



## World ANTI-drug campaign launched



Picture: UNODC

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is leading the international campaign to raise awareness about the major challenge that illicit drugs represent to society as a whole, and especially to the young.

The goal of the campaign is to mobilize support and to inspire people to act against drug abuse and trafficking. The campaign encourages young people to put their health first and not to take drugs.

The international campaign "Do drugs control your life? Your life. Your community. No place for drugs" communicates that the destructive effects of illicit drugs concern us all. Their use harms individuals, families and society at large. Drugs control the body and mind of individual consumers, the drug crop and drug cartels control farmers, trafficking and crime control communities.

Teenagers and young adults are particularly vulnerable to using illicit drugs. The prevalence of drug use among young people is more than twice as high as that among the general population. Peer pressure to experiment with illicit drugs can be strong and self-esteem is often low. Also, those who take illicit drugs tend to be either misinformed or insufficiently aware of the health risks involved.

UNODC and its campaign only focus on drugs under international control, as specified in the three multilateral treaties that form the backbone of the international drug control system. These illicit drugs include amphetamine-type stimulants, coca/cocaine, cannabis, hallucinogens, opiates and sedative hypnotics.

Source: <http://www.unodc.org/drugs/>

## UN to devalue opium in Afghanistan

United Nations officials in Afghanistan are attempting to create a "flood of drugs" in the country intended to destroy the value of opium and force poppy farmers to switch to legal crops such as wheat.

After the failure to destroy fields of the scarlet flowers in Afghanistan's volatile south, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime says the answer is to stop the drugs from leaving the country in the first place.

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## Cannabis links to suicide, schizophrenia

*A research paper on the consequences of cannabis use*

Drug Free Australia (DFA) launches the publication of a research paper which draws on world-wide current research into the effects of Cannabis. The publication, *Cannabis - suicide, schizophrenia and other ill-effects*, describes the consequences of acute and chronic cannabis use.

NEW RESEARCH

DFA is bound to launch this work across Australia to focus attention on the mental and physical risks of cannabis consumption, particularly for young users. "National attention is currently focussed on dealing with binge drinking and so-called 'party drugs'", says DFA Chairman, former Sydney magistrate, Craig Thompson, "but we must not under-estimate or trivialise the devastating effects of Cannabis on too many of our young people. This paper gives a clear and concise report on these effects".

Mr Barich said that while DFA would like to see more government action to curb the use of this illicit drug, it wants to reach out to ordinary Australians to ask them to help turn the tide on its social acceptance.

- Cannabis is still the most commonly used illicit drug in Australia
- Age at first use continues to decline yet potency has been increased
- Cannabis is confirmed as the "gateway drug", leading many to hard drug use
- Dependent Cannabis users report compulsive and out-of-control use more frequently than dependent alcohol users
- Severe mental disturbance by users is not uncommon, especially when use begins in adolescence. Links have been established with depression, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia and suicide rates.
- Impacts on brain function
- Physical harms including cancer



Source: Drug Free Australia

# UN to devalue opium in Afghanistan

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"Manual eradication is incompetent and inefficient,"

UNODC chief Antonio Maria Costa said during a visit to the western Afghan province of Herat. "So we want to see more efforts to stop the flow of drugs across Afghanistan's borders and the hitting of high-value targets to create a market disruption. We want to create a flood of drugs within Afghanistan. There will be so much opium inside Afghanistan unable to go out that the price will go down."

Officials admit that the plan is a second-best solution to intensive eradication campaigns.

and there is little to stop smugglers crossing the border.

**While the Iranians, fed up with the problems created by the country's 1 million heroin addicts, have taken steps to build ditches and walls along the frontier, the Afghans lack even a fraction of those resources.**

On the Afghan side of the border, Costa visited one of 24 squalid border checkpoints supported by a sprinkling of EU money, where the commanding officer told the UNODC chief that his men needed heavy weapons to defend themselves against the much better armed smugglers who race

The local UNODC officials say the decision by Karzai, apparently taken to protect customs revenues, is "killing the villages". The governor of Herat province, Ahmad Yusef Nuristani, said young people in the border areas had no choice but to join the drug smugglers to survive. "They were trading areas that kept people busy with legitimate businesses so they would not be tempted into employment by the drug traffickers," Nuristani said.

**Even without attempts to disrupt the flow of drugs out of the country, Afghanistan is doing a good job of destroying the value of its main export. Huge overproduction, which by some estimates twice outstrips world demand, has led to a steady fall in the value of opium. A kilogram is now worth less than one fifth of what it was in 2001. The slump in opium values, combined with last year's soaring worldwide price of wheat, fuelled hopes that farmers would switch crops. However, wheat has fallen by 30% since October and humanitarian handouts of imported wheat last winter also helped to keep**

prices in Afghanistan low.

**Costa said his request that the World Food Programme buy only Afghan wheat had been rejected by "free market ayatollahs who think political stability is less important than free market principles".**

The UNODC country chief, Jean-Luc Lema-hieu, also warned that the strategy of capitalising on falling opium prices could be torpedoed by Chinese drug dealers looking to Afghanistan to supply China's growing army of heroin addicts. "I think we have a two-year window before the Chinese pick up on the Afghan market. Currently the Chinese dealers source their heroin from the Golden Triangle..."

By Jon Boone, guardian.co.uk

Global illicit opium poppy cultivation (hectares), by region: 1990 - 2007

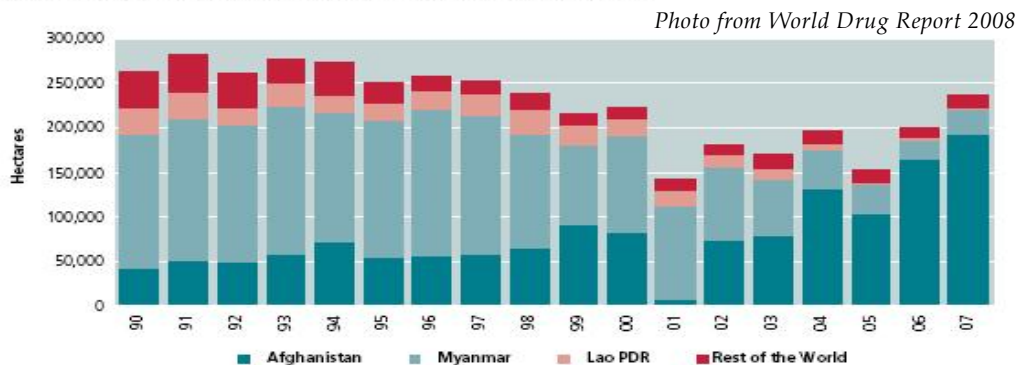


Photo from World Drug Report 2008

Last year the Afghan government succeeded in destroying only 3.5% of Afghanistan's 157,000 hectares of poppy because eradication teams were either attacked or bought off by local drug lords. But the attempt to use brute economics to tackle the country's \$4bn (£2.5bn) narcotics industry instead is fraught with problems - not least Afghanistan's thousands of miles of porous borders.

Costa got a first-hand view of that issue this month from the porthole of a UN helicopter chartered to fly along a portion of the 580-mile border that separates Afghanistan from Iran.

The vast swaths of desert are thinly populated with a scattering of mud brick villages,

through the huge gaps in the border.

The task of beefing up Afghanistan's defences on this vast stretch of border is supported by just two UNODC officials, and they say that while their Afghan colleagues have been ready for months to start joint border patrols with their Iranian counterparts, progress has stalled because of bureaucratic infighting between ministries in Kabul.

Their efforts have been further undermined by a recent decree by President Hamid Karzai to close down small cross-border markets which had been a source of economic activity in an otherwise barren wilderness.

## US forces arrive in Helmand, Afghanistan with pledge to tackle opium production

US forces have signaled a radical shift in their strategy in Afghanistan, vowing to cut the Taliban's main source of income by stamping out the production of opium. British soldiers in Helmand were under orders to turn a blind eye to the drug industry for fear of driving opium farmers into the arms of the insurgents. Army commanders argued that if they were to secure the support of an ambivalent population, the troops had to avoid becoming embroiled in fighting a narcotics trade that employed hundreds of thousands of local people.

As thousands of US troops were heading for southern Afghanistan early in May, American commanders indicated that Britain's softly-softly approach was no longer tenable. The focus for the 20,000 US troops deploying into the south will be the three key drug-producing provinces of Helmand, Kandahar and Zabul. Their orders are to stop the flow of drugs money to the Taliban - estimated at \$300 million (£202 million) a year from taxing and protecting the opium crop. It is enough to fund the entire annual cost of the insurgency in the south.

Source: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/>

# "Grasspass" against drug tourism in 8 Dutch cities

Eight Dutch cities near the German and Belgian borders will introduce a membership card for soft drugs users in an attempt to fight drugs tourism, they said early in May.

"Coffee shops have to refocus on their original policy: small-scale sale of grass for the own population," said a spokesman for the southern city of Maastricht, which is one of the cities participating in the project.

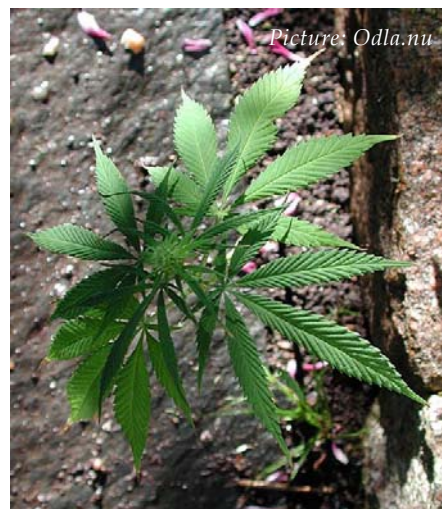
Although such drugs are officially banned in the Netherlands, coffee shops sell small quantities of marijuana, making them popular venues for tourists and locals alike.

The card, dubbed the "grasspass", allows people to buy a maximum amount of three grams of soft drugs. People will have to register for the pass and the cities hope that drug daytrippers will be discouraged by the extra bureaucracy.

The Dutch cities of Bergen op Zoom and Roosendaal, located near the Belgian border, have already said they will close all their shops within two years to combat drug tourism and crime.

Gerd Leers, mayor of Maastricht, which earlier angered Belgian authorities by proposing to move its city center coffee shops to the edge of the city, said last year about 60 percent of the people who visit the city's coffee shops each year were French or Belgian.

Coffee shop owners support the grasspass initiative, but some are cautious. "We agree with being tough on crime and underground movement, but we will never participate in discriminating foreigners," said Marc Josemans, chairman of the association for official coffee shops in Maastricht.



Source: <http://www.signonsandiego.com/>

## CANADA: federal regulations to grow medical marijuana

Marijuana remains illegal and controlled substance in Canada. Nevertheless *Health Canada* has recently amended Marijuana Medical Access Regulations (MMAR). That in order to "streamline the process of applying" and to "move the medical marijuana programme toward a more traditional health care model", according to *Health Canada*.

Streamlining implies that applicants in category 1 would no longer have to have their application viewed by a specialist to get this treatment. MMA Division runs the authorisation and access to marijuana legislation within *Health Canada*.

Earlier regulations of 2003 restricted the authorized permission to grow medical marijuana for one person only. The introduced amendments allow now growing plants for two persons; the idea that has already caused protests among the proponents of "medical" cannabis use.

Canadian media reported that less than 20% of those 3000 persons who were granted the authorization to use marijuana for medical purposes would use the drug provided by government approved distributor, since they found the quality of the drug foul.

Source: [Actnow.nu/www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://actnow.nu/www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

## UK: GBL to be listed as Class C drug

**New controls for a range of substances, including gamma-butyrolactone (GBL), were set out today in two public consultations launched by the Home Secretary Jacqui Smith.**

The aim is to prevent the misuse of GBL, 1,4-butanediol (1,4-BD), 1-benzylpiperazine (BZP) and a range of anabolic steroids as part of the Home Office's drug strategy and its commitment to responding to the changing drugs environment and emerging threats to public health. GBL and 1,4-BD have legitimate uses as solvents but can be converted into the Class C controlled drug GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyric acid) in the body. The consultation sets out three options for control and invites industry, commerce and the general public to set out to the government the potential impacts of the different approaches. These responses will inform the action that government takes forward.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said 'I am determined that we respond to the dangers of these drugs and that is why I have committed to

controlling them. It is absolutely right that we continue to adapt our drug policy to the changing environment of substance misuse. "This is the next step in tackling the unregulated market of so called "legal highs".

The second consultation sets out the government's intention to control BZP as a Class C drug. It also makes clear the Home Office's aim, in line with the advice published today from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, to control a group of related compounds or substituted piperazines that have the same or very similar harms to BZP.

The consultation also sets out the government's intention to update the list of steroids currently controlled as Class C drugs by adding a further 24 anabolic steroids and two non-steroidal substances to the class.

Source: <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/>



# About *European Action on Drugs* campaign

The European Commission will launch a campaign June 26 called the European Action on Drugs. The campaign is open to basically everyone: NGOs, individuals, businesses, schools etc. If someone wants to join they simply have to sign up and commit to an action, it is up to you or your organisation how to contribute with. That's basically it: one pledges to do one's part.

## ★ ECAD COLUMN

In return the participants become a part of the campaign, which means they will probably be allowed to use the EU campaign logo. There is very little screening in it: more like an empty bucket where all sorts of activities may be thrown in. What it does is that it creates some visibility for the EU Commission and the Civil Society Forum on Drugs. It also creates a network of those involved.

ECAD is a member of the Civil Society Forum on Drugs, which consist of NGOs, and the issue has been discussed in the Forum. You may divide the participants in the Forum in two groups; the ones who are for a more restrictive policy and the ones who are in favour of a more liberal approach.

About the issue of a campaign, the drug liberals opposed it. My guess is that they opposed it because it suddenly will involve many new participants at the drug policy level and that they will have little control or influence over its content (nobody will). Today the liberals are able to control and dominate the Civil Society Forum on Drugs; and in effect acting as gatekeepers between NGOs and the Commission. Some of this may be weakened.

The campaign is not shaped in a way that ECAD would prefer. It is too soft on drugs and is, as I see it, largely into a harm reduction approach. Besides, the message is not clear. The network of participants that will join the EU campaign will risk being continuously exposed to this approach. This is the danger. It is therefore possible that the campaign is fundamentally supported by the drug liberal strategy, although many of its drug liberal groups that are very radical will oppose it of various reasons.

On the one hand, contributions from "ordinary people", NGOs, schools etc will largely promote a no-drugs approach, I guess, while the Commission will use the campaign to promote harm reduction approach – although it cannot stray too far in that direction either, it is after all sort of accountable to the EU Member States. In accordance to this, there will be a tug of war over the agenda set by this campaign.

ECAD do not suggest, nor advise against, member cities or other bodies to join the campaign. To make sure that the ones pledging for liberalisation do not make up the majority in the campaign, it could though be a good idea to join with sound projects and activities. Please spread the web address

[www.euactiondrugs2009.eu](http://www.euactiondrugs2009.eu) where people can join. It is also possible for us to make our own recommendations on how campaigns should be formulated. I'm sure the harm reduction groups will do that.

/ECAD Director, Jörgen Svidén



Picture: [www.eu2008.si](http://www.eu2008.si)



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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## Drug addicts say abstinence sets them free

*Australian government has no efficient strategy for those undergoing the maintenance treatment, claim former heroin addicts interviewed by Australian Sydney Morning Herald.*

When it comes to maintenance treatment, former drug dependants are among those most ardently against it, while the state advocates heroin users to be treated with methadone for the sake of avoiding relapse risks.

Those addicts who had set upon the abstinence train while in jail, went furious after being drug-free at the end of their term, when they were told that they had to start using buprenorphine 3 months before their parole or they would not be released.

*Sydney Morning Herald* published an interview with 30 year-old former heroin addict Sam who having endured all the abstinence symptoms and determined about being drug-free for three years already, had to start using buprenorphine, which is a very addictive substance.

Some other former heroin addicts interviewed by the newspaper described their experience with Australian health services as "were given no other option, but to accept addiction for life", when they sought for help.

According to the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*, the number of people receiving methadone treatment has come to 41 300 last year, that is almost twice as many as it was back in 1998, with 24 600 persons on methadone nationally.

There is obviously a lack of alternatives for those who wish to stay drug-free, and Australian government has missed a streaming strategy out of the methadone maintenance for life, concludes *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Source: <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/>

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