaria has a few million less inhabitants than Sweden and roughly 30 000 heroin addicts, while Sweden has about 27 000 hard drug abusers - that is to draw some parallels. That is taking into account all narcotic substances, not only heroin.

-Bulgaria's exposed position, with the Balkan route crossing the country, is bound to have an impact on the drug situation, deliberates Sven. -That is why it sounded so frustrating that the whole Bourgas region of over 400 000 inhabitants had only 6 drug police workers...

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*Left to right: Juliana Raicu, Bucharest National Anti-drug Agency, Jim Corr, Chairman of ECAD, Paulina Lönnroth, ECAD coordinator, and Sven Persson*

## Italy relaxes cannabis laws

*Boosted by its overwhelming victory in the referendum on devolution in June, the centre-left Government of Romano Prodi has moved to dismantle yet another legacy of the Berlusconi era by overturning its "zero tolerance" drugs policy.*

The change will restore the distinction between "hard" and "soft" drugs, and will increase the amount of cannabis a person can possess without being arrested as a suspected dealer.

During its first month in power the Centre Left, which won local elections last month as well as the general election in April, has reversed the policies of Silvio Berlusconi's five-year administration on issues from Iraq to significant infrastructure projects.

Livia Turco, the Minister of Health and a member of the former Communist Democrats of the Left, said that she would act immediately on the amount of cannabis permitted, an administrative measure that does not require parliamentary approval.

She said the amount of cannabis allowed for personal use - 500mg - would be doubled. Nearly 10 per cent of Italians smoke cannabis regularly, according to a recent survey. A third of Italian teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 say they have smoked it at least once.

Paolo Ferrero, the Welfare Minister, who is a Communist, said he would ask Parliament to repeal the "zero tolerance" policy and re-establish the distinction between hard and soft drugs. The emphasis would be on "prevention rather than punishment" and "treatment and rehabilitation rather than repression". This would help to fight illegal drug-dealing by the Mafia, Signor Ferrero said.

However, Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of the UN Office

on Drugs and Crime, issued a warning this week that cannabis posed "health risks" similar to those caused by heroin.

In the 2006 World Drug Report, he said cannabis had become more potent in recent decades and Governments that maintained "inadequate" policies "get the drug problem they deserve . . . Policy reversals leave young people confused as to just how dangerous cannabis is".

Daniela Santanche, a member of the Far Right Alleanza Nazionale - the moving force behind "zero tolerance" - said Signora Turco's decision would "send a terrible message to young people that drug use is OK".

The new drugs policy has also raised alarm among Catholic members of the centre-left coalition. The Vatican objected strongly this month when Signor Ferrero suggested that Italy might introduce supervised "shooting galleries" where heroin addicts could inject themselves in a controlled, hygienic environment.

A number of nations, including Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Australia and Canada, have supervised "drug-consumption centres". But the International Narcotics Control Board says this appears to condone hard drugs and thus undermines the UN's prohibitionist policies.

Signor Ferrero also caused a furore recently by declaring that "many professional people in Italy, including politicians" use cocaine. Health experts say there has been an 80 per cent rise in cocaine use in Italy over the past ten years. There are also an estimated 300,000 heroin addicts.

*By Richard Owen in Rome for "Times online", June 27, 2006*

## Swedish expert on drug policies in the Balkans

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...Last year they have documented barely 121 drug-related crimes. The drug legislation was tightened up in 2004, and the number of drug offences is increasing, although from a previously low level. -Similar to other Eastern European countries, harm-reduction movement has been very active here\*.

Harm reduction groups, with support from the Open Society financed by George Soros, and from the Netherlands, Belgium and other countries, have launched a number of NFOs within the drug field.

- I have asked people I met at a meeting, how they would describe Sweden in this context, and they said that Sweden was a country with conservative drug policies and a strict infectious disease control legislation, which discriminates drug-addicts. They got this picture from the mass media and from their European co-operation partners. An interesting discussion on drug issues followed, which hopefully corrected the disinformation about Swedish drug policies to some extent.

*- What was most impressive about your Bulgarian visit?*

- A visit to Sofia's *Municipal Centre for Addiction* has influenced me a lot. The staff there consists of 16 (plenty!) people working with prevention at schools and out-patients. There are 16 similar centers all over Bulgaria.

- It was also very inspiring to see the willingness to solve drug problems and people's boosting energy to tackle these issues. That was also very obvious during ECAD Balkan conference in Bourgas, which pinned the whole week of my study visits. To launch ECAD office in Bourgas, in order to coordinate Balkan activities is an important decision that can become an instrument in moulding the public opinion, which I think I have already started, concludes Sven.

*\*In Sofia I saw one example of this, namely Initiative for Health, a harm-reduction programme supported by Soros, and with needle exchange as their main activity. Via two field-stations and three busses, the programme meets some 1000 drug addicts monthly without offering any treatment for their drug abuse.*

## ECAD Conference in Bourgas

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Jim Corr, the Chairman of the Board, welcomed Mr. Pawel Wypych, director of Warsaw Social Policy Department and Mr. Piotr Laszewicz, his colleague, as new members of the Board and political representatives of Warsaw, the city that is becoming more and more active in ECAD network.

Stockholm City representative for the last four years, Margareta Olofsson, leaves ECAD Advisory Board. The Board thanks her for many working hours that were spent together for the sake of drug-free Europe.



*Jim Corr, ECAD Advisory Board Chairman thanks Margareta Olofsson on behalf of ECAD*

In connection with Swedish national elections, which took place at the end of September, the City of Stockholm will be represented by new politicians onwards.

*ECAD sends its warmest regards to the Mayor of Bourgas, Dr. Yoan Kostadinov, his deputy, Dr. Atanas Boshev and senior prevention specialist, Dr. Ivailo Dimitrov for their cordial welcome and flawless organization of the conference.*

Thanks to the work of such devoted partners ECAD has solid grounds for closer cooperation in the Balkans.

## Anabolic steroids misused massively

*The use of anabolic steroids (1) is becoming mainstream as young men turn to the drugs to boost self-confidence and improve body image, a survey of 20 UK towns and cities by Druglink magazine, published by the drugs charity DrugScope, has found.*

*Traditionally used primarily by elite athletes and bodybuilders, the popularity of anabolic steroids has grown dramatically on the UK drugs scene, with 11 out of the 20 areas surveyed reporting a significant steroid presence in their drug market. Drug workers are seeing young professionals, building site workers and students, aged between 16 and 25, using steroids for purely aesthetic reasons – a shortcut to the muscled, toned physique of their sporting heroes. Supply of the Class C drug, a human growth hormone, is illegal, but possession is not. Side effects of steroid misuse in men include reduced sperm count, kidney and liver problems, high blood pressure and increased aggression. Injectors risk contracting viruses such as HIV, hepatitis B and C.*

*Another development picked up by the survey is the decline of heroin deals by the gram in a market increasingly dominated by the £10 bag, or even discount offers on bags of heroin and crack cocaine. This particular sales technique is associated with a worrying rise in 'speedballing', where the two drugs are simultaneously injected from the same syringe. /By [Drugscope.org.uk](http://Drugscope.org.uk)*



**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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