



## ECAD — a person-caring organisation



ECAD Advisory Board had its autumn meeting last week in Cork, Ireland. Representatives of **Istanbul, Warsaw, Burgas** and **Göteborg** including ECAD staff met with **Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor Brian Bermingham**. Despite scarce attendance the meeting resulted in productive discussions about the future of ECAD. ECAD new director Jörgen Svidén pointed out that ECAD in transition should become an "opinion-to-knowledge" organisation. *"We deliver knowledge today already, but we can do better than that, we can be a bridge from knowledge to action"*.

A lot of debating was focused on effective evidence-based drug policies and networking with ECAD member cities. *"In the past years there has been a shift from purely preventative drug policies in Ireland to a pragmatic approach to public health: we would not want to cut the addicted off as people in error"*, said ECAD Chairman. ECAD pursues and will pursue the principle of total opposition to legalizing drugs and fully embraces the UN Conventions on drugs.

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## Will Ecstasy be downgraded in the UK?

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs suggested ecstasy should be downgraded to class B. Professor David Nutt stepping up as a new leader from the Advisory Council in November announced for his plans to declassify ecstasy as one of the first actions in his new position.

In response to this a group of senior police officers at the association of Chief Police Officers wrote a letter to the government, stating that a downgrade of ecstasy from class A to class B would be an "un-

fortunate message" to the public.

The government that has already ignored the ACMD advice and transferred cannabis to class B from class C, has asserted for BBC that ecstasy should remain a class A drug: "Ecstasy can and does kill unpredictably. There is no such thing as a "safe dose".

Source: BBC ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/7636896.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7636896.stm))

## AFTERMATH of CANNABIS RE-CLASSIFICATION

*Cannabis users in the UK face new penalties when the drug is up-graded to class B from January next year, the home secretary said on the 13th of October.*

British Home Office confirmed that repeat cannabis offenders will face penalties. People caught cannabis for a second time could now face a fine of £80 and after three strikes would be arrested. /PAGE 2

## MEGA-COFFEE SHOPS: to be moved or not?

*Two Dutch cities, Roosendaal and Bergen-op-Doom in the Southern part of the country announced recently that they cannot handle the disorder caused by drug tourists and will close all 8 coffee-shops from the beginning of February 2009.*

However, it is not yet agreed whether the coffee shops of the centre of Maastricht will be moved to the borders of the city. /PAGE 2

## OSLO CLOSES INJECTION ROOMS

*Controversial injection rooms for drug addicts in Oslo, Norway, should be closed by the 1 of January 2009, suggested Oslo city Council, "byrådet".*

Practicing injections in Oslo aroused plenty of criticism, since few drug addicts have been using injection room and the number of deaths caused by drug overdoses did not diminish. /PAGE 3

# MEGA-COFFEE SHOPS: to be moved or not?



Picture: <http://current.com/>

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The recent invasion ordered by justice department of the mega-coffee shop Checkpoint in Terneuzen (Zeeuws-Vlaanderen) has startled many owners of Maastricht coffee shops. The quantity of marijuana found in the Terneuzen coffee shop (daily about 3000 visitors) exceeded the quantity allowed by far.

Annually Maastricht attracts 1 1/2 million drugs tourists causing a lot of disturbance of the public order. For years Maastricht city council and coffee shop owners have been arguing about transferring coffee-shops to other areas.

About 6 to 7 shops will remain in the centre, others will be reopened in the outskirts. The enterprisers realize that this is an opportunity to attract a lot of new clients. As it seems today, agreements between local government and coffee shops are not binding yet. Officials concerned refuse to take any action, and chief head prosecutor Wiegant implies he is not in a position to deal with this matter. "In the end the law of tolerance will be executed", he says.

## Comment:

For months Belgian neighbour cities like Lanaken have protested against the plans of Maastricht. The coffee shops will be as close as 500 meters from their borders if the transfer will be accomplished.

However Maastricht would not listen to these protests and keeps pushing ahead.

There is a nice tradition to always help your neighbours in the Netherlands, but Maastricht seems to have forgotten about this tradition completely.

Burgomaster Leers of Maastricht demonstrates how contradictory an attitude can become. Mr. Leers used to be a big advocate of coffee shops, for him - a matter of giving people a choice to smoke cannabis or refrain from that. At the end of July he announced he would be sitting in a committee of the Clean Air Foundation. This foundation has come to the publicity for the idea of banning all (tobacco) smoking in public.

The fresh news is that Terneuzen announced about tightening of local laws for cannabis trade starting May 2009. The opening hours for the coffee-shops will be curbed and the amount of cannabis per buyer will be reduced.

Jan Berlijn and Carla Maissan, ECAD expert correspondents

## AFTERMATH of CANNABIS RECLASSIFICATION

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This was announced alongside a Parliamentary Order laid to reclassify the drug to Class B from 26 January 2009. Reclassification is a preventative measure to protect the public. Cannabis stronger strains, such as skunk, that now dominate the illegal UK cannabis market may increase mental health problems, especially if young people start to use at an early age of "binge smoke". Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said:

*"While cannabis has always been illegal, reclassifying it to a Class B drug reinforces our message to everyone that it is harmful and should not be taken. This is the next step towards toughening up our enforcement response - to ensure that repeat offenders know that we are serious about tackling the danger that the drug poses to individuals, and in turn communities."*

Both reclassification and escalation for repeat offenders will reinforce the message that cannabis is illegal.

Mark Matthews had been appointed as a national coordinator to combat cannabis cultivation. During National tackling Week in May this year, 89 cannabis farms were shut down. Mr. Matthews is now intensifying work in this area, working with law enforcement agencies to develop a comprehensive intelligence picture and robust national response to combat cultivation, making UK a hostile environment for criminals involved in this illegal trade.

When cannabis was reclassified to Class C in 2004 the policing approach in Scotland and Northern Ireland did not change<sup>3</sup>. Cannabis warnings were not introduced. Anyone found in the possession

of cannabis was and will continue to be reported to the Procurator Fiscal of Public Prosecution service respectively where a decision on cautioning or prosecution will then be made.

Data from the British Crime Survey continue to show cannabis use is falling steadily across all age ranges. Between 2002 /03 and 2007/08, the proportion of 16-24 year olds reporting the use of cannabis in the last year fell from 26,2 per cent to 17,9 per cent, equating to a drop of more than 30 per cent over the period.

A survey of secondary age pupils shows that young people had more negative attitudes to cannabis in 2007 than in 2003. 10 per cent of 11-15 year olds thought it was "okay to take cannabis once a week" in 2003, dropping to 6 per cent in 2007.

Furthermore cannabis use among 11-15 year olds, 16-24 year olds and the wider adult population have all been falling consistently since 1997.

The FRANK campaign has been successful in shifting young people's attitudes towards cannabis use. In a survey to measure the effectiveness of the campaign, the number of 11-14 year olds who said that cannabis is "very likely" to damage the mind of someone rose from 45 per cent to 58 per cent in 2008.

Young people who want to know more about the risks of using cannabis or other drugs can contact the FRANK website and helpline: <http://www.talktofrank.com> or ph. 0800776600.

Source: <http://nds.coi.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=381162&NewsAreaID=2>

# OSLO CLOSES INJECTION ROOMS

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Drug injection room was opened first in February 2005 after heroin problem had grown out of proportion and led to many cases of death as a result of drug overdoses.

The initial idea behind opening an injection room was to provide medically controlled environment for drug users, to offer addicted people a possibility to have a proper life circumstances and provide for their contacts for help and treatment.

In the beginning of evaluation of injection room activity, performed by State Drug Research Institute, there had been a lot of critical remarks about this pilot project. That was due to insufficient planning, as a consequence of which less registered addicts came to use the project as it was initially meant. Approximately 40 registered addicts had visited Oslo injection room in the beginning of this year, that is out of 3000 injecting drug users the city has, according to city administration.

The liberals and the conservatives who comprise the majority in Oslo city Council reckon that maintaining the project would not be a

rational investment of municipal money. Oslo injection room costs tax payers approximately 12 million Norwegian crowns, of these - 7 million come from Oslo municipality. The new suggestion is to spend this money onto drug field work, new shelters and institutions for drug addicts, who have double diagnoses.

- *We had had second thoughts about drug injection room, and those proved to have a basis. It was not working as intended,* announced Knut R. Reinås, a speaker for Association against drug intoxication.

Even if the injection room will be closed the debate on drugs will continue in Norway. Last year almost 200 addicts died in the country as a result of overdoses. Heroin is still a principal problem, and the amount of cocaine and amphetamine in Oslo increases.

These protests against injection room in Norway were not singular, INCB has also criticised injection rooms, the very existence of which is not compatible with the letter of UN conventions on drugs.

*By Drugnews*

## DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- A quarter of a million people in England and Wales take ecstasy every month
- Between 2003 and 2007 ecstasy or MDMA was involved in 246 death cases in England and Wales, according to the Office of National Statistics
- Possession of a class A drug can result in a sentence of up to 7 years of imprisonment, an unlimited fine or both
- Dealers can face a life imprisonment, an unlimited fine or both
- Possession of a class B drug implies a maximum sentence of 5 years.

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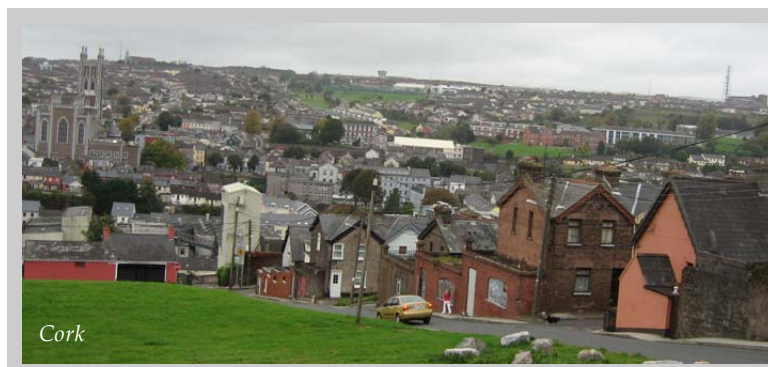
ECAD networking is utterly important; it is strengthening the bond between the central organization and the cities. Over the next couple of months we are going to make contact with member cities and ask you what ECAD can do for you. With your feedback we will be able to assess our work.

ECAD and the City of Göteborg are preparing ECAD 16th Mayors` Conference - second conference for World Mayors. Göteborg Municipality representatives, *Ove Lundgren* and *Kristina Jung* shared with the AB members that their municipality established a steering group that consists of city politicians and a working group to make the Conference preparation process most effective. You can find all information about the conference under *Conferences* at [www.ecad.net](http://www.ecad.net) or at Göteborg`s municipal homepage. The conference will have its own website very soon.

ECAD is very grateful to Cork City Council for its generous hospitality. Many interested in Cork outskirts visited Butter Museum and the magnificent Blarney Castle. Those who kissed the Blarney stone will from now on be able to distinguish between "Blarney" and "baloney".

Next AB meeting will take place in Göteborg, 4th of February 2009

in the afternoon in connection with ECAD World's Mayors Conference that takes place on February 5 and 6, 2009



Cork



Blarney castle

# Tolerance behind Dutch drug policies

Cannabis is Dutch third biggest export product. Partial explanation to this is that the Netherlands allow illegal drug trade because the Dutch are not prone to interfere in other people's matters.

"Whatever someone likes to do or is doing together with others and as long as it does not cause harm for the third part, has to be permitted".

This mentality explains the philosophy behind the Dutch drug policy and is the cornerstone of public attitude to living, explained Andreas Kinneging, law professor at Leiden University during Worlds Forum Against Drugs in Stockholm in the beginning of September.

A couple of weeks ago Dutch authorities had closed the largest coffee-shop in the country. Only this coffee-shop had 2 900 visitors per day, but the records bore up to 5000 visitors, the majority of them -French or Belgian. In this kind of coffee-shop it is allowed to have 500 gram marijuana in stock and visitors are permitted to buy 5 gram maximum. The storage would thus be empty after a half an hour if everything went by according to the law.

However Special police force set up recently by the government ceased on one occasion solely 264 kg of "light drugs" from this coffee-shop and its storage.

Holland has had a mixed cultural pot of inhabitants ever since it's colonial power ambitions. Dutch politicians have always had a very pragmatic way of tackling the drug problem. The double-bottom policy - along the "Gedogen"-tolerance line, allowing what is officially forbidden, - is stated to follow the general public opinion. So as long as one is ultra-liberal about drugs nothing will be changed about it.

- The number of coffee-shops has been reduced from 1 179 pieces year 1997 to 729 in 2005.

- The turnover of these coffee-shops have increased to over 1,8 billion Euro annually, and the state gets a fare share of almost 4 million Euro in taxes.

These figures are unofficial, as well as the fact that cannabis is Dutch third main export goods after cucumbers and tomatoes.

- Almost 3400 persons are engaged in various kind of work in coffee-chops, 80 per cent of shop owners have criminal background.

By Drugnews

## Irish Drugs Minister believes in investing in drug treatment

*John Curran, Irish Minister responsible for the national drug strategy stated that Government investment in drug treatment has been paying dividends.*

According to a new research, performed by NUI Maynooth researchers, drug treatment reduces Irish crime rate and opens the door for dependent people to re-enter the community in a meaningful way.

The NUI researchers monitored a progress of a group of 404 opiate users during their three-year long drug treatment. At the mark of three years 70% of this group were in some form of drug treatment, of these 86% were on methadone and 29% were drug free after three years. Heroin use reduced from 81% to 47% the first year with improvement maintained among 47% of users at the end of the project.

The chairman for the National Advisory Committee on Drugs (NACD) Dr. Des Corrigan said the mortality index was low in comparison with similar studies in Britain. He added that "harm reduction services demonstrated effect most notably in the low rates of borrowing or lending of injecting equipment in the study".

Irish government will use the results of this research to mould its drug policies. According to John Curran:

*"It is the intention of Government to build on these positive outcomes. Whilst there are still areas for further study, it is clear that continued investment and implementation of the rehabilitation strategy will provide further positive outcome in the years to come".*

Source: Irish Examiner, Oct. 10, 2008.

## Middle and upper class to seek for cocaine treatment in Ireland

There has been a 50 per cent increase in the number of professionals and executives seeking cocaine treatment in Ireland in the last three years, according to the acting head of Ireland's largest private addiction treatment centre.

The Rutland Centre in Dublin has been open for 30 years and has treated more than 14,000 clients to date. Austin Prior, head of treatment service at the Knocklyon-based facility, said a clear trend in cocaine problems among middle- and upper-class professionals had become obvious in recent years.

The centre is starting a new eight-week evening programme for cocaine addiction next month to cater for this group. It is also organising a two-day seminar, entitled 'Treating chemically-dependent executives and professionals', for employee assistance professionals, counsellors and psychotherapists.

Prior said that addiction among executives, managers, doctors, lawyers, engineers and other professionals was a "serious and poorly-understood and managed" problem. The EU's monitoring centre on drug abuse estimates that cocaine use plays a determining role in about 10 per cent of all drug-related deaths.

The Rutland centre's new cocaine addiction programme involves individual, group and, potentially, family therapy. It also includes clinical assessment and laboratory screening, an individualised treatment plan, workshops, and cognitive behavioural therapy.

Source: Nicola Cooke, The Sunday Business Post, 28/09/2008



**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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