



Press Release from UNODC and ECAD



Tomas Hallberg, ECAD, Antonio Maria Costa, UNODC

UN drugs chief warns European mayors about risk of overdoses from bumper Afghan opium crop

Vienna, 22 November 2006 — Europe's cities face the risk of a significant increase in the number of deaths from heroin overdoses because of the record opium crop in Afghanistan this year, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio Maria Costa said on 22 November.

In a letter to 63 mayors of European cities, he repeated the warning he has made to the world's national health authorities that a sharp rise in the supply of heroin tended in the past to lead to an increase in the purity of the end product rather than lower street prices.

"I strongly encourage the mayors of Europe's cities 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," Mr Costa said in the letter.

At a meeting on 22 November with Tomas Hallberg, Director of European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD), the UNODC chief discussed efforts by cities and municipalities to combat drug abuse more effectively.

"I welcome ECAD's efforts to get European cities united around the goal of reducing drug addiction," Mr Costa said. "Some cities take the problem more seriously than others. Illicit drugs are a serious threat to our young people and the very future of our societies. We need a robust and consistent response."

Mr Hallberg urged European politicians "to take responsibility for what is happening in their own backyards." "They cannot simply sit back and wait in the hope that their drug problem will disappear by itself or be solved by others," he said.

The two men agreed that rising cocaine use in Europe, especially in Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, was a cause for serious concern.

ECAD is the leading organization for promoting a drug-free Europe. Representing millions of European citizens, ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives against drug abuse and in support of the United Nations conventions to strengthen the international drug control system.

ARCD shares concerns

The French-Swiss Anti-Drug Association ARCD (Association romande contre la drogue) shares the concern of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio Maria Costa, who warns the mayors of the 63 cities and municipalities against the risk of a significant increase in the number of deaths from heroin overdoses because of the record opium crop this year in Afghanistan.

In the press release from 23 November, 2006 ARCD states that

"This is an opportunity to recall that the number of acute drug-related deaths sharply increased in Switzerland last year, from 182 to 211. In the cantons (states) of Zurich and Geneva alone, this number increased respectively from 58 to 63 and 4 to 14. It is also worth mentioning here that these two cantons each have one or more premises for the injection or inhalation of illicit drugs, whose very existence seriously detracts from prevention, therapy centred on abstinence and repression – the three pillars of a coherent and restrictive drug policy. Conversely, in France, which has no such "shooting galleries", the number of lethal overdoses continues to decline, with only 57 cases listed last year (*Le Figaro*, 19 October 2006).

★ ECAD NEWS

"The ARCD most earnestly urges the authorities to encourage drug addicts to join a care network, to maintain their support for therapeutic institutions centred on abstinence, to improve drug prevention and to reinforce repression of drug-trafficking, all of which are measures which should contribute to reducing both supply and demand while at the same time curtailing the social costs generated by drugs, which stand at more than 4 billion francs a year."

Busy autumn for ECAD Regional offices in Russia and Latvia:

On resources, drug-related deaths and fighting drug mafia in own backyard

ECAD's autumn 2006 was marked by a number of conferences and seminars arranged by the ECAD regional offices in Russia and Latvia. "ECAD Newsletter" asked Tomas Hallberg, Director ECAD, to comment.

Tomas: Kazan conference is one of the two annual ECAD conferences that we carry out in Russia. This conference was arranged in cooperation with the municipality of Kazan and partly with the government of Tatarstan.

"EN": What does the drug situation in Kazan look like?

Tomas: One can say that the situation is slightly better than the Russian average. The municipality puts big resources into drug combat. What is good in Kazan and what they have shown is development of treatment and rehabilitation system. It is what many other Russian cities lack.

"EN": What was your role at the conference?

Tomas: I explained how ECAD is organised and how we work. We had also invited two other speakers from Sweden, Per Johansson from the Swedish National Association for a Drug-free Society (RNS) who talked about the role of NGOs in creation of the Swedish successful drug control policy, along with Johanna Gripenberg who presented Stockholm's municipal project "Stad" ("Town") aimed against dealing



Some facts

Population: just over a million
Capital of the Russian Federation's Republic Tatarstan
Kazan's Kremlin is on UNESCO World Heritage list

with drugs in restaurants and bars.

"EN": Did you have a chance to form an opinion on how drug combat is functioning in Kazan?

Tomas: It is rather difficult to grasp how anything is functioning while attending a conference. However one can form an opinion of what resources and energy are being devoted to combating drugs. In my view, there are many skilled, well-read specialists working hard with the issue in the city. They have money and resources behind them.

"EN": What impression did the city make on you?

Tomas: Kazan is a very nice and beautiful city, where East and West meet. There are many beautiful churches and mosques.



On November 17, Tomas Hallberg took part in the next ECAD seminar arranged in cooperation with the St. Petersburg State University. This seminar was about drug-related deaths.

"EN": Tomas, are the drug-related deaths a topical issue for Russia?

Tomas: Yes, definitely it is a topical issue. This has been recognised even by the Russian state drug control agency, "Gosnarkokontrol". One of the representatives for the agency said during the seminar that the official death-rate related to drug abuse is 8,000 per year but he added that this number might be incorrect and that it could be as much as 70,000 per year.

"EN": Drug-related death is a rather complex definition. Did the participants agree on a certain interpretation of it?

Tomas: This is what the seminar was about, to show that the "drug-related death" is a political definition. It is basically impossible to compare different countries since statistical data is being collected according to different criteria.



"EN": You have also participated in a security conference in Riga, Latvia.

Tomas: I was invited by the director of the ECAD Regional office in Latvia Andrejs Vilks. Security conferences are often about fight against terrorism and organised crime. Many think that it is more important to stop illicit drugs at borders. My starting point for this conference was that one should fight drug terrorism in one's own backyard.

"EN": And this means...

Tomas: This means in fact that we need to work hard on the streets and squares, by the schools, in restaurants, bars, and at discos to stop drug abuse and to chase drug traffickers down to the last link. As a result there won't be much money left to send as "tax" to drug dealers. I demonstrated in my speech that since the drug use in Sweden is only a third of the European average (according to a new UN report*),

“ My starting point for this conference was that one should fight drug terrorism in one's own backyard. ”
Tomas Hallberg



Swedes consequently contribute only a third of the money to those who profit by drug trafficking. And the whole deal is about money, is it not?

"EN": Has your idea been met with sympathy?

Tomas: Yes. The idea has also received good media coverage. One of the bigger Latvian newspapers devoted an entire article to my speech. I would also like to note that the conference was broadcast to a number of Latvian universities whose students could actively participate and put questions to the speakers.

"EN": Thank you.

* Download from www.ecad.net: "Sweden's Successful Drug Policy: A Review of the Evidence"

Shared Responsibility: About Cocaine in Colombia and Europe

Visit the homesite www.sharedresponsibility.gov.co to find information on cocaine and its connection to Colombia and Europe.

Those interested can also read a speech that the former chief for drug combat in Colombia, General Rosso Jose Serrano Cadena made in the USA on September 21, 2006.

You'll find the speech at

www.internationalrelations.house.gov/109/cad092106.pdf

Drugs in Europe now cheaper than ever before

EMCDDA's annual report

The price of illicit drugs on Europe's streets has fallen over the last five years and drugs are now probably cheaper across Europe than ever before, reports the EU drugs agency EMCDDA, in its 2006 Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in Europe. The announcement comes after a five-year trend analysis (1999–2004) of street prices of drugs in Europe revealed that average prices were falling in most countries and for most substances, in some cases by almost half. The research is the first of its kind carried out at European level.

EMCDDA Chairman Marcel Reimen said in a comment: 'Price is just one of many factors influencing people's decision to take drugs, and at present we see no simple relationship between general consumption levels and the price of drugs on the street. Nonetheless we cannot fail to be concerned that across Europe drugs are becoming cheaper in real terms. If this means that those who have a tendency to consume drugs will use them more, then the ultimate cost of drug-taking in terms of healthcare and damage to our communities is likely to be considerable'.

Prices

Prices in Europe as a whole fell in this period for cannabis resin (19%), herbal cannabis (12%), cocaine (22%) and brown heroin (45%) as well as for amphetamine (20%) and ecstasy (47%). All prices were corrected for inflation to assess 'real' prices more accurately.

Drug-related deaths

On average between 7,000 and 8,000 drug-related deaths are reported each year in Europe. Latest data show that they accounted for 3% of all deaths among adults under 40, although this figure rises to more than 7% in Denmark, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, the UK and Norway. These (minimum) estimates are directly related to drug use, mainly opioid use, but do not include deaths related to accidents, violence or chronic diseases.

Cannabis

Cannabis continues to be the most widely produced and trafficked plant-based illicit drug worldwide and is the most seized drug in the EU.

In the EU, Bulgaria, Romania and Norway, among all adults (15–64 years), it is estimated that:

- 65 million adults have used cannabis at least once (lifetime use) – 20% of adults. National figures vary widely, ranging from 2 % to 31 %, with the lowest figures in Malta, Bulgaria and Romania, and the highest in Denmark (31 %), Spain (29 %), France (26 %) and the United Kingdom (30 %). Of the 25 countries for which information is available, 13 presented lifetime prevalence rates in the range 10–20 %.
- 22.5 million have used it in the previous year (recent use) – 7% of adults. Last year use is clearly lower than lifetime experience. National figures range between 1 % and 11 %, with the lowest figures reported by Greece, Malta and Bulgaria, and the highest by Spain (11.3 %), France (9.8 %) and the United Kingdom (9.7 %).
- 12 million have used it in the last month (current use) – 4% of adults. Estimates of last month prevalence will more closely represent regular use of the drug. Country figures range between 0.5 % and 7.5 %, a 15-fold difference. The lowest figures were reported from Lithuania, Malta, Sweden and Bulgaria, and the highest from the Czech Republic (4.8 %),

Spain (7.6 %) and the United Kingdom (5.6 %).

- 3 million are using it on a daily/almost daily basis (intensive use) – about 1% of adults.
- Cannabis is reported as the main problem drug by around 15% of those **seeking treatment** for drug problems in Europe, and by 27% of those who are seeking treatment for the first time in their life, making it the next most commonly reported drug after heroin.

- **The potency** of cannabis products is determined by their content of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the primary active constituent. In 2004, the reported average THC content of cannabis resin at retail level varied from less than 1 % (Bulgaria) to 16.9 % (the Netherlands), while herbal cannabis potency ranged from 0.6 % (Poland) to 12.7 % (England and Wales). The potency of locally produced herbal cannabis was reported at 17.7 % in the Netherlands.

Cocaine

Around 10 million Europeans (over 3% of adults 15–64 years) have ever used cocaine and around 3.5 million are likely to have used it in the last year (1%). In terms of absolute numbers, cocaine now ranks in second place as Europe's most used illegal drug after cannabis, slightly ahead of amphetamine and ecstasy. Most national surveys estimate that between 1% and 10% of young Europeans (15–34 years) have ever tried the drug and between 0.2% and 4.8% have used it in the last 12 months. The higher rates of use are found among young adults in Denmark, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands – where rates of last year use are around 2% – and in Spain and the UK, which stand out with estimates exceeding 4%. However, for these last two countries, big increases in use in the mid- to late-1990s were followed by a more stable situation from around 2001.

General information

This year the *Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in Europe* offers data from the 25 EU Member States, Norway, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. Cannabis, cocaine and opioids, as well as amphetamines, ecstasy and psychotropic drugs are the focus of four chapters looking at drug use, trends, supply and treatment. Further chapters relate to: policies and laws; responding to drug problems; infectious diseases and drug-related deaths; and monitoring problem and multiple drug use. The report will be available in 23 languages.

Online versions of the report are published at

<http://annualreport.emcdda.europa.eu>, a dedicated website also offering EMCDDA **news releases** (23 languages) and **national reports** (English) from the **Reitox national focal points**. The report is complemented by three **Selected issues** (English) entitled: 'European drug policies: extended beyond illicit drugs?'; 'A gender perspective on drug use and responding to drug problems'; and 'Developments in drug use within recreational settings' (<http://issues06.emcdda.europa.eu>).

Methadone fails 97% of drug addicts

Scotland Research

The Scottish newspaper "Scotland on Sunday" turns to the assessment of the Scottish Executive's methadone programme made by Prof. Neil McKeganey: A key government drugs policy has been exposed as a shocking failure after it emerged that giving methadone to heroin addicts has a 97% failure rate.

The "Scotland on Sunday" accounts: The report was compiled by Neil McKeganey, Professor of Drug Misuse Research at the University of Glasgow, and one of the most authoritative figures on drugs in Scotland. His survey is the first major assessment of the Executive's methadone programme.

McKeganey's report was based on interviews with 695 drug users who began treatment for their addiction in 2001. The majority were given methadone-based care, while a small percentage were placed in residential rehabilitation. The authors then interviewed them 33 months afterwards to find out whether, over a 90-day period, they had come off drugs.

For those on the most common form of treatment - methadone maintenance - only 3.4% were clear. For those who had been in residential rehabilitation, often for up to nine months and without any methadone, the figure was 29.4%.

The research also proved the clear social benefits of getting addicts off drugs. Of those who were "clean", some 59% were in employment or taking an education course, as opposed to only 29% of those who were still on drugs. A total of 79% of those who were drug-free said they felt better, as opposed to 47% of drug users.

The biggest difference, however, was on crime. Only 13% of those who were drug-free admitted to committing any crime. The figure for those who were on drugs was a staggering 91%.

In Scotland, prescriptions for methadone have risen from 98,131 in 1994 to 411,339 in 2005.

McKeganey told Scotland on Sunday: "The remarkable figure is that if we weren't giving them anything at all, after three years some people would have come off anyway. Around 1% or 2% would have stopped, just because they had had enough. You have to ask yourself: the methadone programme is estimated to cost around £12m a year. If all you are doing is getting 3% of people off drugs after three years - you may say that it is a cheaper programme than residential rehabilitation - but is it justified when it gets so few people off?"

More reports from the Centre for Drug Misuse

"What are drug users looking for when they contact drug services: abstinence or harm reduction?" was published in the leading journal "Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy Journal". The research was carried out by a team led by Professor Neil McKeganey at the Centre for Drug Misuse.

The report shows that the majority of drug addicts contacting drug treatment services in Scotland are looking to achieve abstinence rather than to receive advice on harm reduction from treatment services. The research involved interviewing 1007 drug addicts from 33 drug treatment agencies across Scotland starting drug abuse treatment in 2001. Sixty per cent of those interviewed identified abstinence as their sole reason for contacting drug treatment services. Seven per cent were looking for stabilised drug use and one per cent was looking for advice on safer drug use.

<http://www.gla.ac.uk:443/newsdesk/newsletter/details.cfm?>

Flying Dutchman

Election story

Elections in the Netherlands: a person sentenced for trafficking in "soft" drugs released to serve the remaining term as a volunteer for the political party whose aim is to legalise "soft" drugs

According to the Dutch newspaper "De Telegraaf" of November 20, 2006, director of the Dutch aftercare service *Reclassering Nederland* finds "nothing wrong" with the fact that his institution allowed an (ex)convict to devote his energy to a political party whose aim is to legalise so called "soft" drugs. Cees Hendriks, alias "Space Cees", drug trafficker, serves his remaining sentence of two years as a volunteer for the political party Green Free (slogan "vote cannabis list 20" participating in national elections on November 22, 2006)

Meanwhile Cees Hendriks refuses to pay a fine of Euro 10,000 which he was sentenced for distributing about 250,000 empty wiet (Dutch marijuana) sachets from the air above Amsterdam.

"The environmental committee of Amsterdam will never receive the fine because I did that promotional work by contract of the Justice department. In fact I'm doing this preliminary work in order to achieve the legalization of "soft" drugs and my boss is the department of Justice," explains Space Cees Hendriks.



The Hague politicians are flabbergasted that the rehabilitation service makes use of a former convict, "De Telegraaf" continues. Mr Weekers, MP, burst out: "Have they gone mad? This act undermines our constitutional state". He required an immediate explanation by the minister of Justice Hirsh Balin...

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 **young generation's** well being.



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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