

Information request for Thematic Paper

Voices of Dependent Drug Users: experiences and perceptions of people trying to reduce or quit their drug, alcohol or tobacco consumption

Overall prevalence of problem drug use in the European Union is estimated to range from two to ten cases per 1 000.¹ However, considerable differences exist across Europe and in a few countries users of amphetamines or cocaine constitute an important proportion of problem drug users.

More Europeans than ever before are currently undergoing drug treatment. People with drug problems are often polydrug users and there are indications of a significant and probably increasing health burden related to cocaine use in Europe, which is not yet fully identified and recognised. Also regular cannabis use is also increasingly recognised as a risk for dependence and other health problems.²

There is much to be learnt from people in the field of legal substances as experiences and perceptions of people trying to reduce or quit drug use have some features in common with the experiences and perceptions of people trying to reduce or quit alcohol and tobacco consumption. The average prevalence of cigarette smokers in the EU is approximately 32%³ and some 23 million Europeans (5% of men, 1% of women) are estimated to be dependent on alcohol in any one year.⁴

The EMCDDA is preparing a thematic paper to highlight key issues from the perspective of people who are attempting to reduce their drug, cigarette and alcohol consumption or overcome their dependence. Quotations from interviews with samples of such people either in or outside of treatment services will be used to highlight some of the key issues they face as well as similarities and differences among them.

Direct quotations can provide very personal accounts of a problem from the perspective of the individuals involved. As such, quotations can be used effectively to inform and strengthen statistics and send messages to practitioners and policy makers that lead to the creation of more innovative, holistic and effective responses.

Previous work

The EMCDDA has already produced two 'Voices' publications in English: 'Women's Voices'⁵ and 'Children's' Voices'⁶. These were well received, numerous copies were downloaded and some countries have already translated them for wider national dissemination. 'Voices' publications demonstrate the contribution that qualitative research makes to help reveal and interpret what lies behind the European statistics. This paper will provide deeper understanding of salient and diverse issues for people trying to reduce or quit their substance use.⁷

¹ This includes a range of drugs but mainly injecting drug use and the use of opioids. Given the relatively low prevalence and the hidden nature of problem drug use, statistical extrapolations are required to obtain prevalence estimates from the available data sources (mainly drug treatment data and law enforcement data).

² EMCDDA (2010) Annual Report

³ European Commission (2006) Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco. Special Eurobarometer 239

⁴ Anderson, P., and Baumber, B (2006) *Alcohol in Europe – Public Health Perspective: Report summary*. Drugs: education, prevention and policy. 13(6): 483–488

⁵ EMCDDA (2009) *Women's voices: experiences and perceptions of women facing drug problems*, Lisbon, May 2009 <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers/womens-voices>

⁶ EMCDDA (2010) *Children's voices: experiences and perceptions of European children on drug and alcohol issues*. Lisbon, May 2010 <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers/childrens-voices>

⁷ Berridge, V. (2009), *Learning from the past to plan for the future*, EMCDDA Conference, Identifying Europe's information needs for effective drug policy.



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Deadline

Please send your contribution for Drug User Voices from interview quotations (in published or grey literature and reports from treatment services, outreach services and non-government organisations - in English and/or in the original language) **to Deborah Olszewski (Deborah.Olszewski@emcdda.europa.eu) by May 2011.**

Identify:

- the issue that is being highlighted
- the quotation
- the source of the quotation and publication reference, if applicable

(see guide below)

Acknowledgements

The name, institution and country of contributors will be included in the acknowledgements.

Example Guide

In the left hand column, please **identify the issue/s** being highlighted by the quotation adding issues as appropriate.

In the right hand column, please **insert a relevant quotation** that highlights the issue and **provide the source**.

Issue to be highlighted	Quotation
Contribution of methadone in reducing risk behaviour and assisting recovery from addiction	<p><i>"With a methadone script I'll not be going near people that are doing a lot of stuff. I make a point of staying well clear of them 'cos that's not the life that I want"</i> (female, receiving methadone treatment, UK)</p> <p>Source: McIntosh and McKeganey (2002) Beating the Dragon: Recovery from dependent drug use. Prentice Hall, UK.</p>
Avoiding places where drugs are available	<p><i>"I'm trying to stop smoking just now, which is harder than heroin and anything else I've tried. The problem with cigarettes is that you can't get away from the environment. You go to the pub and it's just there, it's a social drug, It's becoming more anti-social right enough, but it's a social drug"</i> (male, ex heroin addict, UK)</p> <p>Source: McIntosh and McKeganey (2002) Beating the Dragon: Recovery from dependent drug use. Prentice Hall, UK.</p>