



## FREE DRUGS or DRUG-FREE?



*Antonio Maria Costa, The Executive Director of UNODC, put forward his views at the conference in New Orleans hosted by the Drug Policy Alliance on 5-8 December. Here is his speech slightly abridged:*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

From both sides of the aisle, there have been noises about my presence here. Is it right to invite this fellow, the so-called drug czar of the United Nations, to our annual conference? Indeed, in some of the pro-legalization literature I am depicted as a die-hard prohibitionist, a drug control Taleban, a naive proponent of a drug free world, even a general in the war on drugs.

I have heard similar complaints from the opposite front: what is the point of the UNODC Executive Director joining the caucus of those who ask for the end of drug control, mixing with drug legalizers, the radical fringe of the pro-drug lobby, pressing for a world of free drugs that will never come?

I am glad that eventually we all decided that this exchange of views could be constructive, and help public opinion understand better a century-old drama: drug abuse, and the damage that it causes.

Is there some common ground between those who insist on a world free of drugs, and those who propose a world of free drugs ? By the time this session is over, I hope we will all be able to answer in the affirmative. Here are a few pointers:

First, health and security have to be protected when we talk about society, including when we talk about how society deals with drugs.

Second, as a corollary, we can all agree on the need to reduce the harm caused by drugs -- by preventing their use, by treating those who abuse them, and by limiting the damage they cause to the individual and society.

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## Use of cocaine soars in European countries

*Cocaine use is soaring in Europe, where at least 4.5 million people used the white powder last year compared to 3.5 million the year before.*

Twelve million European adults have used the drug at least once, and Spain, Italy and the UK are Europe's hot spots for use of the drug. The alarming new figures are contained in a report by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in Lisbon.

One in 10 young males in Denmark, Spain and the UK are reported to have taken the drug at least once.

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*ECAD  
wishes you  
a happy  
and white  
holiday  
season!*



## The importance of family dinners

Compared to teens who have frequent family dinners (five or more per week), those who have family dinners two or fewer times per week, are

- *three and a half times likelier to have abused prescription drugs;*
- *three and a half times likelier to have used an illegal drug other than marijuana or prescription drugs;*
- *three times likelier to have used marijuana; more than two and a half times likelier to have used tobacco; and*
- *one and a half times likelier to have drunk alcohol, according to a new report by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University and sponsored by The Safeway Foundation.*

The report, *The Importance of Family Dinners IV*, also reveals that compared to 12- and 13-year olds who have frequent family dinners, those who have infrequent family dinners are:

- \* Six times likelier to have used marijuana;
- \* More than four and a half times likelier to have used tobacco; and
- \* More than two and a half times likelier to have used alcohol.

Among 14- and 15-year olds, those who have infrequent family dinners are three times likelier to have used marijuana and two and a half times likelier to have used tobacco compared to those who have frequent family dinners.

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# ECAD in Latvia: the aspects of curbing drug abuse and HIV-spread



ECAD SEMINAR

Scientific and practical seminars arranged by ECAD Office in Latvia have become a good tradition. Also this December around 20 specialists in different fields of prevention (*primary or universal, secondary or selective, tertiary prevention and rehabilitation treatment*) were evaluating the current drug situation in Latvia and getting an overview of the addiction tendencies in Europe.

Representatives of Riga Addiction Prevention Centre, AIDS prevention centre, the Ministry of the Interior and ECAD assembled for discussions in the beginning of December. The seminar in form of opinion exchange proved to be successful this time as well. The specialists analyzed the efficiency of currently applied state prevention programmes (National Limitations` and Control Programme for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances 2005-2008 and Curbing the Spread of HIV and AIDS (2003-2007) programme).

Although the spread of the drug abuse has shown some stabilizing trends during the last years in Latvia, the state programmes referred

to during the conference have been heavily criticized: *“the programmes lack strategic planning”* and *“are not balanced with the financial capabilities of the restrained state budget, as well as the number of qualified specialists has been rather low”*.

According to the state Narcology (*addiction treatment*) agency director, *Astrida Stirna*, the number of addicts has grown 10% in 2006 compared to 2005; the number of rehabilitation in-patients has grown 24% during the last year.

According to the latest data from Riga Addiction Prevention Centre, Latvian capital city has approximately 5000 injecting opiate users and a bit more than 50 000 of Riga's inhabitants are addicted to various types of narcotic substances and this number is growing steadily. It is especially alarming since the age of drug abusers is getting remarkably lower. To resolve the situation the delegates suggested involvement of non-governmental organisations and municipal authorities at early prevention stages.



Low threshold practices such as syringe exchange and methadone programmes caused agitated debates and were much criticized for the lack of scientific prove of their efficiency.

UN project coordinator in the Baltic states *Signe Rotberga* acquainted the seminar participants with the UN activities and new projects in the field, the priorities of which are prevention, rehabilitation treatment based on scientific approach and elimination of addiction consequences.

The participants proposed to hold this kind of opinion exchange seminars on a regular basis; the next meeting is planned for February 2008 in Riga City Council and it will sum up the results of Latvian prevention work for 2007.

*Andrey Vilks, ECAD representative in Latvia*

## The aspiring congregation for the mass use of drugs

The British Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs (nowadays *“The Aspiring Congregation for the Mass Use of Drugs”*) is completely out of touch with reality as shown by their latest discussions about downgrading ecstasy. As if their efforts to counteract existing science on the dangers of cannabis wood not be enough, they are now trying to expand their realm of non-wisdom to comprise ecstasy.



Nick Clegg, Liberal Democrat MP for Sheffield Hallam is quoted by the Guardian as saying *“when will the government wake up and acknowledge something many members of the public know: we are losing the war on drugs?”*

*- Dear Mr. Clegg, the war on drugs hasn't even started in Britain.*

★ OPINION

Pro-cannabis-declassifier David Blunkett, another member of the non-wisdom drug policy congregation, is one of the more prominent causes of the loss Mr Clegg is referring to, heavily seconded by some ignorant politicians and organisations such as *Transform* and *DrugScope* to try to make sure that things would fall apart completely.

The Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs has lost its credibility, something which most non-drug users have discovered a long time ago. The British government would be well off doing without them or at least look for advisers who are in touch with reality.

*By HNNSweden.nu*

# The importance of family dinners

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Among 16- and 17-year olds, those who have infrequent family dinners are twice as likely to have used marijuana and almost twice as likely to have used tobacco compared to those who have frequent family dinners.

"This year's survey finds the impact of frequent family dinners is strongest amongst 12- and 13-year olds, though the relationship holds true at every age," said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA's chairman and president and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. "The evidence is on the table. Teens who have frequent family dinners are less likely to smoke, drink, abuse prescription drugs and use illegal drugs."

The CASA report found 59 percent of teens report having dinner with their families at least five times a week, the same proportion CASA has observed over the past several years. Consistent with what teens report, 59 percent of parents say they have frequent family dinners. Findings in The Importance of Family Dinners IV draw from CASA's 12th annual back-to-school survey, released this past August.

## Family Dining and Current Teen Substance Use

The report also found that teens, who have frequent family dinners are less likely to have used alcohol, gotten drunk, used tobacco or used marijuana in the past 30 days.

In the past 30 days, compared to teens who have frequent family dinners, those who have infrequent family dinners are:

- \* More than twice as likely to have used marijuana;
- \* Almost twice as likely to have drunk alcohol;
- \* Almost twice as likely to have used tobacco; and
- \* More than one and half times likelier to have gotten drunk.

## What They Want at the Table is You

This year's report finds that 84 percent of teens prefer to have dinner with their families rather than eat alone. Eighty-one percent of 16- and 17-year olds also prefer to dine with their families.

Of those teens who have less than three family dinners per week, 62 percent say they would prefer to eat with their families compared to 92 percent of teens who have at least five family dinners per week.

The report also found that more than half of teens (59 percent) are eating dinner at home by themselves or with someone else when they are not eating dinner with their parents. Eighty-three percent of parents say they do not worry where their teen is and what he or she is doing on those evenings when their teen does not have dinner with them.

## Family Dining and Academic Performance

Teens who have dinner with their families five or more times a week are likelier to say that they receive mostly A's and B's in school compared to teens who have dinner with their families fewer than three times a week (64 percent vs. 49 percent). Teens who have fewer than three family dinners per week are more than twice as likely to do poorly in school.

## Other Findings

\* Compared to teens who have five or more family dinners per week, those who have two or less are more than one and a half times likelier to say that they can buy marijuana within a day and almost twice as likely to say they can buy it within an hour.

\* Compared to teens who have frequent family dinners, teens who have infrequent family dinners are almost three times likelier to say that future drug use is very or somewhat likely.

\* Thirteen percent of teens say that no one is telling them that they should not use illegal drugs.

For more information, visit <http://www.casafamilyday.org/>

## Drug consumption rooms in Italy

In a letter to the Mayor of Turin, *Sergio Chiamparino*, UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa expresses concern about the opening of "drug consumption rooms" and the prescription of heroin to drug users.

Costa stressed the need for proper treatment for patients addicted to heroin and invited Italy and Turin to invest more in accessible, integrated, high-quality, specialized treatments as a way of improving health and security.

Costa emphasized the danger of having drug users consuming illicit drugs which can be mixed with unknown fatal substances.

The drug consumption rooms are a way to marginalize drug users by confining them to a specific area of the city without providing the necessary assistance.

On the issue of the prescription of heroin, Costa suggested that this can facilitate contact with drug users who have not responded to other treatment programmes and encourage them to remain in contact with the health services until they can initiate a treatment and rehabilitation process. Costa argued that the prescription programme does not solve the problem of drug addiction or criminality linked with drug use.

In response to Costa's letter, Mayor Chiamparino thanked Costa for his letter stating that his position coincided with that of Costa in that he did not believe in the efficacy of the "drug consumption rooms". He had in fact requested the Minister of Health to explore the feasibility of initiating an experimental programme for the prescription of heroin.

*By UNODC.org*



Freedom, security and justice

## Civil Society Forum on Drugs in the EU

Here are three topics on the agenda taken up by the EU Action Plan on Drugs. They will be presented in the plenary and discussed in the Work Shops in Brussels 13-14 December:

- Progress review of the EU Action Plan on Drugs (*Commission*)
- Programme on Drug Prevention and Information (*Commission*)
- Recommendation on Drugs and prisons (*Commission*)

## Use of cocaine soars in European countries

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In the UK, 13 per cent of 16- to 29-year-olds who visit pubs or wine bars have used cocaine, while the highest incidence of all is found at what the report calls "electronic dance events", where up to 60 per cent of participants in France, the UK and the city of Milan in Italy are reported to have used cocaine at least once.

Cocaine has become the second most-popular drug in the EU after cannabis, according to the report. It is also often used in tandem with cannabis, the report says. "Cocaine use does not exist in isolation but rather if people are using one drug they have a higher probability of using the other." But its use varies hugely from countries such as Lithuania, where it is relatively unknown, to the UK, Italy and Spain which are beginning to rival the US and Canada in terms of high usage.

At raves not only is use widespread but dosages are high, too: in a UK clubbers' magazine quoted in the report, 90 per cent of people who responded said they took at least half a gram of cocaine, while nearly half took one gram or more. Alcohol and cocaine are often used together, the report says, with alcohol accentuating the cocaine "high" while tempering the effects of coming down from it.

The image of cocaine as the drug of choice for successful, middle class, socially integrated young adults is reinforced by the report. By contrast crack cocaine, which is not spreading to the same extent, is largely confined to socially marginalised parts of the community such as prostitutes.

Longer-term health risks of cocaine, according to the report, are cardiovascular, neurological and psychological problems which are often not immediately attributed to the drug.

Riccardo Gatti, an expert on cocaine use in Milan, where the drug is prevalent, told Corriere della Sera newspaper that the image and the reality of the drug were very different. [...]

The actual effects, says Dr Gatti, include "emotional instability, incapacity to control impulses, tendencies to paranoia, a sense of being persecuted. Sleep is disturbed, or there is none, or too much".

"People take pharmacy drugs to resolve the problem, convinced that cocaine is not involved. They pass from unrestrained laughter to tears, from sympathy to antipathy, from aggression to passivity, within minutes. In love and friendship, suspicion insinuates itself ... and in sex, compulsion, unsatisfied desire, phantom erections. The urban legend is that cocaine makes you a stud, but it's not true."

For those who decide to kick the drug, however, there are problems. "No effective medication exists to help cocaine users maintain abstinence or reduce use," says the report, "which may account for the high relapse rates in cocaine treatment."

/By Peter Popham in Rome, November 23, 2007

<http://news.independent.co.uk/europe/article3187093.ece>

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Third, I hope we also agree on the need to ensure that drug policy is evidence-based, not the result of political considerations or ideological preferences.

Fourth, I submit that the dichotomy prohibition vs legalization is a misnomer. Such a confrontation is too simplistic for scientific deliberations, nor does it help those whom we all wish to assist: our brothers and sisters, the drug addicts.

Fifth, and finally, I hope you also agree that it is more accurate to refer to our divergence as a difference about the degree to which addictive substances (drugs, alcohol and tobacco) should be regulated.

If these points are accepted, the discussion is to be centred on where the bar is set, how to define the degrees of regulation...

*Ladies and gentlemen, if you really want to rethink drug policy, then help rebalance global drug control in favour of prevention and treatment. ...Offer all drug addicts a comprehensive package that includes prevention, treatment and reintegration, not only harm reduction gadgets.*

*Do not only:*

*- prevent the spread of diseases that precede and accompany drug use, like HIV and hepatitis.*

*This is a noble aim that we all share. But let us go further and:*

*- devote more attention to prevention and early detection of drug vulnerability;*

*- reach out to people who need treatment, on a non-discriminatory basis;*

*- support the mainstreaming of drug therapy into high-quality and accessible public health and social services.*

*Let us also:*

*- promote alternative measures to prison for drug addicts, offering them rehabilitation programmes;*

*- treat all forms of addiction. There is no consolation for stabilizing drug trends if people turn instead to other substances;*

*- finally, and most importantly, make drug control a society-wide issue.*

READ MORE AT: [www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)



**ECAD** is Europe's leading organization promoting a drug free Europe and representing millions of European citizens.

ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives against drug abuse supporting the United Nations Conventions.

**Has your city joined ECAD?**

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