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Authors in alphabetic order





LIST OF AUTHORS

Benschop, Annemieke et al	1	Storbjörk, Jessica	21
Bernard, Christiane	2	Tieberghien, Julie	22
D'Huyvetter, Eline et al.	3	Triantos, Petros	23
Gourgiotou, Ismini	4	Tsiliakou, Maria	24
Hakkarainen, Pekka	5	Tsiganou Ioanna	25
Henriques, Susana	6	Tzanetakis, Meropi	26
Heyde, Julie	7	Van de Mheen, Dike	27
Kalogeraki, Stefania	8	Vlaemynck, Marie	28
Katsigaraki, Eftychia	9	Wouters, Marije	29
Kraus, Ludwig	10		
Kronbaek, Mette	11		
Landale, Sarah	12		
Micha Katerina et al.	13		
O'Gorman, Aileen	14		
Pistos, Constantinos	15		
Potter, Gary	16		
Rigoni, Rafaela	17		
Snertingdal, Mette	18		
Springer, Alfred	19		
Stefanidou, Maria	20		

Annemieke BENSCHOP, Alberto OTEO PÉREZ

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Gender and ethnic specific patterns of substance use within a group of marginalized crack users

While general population surveys often show gender and ethnic differences in prevalence of substance use, these distinctions do not necessarily occur within subpopulations. And within groups of substance users, gender and ethnic differences might still exist, not in terms of prevalence, but in terms of characteristics of use (types of drugs, frequency, amounts, mode, etc.). However, many studies among specific subgroups are too small or too selective (i.e. male dominated and/or ethnically homogeneous) to allow for analysis of differential patterns of substance use.

Alberto Oteo Pérez interviewed 1.039 crack users, recruited through low threshold substitution facilities, user rooms and respondent-driven sampling in three Dutch cities in 2009-2011. The total sample consisted of 847 males (81.5%) and 192 females (18.5%); 379 (36.5%) were Dutch and 660 (63.5%) were first or second generation immigrants, mostly of non-Western origin (146, 14.1% Western; 514, 49.5% non-Western).

Dutch and immigrant crack users, as well as male and female crack users show marked similarities in patterns of crack use, but there are some differences in their use of other substances (alcohol, cannabis, downers). Notably, consumption patterns of first generation immigrants take an intermediate position between those of Dutch and second generation immigrants.

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Patterns of drug distribution among socially integrated users: Social suppliers and 'real' dealers

Objectives: The presentation draws on the results of a study on socially integrated users of illicit drugs of whom the majority also has experience with the social supply or sale of cannabis, and, to some relevant extent, hard drugs (e.g. cocaine and amphetamines). The study aims to explore a) supply networks of socially integrated users, b) the links between drug consumption and drug distribution activities, c) the structures and patterns of drug distribution on the various trade levels, d) motives for dealing drugs and e) career dynamics.

Methodology: Study participants were recruited through snowball sampling and respondent driven sampling. With each participant a semi-structured interview followed by a standardized questionnaire interview were conducted.

Results: A total of 214 current users of illicit drugs were interviewed. 79% had ever distributed illegal substances and almost one third (31%) did so within the prior month. Of those with experience in distributing drugs, all had supplied others with cannabis and 55% also with hard drugs. 23% reported that their drug distribution activities were exclusively non-profit-oriented; only 45% stated that their dealing was mostly geared to make profit. On average the interviewees earned more than 2.000 Euros in their most profitable month, with revenues ranging from 2 Euros to 30.000 Euros. A quarter of those experienced in distributing drugs reported the highest profit ever made in one month to be more than 1.000 Euro, indicating a relatively high volume of drugs dealt. The most stated motive for drug distribution activities was "to do friends a favour" (81%), followed by "supporting own drug use" (47%) and "improved living standard" (24%). About 70% reported that they only passed on or sold drugs to friends or acquaintances. This limitation of the circle of customers was also regarded as an important strategy to reduce the risk of criminal prosecution. Yet, 43% of the drug distributors had ever been arrested for the possession of drugs.

Conclusions: Among socially integrated users of illicit drugs, distribution activities, mostly as a social supply to friends, seem to be very common. The limited availability of drugs due to their illegality appears to be compensated through the social networks of drugs users and the willingness of some to provide drugs for others. In this regard, the line between supplying drugs as a mere favour to friends and profit-oriented activities seems to be rather blurry.

Eline D'HUYVETTER, Tom DECORTE

Ghent University, Belgium

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Low level drug distribution in Antwerp - a case study (February-December 2012)

Objectives: The Institute for Social Drug Research is carrying out a case study regarding a specific segment of the local drug market: the low level drug distribution of marihuana, hashish, cocaine, heroin, XTC and speed. The study is commissioned by the city of Antwerp. Some neighbourhoods are confronted with severe nuisance caused by drug deals between low level dealers and drug users. Studies often focus on the demand side of the drug market, but little is known about these drug dealers and their modus operandi (Maccoun & Reuter, 1992; Ponsioen, Blanken & Barendregt, 1999; Reid, Aitken, Beyer & Crofts, 2001; May & Hough, 2004; Lalander, 2008; Bucerius, 2007). From what is known from fieldworkers, it seems that most small-scale drug dealers are (illegal) immigrants living in hopeless circumstances with little perspectives on a better future. It is a very vulnerable and elusive target group that requires tailor-made measures. The local government has already undertaken many efforts, but the question is whether this specific policy bears fruit. In order to support the local drug policy, this case study will focus on three central research questions:

- 1) What profile or common background features can be assigned to the low level drug dealers in Antwerp?
- 2) How is the low level drug market in Antwerp structured and how do low level dealers operate?
- 3) To what extent is the low level drug distribution in Antwerp controlled by the local police and what are the (un)intended effects of their activities on the local drug dealers and on the local drug market in general?

Methodology: To gather information about the low level drug distribution in Antwerp, the case study consists of three qualitative parts. Firstly, police reports and judicial files will be studied in order to get a broad and rudimentary image of the central case. Secondly, in-depth interviews with key informants (professionals, drug users and drug dealers) will be conducted to explore the topic more profoundly and to fill in any missing gaps. Finally, the researcher will conduct ethnographic fieldwork to verify findings in practice. This methodology is based on the analysis of national and international literature concerning local drug market research (Atkyns & Hanneman, 1974; Maccoun & Reuter, 1992; May & Hough, 2001; Korf & Verbraeck, 1993; Aitken, Moore, Higgs, Kelsall & Kerger, 2002; Home Office Research, 2002; Ritter, 2006).

Results: As this qualitative case study research just took off several months ago, analysis and results are to be expected this fall. An official report of the research will be drafted and presented during a seminar at the outset of 2013.

European dimension: Local studies concerning the functioning of a low level drug market contribute to the theorization about drug markets in general. They help us understand the dynamics of the phenomenon on a local level. Furthermore, a study like this can be very useful within the analysis of local drug policies in other big European cities.

Ismini GOURGIOTOU

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What can be learned from a comparative analysis of the drug policy in separate EU countries? The case study of social reintegration

European countries have established different welfare models (liberal, conservative, Scandinavian, north-European) in order to organise their drug policy and, in particular, their activities related to social reintegration under the guidelines of the European Strategy for Drugs. A great deal of funds and human capital has been invested in the prevention, therapy and social reintegration of (ex) drug addicts. The question is to what extent do policy makers take advantage of the research or follow up studies of different programmes about vocational rehabilitation or other similar activities? This is an important question, and it is related to all the existing literature about therapy and treatment in this area, as well as to all the efforts that have been made concerning labour reintegration and thus the social integration of that vulnerable group in the population.

The separate institutions or organizations which deal with therapy, treatment and social reintegration or research into drugs and alcohol have the most updated information about the profile of the target group and their needs, which may also differ over the years, due to changes in individual societies. The policy makers must take the updated statistics into consideration and should cooperate with the social scientists in order to decide on the most suitable activities for the various needs of the target group. A systematic evaluation of the programmes that are set up especially for the labour and social reintegration of (ex) drug addicts should constitute the basis of each policy revision or new phase of planning.

Through a comparison of separate EU countries and an examination of the current position of social reintegration activities for (ex) drug addicts, we expect to acquire information about the existing evaluation systems, as well as about the development of follow up results and their exploitation by the policy makers. Our source of data is based on the information that each country sends to the EMCDDA in yearly reports. The countries that have been selected are representatives of the four models of the states of providence (UK, France, Sweden and Greece). The information from those countries will give us a unique insight into how EU countries with different backgrounds have managed to incorporate general strategic principles under the umbrella of the European Strategy for Drugs.

Although in theory the exploitation of the research results about (ex) drug addicts is very important, it is actually quite difficult to estimate their contribution to policy planning.

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Different patterns of poly drug use – In search of a typology

Poly drug use, including the combination of illicit drugs with alcohol, and sometimes, medicines and non-controlled substances, has become the dominant pattern of drug use in Europe, states the EMCDDA in the annual report on The State of The Drugs Problem in Europe 2011. In last year's ESSD conference in Aarhus, Axel Klein presented an even stronger claim: "Poly drug use is the norm, and the obsessive relationship with a single substance is the actual problem". Indeed, there are only relatively few studies on poly drug use, especially when it concerns combining the use of alcohol, medicines and illicit drugs. As Hakkarainen & Metso (2009) argue, "...alcohol research and drug research, in a way, have developed their own discursive realities, which are separate, and the joint use of drugs and alcohol—so often met in the real world of people—has largely remained a no man's land for researchers."

A review of the literature clearly shows that poly drug use is not a uniform but a multi-dimensional phenomenon which includes several patterns and practices of use. With reference to Norman E. Zinberg's (1984) Drug, Set and Setting model, the most important dimensions defining poly drug can be named as follows:

1. substance combinations
2. timing of the ingestion: concurrent or simultaneous
3. intention of mixing: to boost, to prolong, to neutralize, to replace, to heal
4. planned and/or situational/casual practice
5. control of use: between mastery and compulsion
6. cultural context: between streets and night clubs

In this presentation, which is based on a multi-disciplinary research project recently started in THL, we will make some suggestions for a workable typology of different patterns of poly drug use.

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Visual methods in drug research: Examples from a study of life course trajectories of social reintegration

With this presentation we intend to explore the added value of visual methods as a complement to the qualitative data in drug research.

Our study has focused on life course trajectories of social reintegration in a group of drug addicts that had completed their treatment process in an international therapeutic community in Portugal. The empirical component of this study is composed of about 60 individuals selected from an in-depth qualitative approach from a previous phase.

During the in-depth interviews and ethnographic notes, participants were given disposable cameras and were asked to take pictures of images that represented their social reintegration (or lack of it). The use of visual data in this context aimed to be a complement of in-depth interviews: capturing dimensions beyond the verbalized ones during the interviewing process. With this strategy we agree with the statement that qualitative methods have an over-reliance on words when it comes to describe behaviours, contexts or symbolic means (Rhodes & Fitzgerald 2006).

Based on the obtained results with this methodology, we aim to reflect upon the advantages, limitations and challenges of using visual methods as a strategy to study drug addicts. We also reflect and discuss the potential of this technique in order to additionally and complementary contribute to understanding the phenomenon in study. In fact, in our research, this visual technique was used as a complementary methodological strategy to phone survey questionnaires, life course interviews and ethnographic observation.

Julie HEYDE, Tom DECORTE

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Setting up an international comparative internet survey: Methodological and ethical challenges

Although the use of cannabis is getting increasingly normalized within the general population, the cultivation of cannabis remains a sensitive research topic since it still is an illegal activity in most countries around the world. New research methods, however, offer us interesting possibilities to reach the 'hidden' population of cannabis cultivators. Internet-based research methods and internet surveys in particular can be very valuable techniques when studying hard-to-reach populations as they hold some major advantages in comparison with classical survey techniques. By far the biggest advantage of an internet survey on a sensitive topic like cannabis cultivation is the anonymity that goes with it. Moreover, an internet survey allows us to reach a vast number of potential respondents in a quick and relatively cheap way. The use of an internet survey, however, brings along some methodological and ethical challenges as well, such as sampling problems and privacy issues. This presentation will highlight some of the important challenges associated with the construction of an internet survey in an international context.

The Institute for Social Drug Research (Ghent University) has set up an internet survey in order to assess the nature and harms of cannabis production in Belgium (commissioned by the Belgian Science Policy Office). At the same time, similar internet surveys on domestic cannabis cultivation have been set up by researchers in Canada, the US, Australia, the UK and Denmark, all starting from a core model questionnaire and adding a specific national research focus. The international core model questionnaire was jointly constructed by the members of the Global Cannabis Cultivation Research Consortium (GCCRC) and brought attention to some specific methodological and ethical challenges.

Primarily, consensus had to be reached on a common research questionnaire that is interesting for global comparison. Methodological issues were discussed, including technical aspects such as software and synchronicity of the different national internet surveys. We needed to decide on strategies to reduce response error, item non-response and dropout, for example by influencing the (perceived) time required to fill in the survey (Andrews et al., 2003), restricting open-ended questions and putting privacy-sensitive questions at the end of the survey (Cho & Larose, 1999). Furthermore, we had to go into methodological matters like completeness and relevance of the questions, understandability of the language used, possible differences in interpretation, and logical hierarchy of the questions. For comparability reasons, we needed to keep the core model questions and their design as similar as possible when translating them to the different national contexts. Lastly we discussed several ethical issues, for instance privacy protection of participants, the use of IP-addresses to identify double entries, informed consent, etc. In our presentation we will focus on all the challenges associated with internationally setting up an internet survey on cannabis cultivation.

Stefania KALOGERAKI

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On the potentiality of conducting online mixed method school-based drug research

The main rationale of the paper is to advocate that online mixed method designs can capture the multifaceted licit and illicit drug use among school-aged populations more reliably and at a lower cost than conventional modes of data collection. During the last decade, the growth of the online quantitative research has been exponentially challenging conventional methods of administering surveys. The major advantages of online surveys are associated with the decreased costs, the faster response times and the higher data quality due to built-in checks that prohibit data completion, data entry and coding errors. In addition, the online data collection affords a stronger sense of anonymity resulting in higher self-disclosure in reporting stigmatized behaviours such as drug involvement. Despite the benefits, online surveys are challenged by non-probability sampling constraints and under-coverage errors that prevent valid inferences to the general population. Such drawbacks can be adequately confronted in studies targeting restricted sub-populations with good sampling frames and universal web-access, such as school-aged populations, providing high data quality of generalizable outcomes at lower cost and more rapidly than the traditional survey modes. The online school-based quantitative research outcomes can be further enriched with online qualitative studies. The latter focuses on the meanings, perceptions, processes and contexts of the “world of drugs” in school-aged children working complementary to the quantitative findings and providing insights behind the statistics. Although the online qualitative research is still in a fledging state, it is considered to be more time efficient and less expensive than in-person approaches. Most importantly, it minimizes biasing effects and is more adequate for sensitive research topics as respondents feel less reluctant to disclose personal experiences than in face-to-face settings. Although the amalgamation of online qualitative and quantitative traditions constitutes a challenging methodological path, it enhances the credibility of research findings and gains a fuller knowledge of the multidimensionality and complexities of drug problems; hence, it optimizes our understanding in drug use among school-aged populations. Given that in EU member states internet access in secondary schools is almost universal studies such as HSBC (Health Behavior in School-aged Children) and ESPAD (European School Project on Alcohol and Drugs) should thoroughly examine the potential of conducting online mixed method school-based drug research in order to capture the full range of factors affecting children’s drug use.

Eftychia KATSIGARAKI

Ministry of Justice, Transparency, and Human Rights

Directory of Organization and Functioning of Special Treatment Institutes

Findings from research conducted among juvenile and post-adolescent drug users detained in Special Correctional Institutes (Facilities) of Greece

Research has revealed that the family environment plays an important role in juvenile delinquency (Parsons & Bales, 1955; Bergeret, 1990) and that drug use is also linked to juvenile delinquency (Hough & Mitchell, 2003; Newburn, 2002). However, there is little information regarding the profile of the detained, juvenile drug user in Greece. The present study aims to offer a preliminary examination of their profile, not only regarding their demographic characteristics but also the mechanisms that link drug addiction with:

- i. Structural and functional characteristics of family and child care environment
- ii. Delinquency record

A 3-month study (February – April 2012) of 96 male detainees between the ages of 15-23, both Greek and foreign nationals, was conducted at the Avlona and Volos Special Juvenile Correctional Institutes. The participants were interviewed, the questionnaires contained both closed and open questions. Results of this study revealed that the majority of participants had abandoned school very early, had high rates of mental health problems and alcohol abuse and most importantly, were coming from broken families with which they had minimal ties. Findings of the study also pointed out that the majority of the 20-23 year olds, prior to their imprisonment, had attended drug counselling programmes.

Some of the results pointed to the need for longitudinal studies to further examine and understand juvenile drug use in prison as well as the need for increased prevention and treatment programmes inside and outside prisons.

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IFT Institut für Therapieforschung, München, Germany

Cannabis-related problems among adolescents in 13 European countries

Cannabis use and cannabis-related problems in 13 European countries will be explored. Data of the European School Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) from the year 2011 will be used. For assessing cannabis-related problems the Cannabis Abuse Screening Test (CAST) was used. The overall trend across countries revealed no change in the 12-month cannabis use prevalence between 2007 and 2011. However, substantial increases were observed in a number of countries, e.g., France, Monaco, Poland, and Latvia, while in other countries such as the Slovak Republic or the Czech Republic prevalence rates have slightly decreased since 2007, suggesting that population estimates for cannabis use vary strongly over time. Furthermore, results revealed an average of 33 % of last year cannabis users with positive responses on 2 or more CAST items. These adolescents are considered having an elevated risk for developing cannabis-related problems. The proportion of high-risk users among the total sample ranged from 1 % to 9 % and was on average 5 %. Overall, cannabis use is rather popular among 15 to 16 year-olds in Europe. One in three of those students reporting cannabis use fulfilled the CAST criteria for a high risk of cannabis-related problems indicating an alarming situation. Initialisation of appropriate prevention measures may be considered in order to prevent an escalation of negative consequences and the development of cannabis dependence.

Mette KRONBÆK

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Willing informants – Strategic considerations regarding daily cannabis users' participation in a research project

Background and aim: Today, cannabis is the most prevalent problem among newcomers in substance abuse treatment in Denmark. In 2011, 67% of those who were seeking treatment for the first time were cannabis users, whereas in 2000, it was 30%. Although cannabis treatment has become more prevalent, still the majority of daily cannabis users are not seeking treatment.

This paper is based on my PhD project about daily cannabis users within and outside treatment. Through the collection of interviews, I encountered a surprising amount of eagerness from cannabis users for participation in my project. Therefore, two methodology questions became central:

- What are the interviewees' motivations for participating in this research project?
- What influence does their agenda have on this research?

Data: Thirty-two daily adult cannabis users with the age range from 22 to 61 years were qualitatively interviewed about their lives with daily cannabis use. A total of 16 participants were recruited through cannabis treatment facilities in the municipality of Copenhagen. Furthermore, 16 participants were recruited through Internet advertisements, and did not have a history of treatment for cannabis use. Daily cannabis use was defined as using cannabis at least once a day. Participants who used other drugs or alcohol more than once a week were excluded from the study. The participants received no payment for their participation in this project. Most of the daily cannabis users seemed socially included and had an interest in being interviewed.

Results: All cannabis users who participated in the interviews had an agenda for participating. One agenda was, for example, to help change general attitudes towards cannabis, cannabis users, and the stereotypes that are often connected to deviance, criminality, and deprived socioeconomic status. By participating, they wanted to show the well-functioning cannabis user, happy cannabis user, medical cannabis user, and so on. Another example was to contribute to the legalization debate. By participating in this project, they thought that they could add knowledge and information about cannabis as a rather harmless drug. A third agenda was to contribute to the promotion of more cannabis treatment and demonstrate its importance.

In this presentation, these differences and similarities between interviewees within and outside treatment will be discussed in the light of ethical dilemmas that these agendas have introduced. The interviewees' interest in participating in my research and their expectations to this research's conclusions are conflicting with my own academic interest and interviewees' different agendas.

Sarah LANDALE

Freelance Researcher

Trajectories, transitions and turning points: Meaningful activities, substance use and desistance

The research aimed to examine desistance from substance misuse among a group of adults with alcohol and other drug problems. The presentation draws on longitudinal data following substance using offenders who were in the early stages recovery journeys in the North-East of England and engaging in recovery activities at the beginning of the research. Using a life course theory of informal social controls, the presentation focuses on the extent to which respondents experienced a turning point (an alteration or deflection in a long-term pathway or trajectory that was initiated at an earlier point in time) in their recovery journeys.

Objectives:

- To carry out three individual, in-depth interviews with respondents during the course of one year.
- To examine in detail the meaning which respondents attached to their routine activities in the broader context of their lives, and to identify how these meaning-systems shifted during the fieldwork.
- To identify whether the concept of turning points was relevant to the study's aims and, if so, examine what constituted this.

Methods: In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 42 participants at three points in time, with six month intervals. Criteria for inclusion were that at the research outset, participants were engaging regularly in a voluntary sports programme as part of their recovery, and were registered in treatment for their alcohol or drug use problems. A thematic approach was used to analyse the findings, and with an inductive approach the theoretical framework which informed the findings was a life course theory of informal social controls (Sampson and Laub 2005).

Significant Results: Eighteen respondents were desisting from substance use and offending. Desistance was related to involvement in a variety of routine activities, informal social controls, and agency (choice). Routine activities offered “window[s] of opportunity for change” (Best and Groshkova, 2010), through which turning points – conceptualised in this study as an identity change – were taking place for desisting respondents. Routine activities included family responsibilities and recovery activities such as sports programmes and volunteering.

Conclusions: The life course theory offers an organising framework for examining drug use trajectories. It identifies key life events and which contribute to stability and change in drug use, analytically examining role, and their relationship to each other. The concept of turning points provides a process through which understanding may be gained as to why the same event may result in desistance for one person and not another.

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Drug use among immigrants in Greece: Designing empirical research and analysis of the main qualitative and quantitative results.

Empirical research on drug use and addiction presents many difficulties. The proposed paper will refer to the research design procedure and results of a qualitative and quantitative empirical research in Greece for investigating the trends and characteristics of immigrant population drug use. Qualitative empirical research data will be presented by analysing the views and experiences of the treatment centres personnel involved, while quantitative data on the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, treatment history, drug use and health situation of the immigrants will be presented and compared to those of native drug users in Greece.

Aileen O’GORMAN

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Ethics in theory and practice: Responding to the challenge

Across Europe, it has become increasingly common for proposals for academic and publicly funded social research to undergo a review process by Research Ethics Committees. These committees vet proposals for their potential to compromise ethical principles of integrity, honesty, confidentiality, impartiality, voluntary participation, and the avoidance of harm. Proposals for studies which involve vulnerable participants and which discuss sensitive topics, such as illegal or deviant behavior, are regarded as high risk and are subject to a more intensive review - topics which are the mainstay of much social drugs research.

In addition, different philosophical and methodological positions give rise to different ethical concerns. For example, from a positivist standpoint, absolute truths about our social world can be uncovered which are value-free and objective and not affected by the researchers’ values or conduct in the field. In contrast, social scientists from the interpretivist tradition emphasise studying social life in its natural setting and from the perspective of the subject; and in so doing, focus on building relationships with our research participants. This approach seems at odds with many ethics codes of behaviour and is often poorly understood by Research Ethics Committees (typically influenced by medical ethics and positivist methodological positions).

As a result, two key challenges emerge; coping with the demands of ethics committees without compromising on research design and methodological rigour; and adapting generic guidelines and codes of ethics proposed by professional associations (such as the American and British societies of Criminology and Sociology) and in methodological textbooks, to the lived experience and situations encountered in drugs research fieldwork.

Drawing on examples of ethical issues arising in my own, and my students field research (including students attending the ESSD drugs research summer school), as well as my experience of dealing with ethics committees; this paper explores the gaps between theory and practice in ethics and suggests ways of responding to the challenges of the dilemmas encountered.

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A new threat: The identification of new illegal substances in the drug scene in Athens

Background: Drug addiction, as mainly a psychosocial phenomenon, is highly correlated with socio-economic conditions. Firstly, during the last decade, a series of major changes took place in the Greek society with an increased number of illegal immigrants. Secondly, economic conditions have deteriorated dramatically nationwide. And as research literature has consistently demonstrated, the prevalence of drug addiction is higher in a socio-economic crisis environment. Finally, patterns of drug use have changed, a) with new ways of administration of the known substances and b) the introduction of new illegal substances. The European Monitoring Centre for Drug and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) has created the Early Warning System (EWS) in order to monitor, report and assess new substances. KETHEA is one of the agencies who participate in this system, mainly through its Outreach programme.

Objective: During the last three years, the drug scenes, especially in the city of Athens, where the majority of Greek drug users are gathered, have changed. New groups of users (i.e. immigrants, homeless, prostitutes), new patterns of drug use, new venues and, most recently, new illegal substances have emerged. The objective of this study is to investigate the prevalence of new substances and their consequences among drug users. Special focus is placed on “Sisa” (crystal methamphetamine) and its presence in the drug scene, in Athens.

Methodology: Field research was conducted by KETHEA’s Street Work programme (KETHEA-EXELIXIS) among drug users in the streets and in a Harm Reduction facility. A structured questionnaire comprised of both closed and open questions was distributed in order to examine the presence of this particular substance, high risk behaviours, patterns of use, co-dependence with other substances, side effects and other aspects.

Significant Results: There’s a significant percentage of this particular substance among drug users in the centre of Athens that used “Sisa”. The people who answered the questionnaire reported a high availability of “Sisa” in a relatively affordable price. They evaluated the particular substance as highly toxic. Reports on various and severe side effects (both mental and physical) that contribute to characterizing this substance as a serious threat, will be presented.

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The challenge of setting marketing regulations for the new psychoactive compounds

While the use of "traditional drugs" remains constant, the illegal drug market goes to new psychoactive drugs, as traders take advantage of chemical substances for the most of which there is no legislation at the international level. In 2011, a total of 49 new synthetic drugs in the European Union have been recorded, versus 13, 24 and 41 which were identified in 2008, 2009 and 2010, respectively. Synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones constitute the majority of these new synthetic drugs since they have identified a total of 23 new synthetic cannabinoids agonists of cannabinoid receptors and 8 new synthetic cathinones. The composition of these new substances makes their identification difficult through the continuous changes of their chemical structures, while the estimation of the risk to human health is not feasible due to the absence of systematic pharmacological, toxicological and epidemiological studies. There are only limited data of 'new psychoactive drugs' effects by a number of individual cases which showed that their use is not safe. This presentation focuses on policy and public health issues originated by the appearance of a wide range of emergent psychoactive substances of diverse origin, effect and risk profile.

Gary POTTER, Aleksandra OSINIGOVA

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Social supply and hard drug markets

Social supply networks are increasingly recognised as playing an important role in how drug users get hold of drugs. To date, most work in this area has looked at young people's recreational use of 'soft' drugs (mostly cannabis and 'dance drugs'). This paper reports on research examining whether elements of social supply exist in the drug-buying experiences of 'problematic' users (self-defined addicts) of 'hard' drugs (especially crack cocaine and heroin). The findings suggest that although social supply networks are not a key feature of these 'harder' drug-using scenes, elements of social supply do still exist. In particular, new and occasional users of 'hard' drugs do experience social supply, but once heavier, more problematic patterns of drug use develop, social supply elements of the drug-buying experience disappear. However, more affluent users (who do not need to resort to criminality to pay for drugs) seem to experience social supply further into their drug-using careers than their poorer colleagues.

These results feed in to a developing 'drug, set and setting' model of retail-level drug markets. Market features such as 'social supply', violence and overlap with other types of crime vary by drug (with 'hard' drugs being more associated with other crime and real dealing, whilst 'soft' drugs are associated more with social supply), 'set' (which can encompass individual attitudes and also patterns of drug use, with 'problematic' patterns of use less associated with social supply) and 'setting' (which can include the socio-economic setting of the user).

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How honest can you be as a researcher?

Participating on ethical committees and personal ethical dilemmas emerging from one's investigations can bring several challenges to researchers on drug use and drug policies. The way one decides to act and reflect upon these challenges, however, can both increase the researchers' comprehension and provide valuable data. This presentation discusses three types of ethical dilemma that emerged during qualitative research analysing how social and health workers as well as police make illicit-drug policy happen, using participant observation of and in-depth interviews with workers in the cities of Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Porto Alegre, Brazil. The first situation discussed relates to participation on ethical committees, which led to interference with research design, bureaucratic hassles and delays. However, analysing the process to acquire research permission has nonetheless proved to be a valuable tool in understanding power relations among research participants and their institutions. The second situation relates to personal identification with some participants and difficulties in empathising with others, and raised several dilemmas, including difficulties in identifying with law enforcement workers, particularly the Brazilian police, which led to a concern about possible bias in the research. It was also difficult to observe situations in which violence towards users would probably be involved, and to understand the reasons workers felt they had to act this way. It was unclear how far one's relativism could go in order to avoid bias. In this second type of situation, ethnographic reflexivity (Bourgois 2003, Guillemin & Gillam 2004) made it possible to understand police motivations as well as how they are viewed by health and social workers. The third set of situations relates to reporting findings. For example, although secrecy and anonymity protect the identity of individual participants, some of the data might bring political consequences when reported to a wider public. Similarly, it is possible that information on workers' attitudes could potentially compromise trust in certain care institutions. And finally, there is the matter of reporting ethical dilemmas, given that openness with readers could have a boomerang effect, confirming bias. A brief conclusion is that if one considers total objectivity and neutrality impossible to achieve, maybe the best thing to do is to be honest, being reflexive during the research and giving readers more autonomy to judge the work.

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Drug courts: The therapeutic ethos a technology of governance

"Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without"

(Edmund Burke 1791)

Classical control theories argue that human behaviour can be controlled in two ways, and two ways only: by the person himself through self-control; or by another person through coercion. The Norwegian Drug Courts was established in Oslo and Bergen in 2006, as a trial project, where drug users could be convicted to treatment instead of prison. However, what type of control are Drug Courts an expression of?

In this paper I explore the ideological and theoretical foundations of the Drug Courts in Norway, and argue that they are an expression of a third way of governing, through the therapeutic ethos, which governs a person's self-control. Inspired by the works of Michel Foucault on *Governmentality* and Nicolas Rose's *Governing the Soul*, I explore the technologies of governing as expressed in the Drug Courts. The concept of governmentality, which refers to governing of governing, is often illuminated by notions such as technologies of power and technologies of self. Technologies of power are the resources used to help develop good behaviour with the idea of creating positive attitudes and attributes while attempting to avoid negative ones. Technologies of self-revolve around the capacity of individuals to control and therefore govern themselves. This means restricting their own negative behaviours while promoting positive behaviours because of personal and societal benefit rather than the rule of law. Included in the technologies of self are responsabilization and self-esteem. Responsibilization indicates personal responsibility, and self-esteem means self-empowerment, but this is based on an earned respect of self through continual self-evaluation, personal discipline, and self-improvement.

The Norwegian Drug Court emphasizes that the drug users must be responsible, motivated to change, cooperative and have a good understanding of their situation to be part of the project. Although the Drug Court was meant as an alternative for the utmost marginalized drug users, experiences from Norway show that the psychologically ill and marginalized drug users are excluded from the program. This is because they are not seen as capable of treatment. This leads us to a neo-liberal paradox: although meant to create a regulating-self, the therapeutic ethos as expressed in the Drug Court takes as its' point of departure the self-governing individual, and leaves the state with the difficult question of how to govern the ones which cannot or will not govern themselves.

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The drug dispositive: Reflections on the science-policy nexus

Objectives: Investigation of the interaction of diverse dimensions of policy making and their relation to ideological and utopian thought systems. Investigation of a “power dispositive” that contains the diverse professions and policy makers which influence drug policies. The special power of research and of some basic principles and strategies which may help to increase the possibilities of social drug research to shape drug policies in controversial directions will be identified.

Methodology:

1. Identification of stakeholders at work in the discourse on drug policies and in their implementation. Assessment of the importance of research as one of these stakeholders.
2. Investigation of the interaction of these stakeholders in the construction of drug policies in diverse fields of activities with focus on research.
3. Exploration of the power of diverse ideological influences on the different stakeholders.
4. For the interpretation theories from “sociology of knowledge” (Karl Mannheim) and Michel Foucault’s dispositive – concept are used as reference.

Significant results: There are many stakeholders who influence the policy making process. They include politicians on local, regional, national and international level but also experts and representatives from different disciplines and social and professional bodies (research; professional organisations; experts from medicine, psychiatry, mental health, public health, psychology, psychotherapy, epidemiology, criminology, sociology; social pressure groups like concerned parents; media representatives; etc.). All these individuals and groups are somewhat influenced by background ideologies and utopic objectives. Research is one of these stakeholders. Its results can be used and misused, and they can also be suppressed as well as assessed in a derogatory way. Politicians do not so much “misuse scientific evidence”, but they are prone to define research topics and to structure research in a way that helps to construct an “evidence based cultural reality” that supports their political aims and opinions. The power of research to counteract predominating attitudes or to introduce controversial scientific evidence is increased when research is based on independent funds and if there is the possibility that the results can be published freely. Publication policies therefore are a very important issue.

Conclusions:

1. Research is one stakeholder in a power dispositive regarding drug policies. Although dependent from funds it should act as independent as possible.
2. Publication policies are of major importance.
3. If research shall become a powerful force of social change it has to develop resp. support novel concepts and innovative research actions. Of special importance seems to be a model that stimulates research within drug using populations conducted by specially trained and supported members of the drug using community from an empowerment perspective.

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Immunodeficiency provoked by cocaine and crack abuse

Illicit drugs, including heroin, marijuana and cocaine, not only alter the abusers' neuropsychological and pathophysiological responses, but also impair their immune functions. Cocaine and cocaine free base (crack), are major drugs of abuse, and have taken an epidemic character over the last decades. Most crack cocaine users are from low-income backgrounds. Crack cocaine urge, and having no means to afford the drug, leaves the users vulnerable making them adopt risky strategies to get the drug. The most common ways reported to get crack cocaine or money to buy it were: prostitution, manipulation of other people, go into debt, sell personal belongings to buy the drug, and theft. Cocaine is known to target the immune system and to cause immunodeficiency, including T lymphocyte suppression and changes in phagocytic activity of macrophages. It was found that cocaine impairs the body's defence system for at least four hours after use. This immunodeficiency that cocaine addicts develop has shown to increase the risk of infectious diseases due to i.v. drug use. The correlation between drug users and sexually related infections has led to the proposal that the immunomodulation mediated by addictive drugs is a major factor contributing to the progression and spreading of AIDS and other opportunistic infectious diseases, since drug addicts often exchange sex for drugs.

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Stakeholders, arguments and power in a changing substance abuse treatment system

Background: This study analyses the political process around the development of the Swedish substance abuse treatment system (SATx). Knowledge about the effects of systems reforms is scarce. This knowledge gap allows debate and organizational changes to be dominated and guided by ideological, political and economic considerations – often claiming to be research-oriented – and fumbling organizational system reforms without a solid research ground. Organizational reforms take place internationally and we see how countries seek to implement organizational models that have been tried (and failed) elsewhere. A Swedish reform proposal now suggests that treatment is transferred from social to health care, which implies medicalization and an abrupt break with a long social tradition in Swedish SATx. The proposal was sent out for comments and 225 stakeholders (state/regional/local authorities; treatment providers; user and other interest organizations; and other experts and universities) have responded the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. Stakeholders in the field of SATx and this process are competing for values and resources and have different means and goals depending on their position (cf Bourdieu). Their arguments may change or stop the reform. A government bill may be presented in the end of 2012 but the outcome, whether there will be an organizational change or not, is still unknown. We hereby face an unusually good opportunity to study the influence of various stakeholders in the policy making process in the field of addictions. The study uses the concepts of path dependency and formative moments from institutional theory.

Aim and research questions: The aim is to analyze conditions, assumptions, arguments and stakeholders in the process of system change. How do different stakeholders characterize addiction problems and the solutions for the problems? What arguments do actors use to promote their opinion? Can a social discourse be separated from a medical discourse and are there other competing discourses? How do user organizations respond to the proposal?

Methods: The written commentaries by stakeholders are analyzed in terms of their content and arguments for or against changes, and of the position from which the sender is presenting the arguments. (No results or conclusions yet).

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The triangle of science, policy and media. Some preliminary results of the analysis of the Belgian cannabis policy debate (1996-2003)

Expectations about the interface between scientific research and policy formulation have been consolidated under the banner of '*evidence-based policy*' (Hoppe, 1999). It proposes that policy makers should be informed by scientists and other drug experts, so that policy will reflect accurate factual knowledge of e.g. drug effects and risks rather than political biases. However, the main problem with this account is that it fails to engage with the complex relationship between policy and science in a meaningful manner, with scientific research just being one of the many sources of knowledge used by policy makers (Hughes, 2007; Stevens, 2010; Monaghan, 2011).

Similar to the evolution in various European countries towards more tolerant policies regarding cannabis possession, a debate on a change of cannabis policy sparked off in Belgium. This debate, initiated in 1996 with the implementation of a Parliamentary Working Group on Drugs, focused on what is called the *de facto depenalisation* of cannabis possession. After lengthy and difficult debates and interactions between parliamentary members, researchers, the media and the members of the public, a new drug legislation was endorsed in Belgium (2003) which *de facto* depenalised the possession of cannabis for personal use. Using the Belgian debate on cannabis policy (1996-2003) as a case study, we aim to understand the contribution of (scientific) research in this debate. How do parliamentary members and members of the government support their ideas and which arguments do they use in rethinking prohibition? Apart from the knowledge producers (academic worlds) and knowledge consumers (decision community), we acknowledge that the media too may play an important role in the interaction between science and policy.

The methodology consists of a (critical) discourse analysis of parliamentary documents and newspaper articles between 1996 and 2003 and, in a following phase, semi-structured interviews with various actors involved (parliamentary members, researchers and members of the media and interest groups).

This presentation will provide preliminary findings on the contribution of (scientific) knowledge in the parliamentary and governmental debate regarding cannabis policy in Belgium. We found instrumental, political/symbolic and conceptual (mis)uses of scientific knowledge and noted dynamic processes between science, policy and media. Each of these will be described and discussed in order to achieve a better understanding of the nexus between science and policy.

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Association of substance use and suicidality levels in Greek male conscripts during the last decade

Aim: The present study is a meta-analysis of three researches that took place during the decade 2001-2010 in Greek young male conscripts. The study aimed to estimate the comorbidity of substance use and suicidal behaviour, during that period.

Method: A total of 2.271 Greek male conscripts (1.098 in 2001, 777 in 2005 and 396 in 2010) participated in this study completing a standard questionnaire concerning their lifetime and current suicidal and substance use behaviour. People with severe physical or mental conditions and people who follow social service were excluded from the study. Due to the randomized selection of the sample, it represented almost all regions and socio-economic strata of the country. The average age of the sample was 21.5 (SD = 2.8) years.

Results: In the sample of 2001 we found that the feeling that "life has no meaning" rose significantly ($p < 0.05$) during the military service period (24.0%) compared to pre-military period (11.7%). Regarding drug use and alcohol abuse we found a significant decrease ($p < 0.05$) during the military service period (22.8% vs. 9.3%), while the use of hashish, heroin, pills and cocaine showed no significant differences between the previous and the present period (9.4% vs. 7.2% and 4.9% vs. 3.9%, respectively). In the samples of the years 2005 and 2010, none of the subgroups who reported suicidality or substance use differed significantly compared to the sub-groups who did not report similar behaviour. For the sample of 2001 it was found that people who have a history of previous suicidal ideation and drug use are significantly more likely ($p < 0.05$) to continue such behaviour during the military service period, compared with those who had no previous record. In the samples of the years 2005 and 2010 we found that the group who reported use of drugs (before and during the period of the military services) are significantly more likely ($p < 0.001$) to belong also to the group of those who had suicidal ideation, compared to the group who reported no relevant past or current use.

Conclusion: The meta-analysis of three studies found high rates of coexistence (comorbidity) between suicidality and drug use in Greek young male conscripts especially during the period of the military services. We suggest the necessity of the early detection of these high-risk behaviours, applying closer monitoring and integrated prevention programs in the army

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Conceptual and methodological questions on the differing treatment of drug-use and abuse among nationally diverse populations: The issue of establishing dual devalued identities

The issue of drug-use and abuse is often treated by literature and research on addiction in policy terms and agenda. Mass migration waves towards Europe have helped the emergence of discussions on differing trends in drug trade and use among native and immigrant populations. The issue of accessibility and efficacy of drug services by immigrant populations is also - but seldom - addressed. However, certain conceptual and methodological issues question the differing treatment of drug use and trade among distinct populations upon ethnicity or nationality variables alone. Cultural variances may obscure the role and importance of the structural parameters involved. Additionally, in certain cases it might be impossible to balance or decipher the role of the structural and cultural factors of analysis as certain of their aspects often intermingle. The proposed paper addresses the theoretical and methodological implications of the above distinctions through the testing of the hypothesis on how dual devalued identities are built in immigrant drug users populations.

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Understanding high-level drug trafficking in the European Union. A qualitative study

By analysing a high-level drug dealing network operating in the European Union, this study aims to fill a gap in European drug research.

About 93% of research activities in Europe focus on research fields of understanding drug use and demand reduction, whereas just 6% of the European research deal with supply reduction, e.g. different stages of illicit drug supply, including cultivation and production, trafficking and diversion/leakage plus drug markets and distribution (Buhringer, Farrell & Kraus, 2009) This study addresses the 6% relating to supply reduction. Better understanding of the structure and operations of drug markets may contribute to improving the understanding of this complex area as well as provide law enforcement agencies with information on where and when they should focus their activities (Wilson & Stevens, 2008).

In order to address these issues, the study provides an empirical analysis on the operation and structure of a network of upper-level drug dealers within the European Union. Moreover, based on the qualitative research study, a definition on upper-level drug dealing will be developed. Therefore, a qualitative case study has been conducted on a network of 45 upper-level drug dealers operating in the European Union and mainly involving Austria, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands and Spain. The in-depth case study is based on three semi-structured interviews with an imprisoned man convicted for drug-dealing offences, three semi-structured interviews with experts from the Austrian Federal Criminal Agency, and additionally legal files (including investigation records, phone tapping protocols, accusations, trial protocols and verdicts) on one upper-level drug dealing network. The data is being analysed with Qualitative Content Analysis (Schreier, 2012; Mayring, 2002), a method suitable for systematically looking deeper into what the very content of the data includes. This analysis is the first qualitative research in the field of upper-level drug dealing for German speaking countries (Wehinger, 2011; Dorn, Levi & King, 2005).

The preliminary findings indicate that: (1) people involved in this drug dealing network primarily dealt for personal enrichment; (2) network members were not mainly hierarchically organized; (3) more or less cooperation and competitiveness between illicit drug dealing networks; (4) physical violence is being avoided by drug dealers in order to minimize the risk of getting caught.

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Scheduled drugs". Report of the Dutch Expert Committee on Scheduling Illicit Drugs

Objective: In 2009 the Netherlands issued a report on the future of drug policy. In this report, questions were asked about the system of scheduling in the so-called Opium Act. The Dutch government proposed a national committee for this purpose. The author was a member of this committee.

The Dutch Opium Act contains two schedules (lists), one for drugs with unacceptable risks (hard drugs) and one for drugs with acceptable risks (soft drugs). The method of criminalization and severity of the sentence varies by list. The purpose of these two schedules is a separation between the soft drugs and hard drugs markets.

Methodology: The committee was asked to work out different scenarios:

- A. Retaining the current system with two lists.
- B. Introduction of a system involving one list.
- C. Introducing a different system.

The committee consisted of experts in the field of addiction, toxicology, legal environment, international law and drug policy. In order to assess the different scenarios, the committee studied other European (and New Zealand) scenario's. The committee used a number of criteria: expressive function, transparency, flexibility, harmfulness, monitoring and enforcement and feasibility.

Results/conclusions: The committee makes the following recommendations: The scheduling system of two lists requires no change. Complementary measures are desirable in order to optimize the operation of the Opium Act: These are a.o.:

- Establishment of a disclosure office (hotline) for the monitoring of new drugs,
- A reassessment of some Opium Act drugs

The last measure mainly concerns the existing distinction between hemp and hashish on the two lists. The committee recommends to tighten this distinction based on THC content. Now, all hemp and hashish are scheduled on List II (soft drugs). The committee recommends hemp and hashish with a THC content of more than 15 % to schedule on List I (hard drugs). Hemp and hashish with a THC content of max.15 % should be maintained in List II (soft drugs).

The Dutch recommendations with respect to the scheduling system and the reassessment of some Opium Act drugs will have consequences for other European countries. The recommendations and the reasoning behind will be discussed.

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Studying social supply networks through the internet

Background and objectives: Social supply is of increasing importance in order to understand drug markets and drug use. This research builds upon the work of Aldridge and colleagues (2011) who conclude after a longitudinal study in North West England that young people obtain their drugs primarily through friends or friends of friends. Young people's drug initiations happen in social settings where they are offered drugs. Additionally, research suggests that these users are otherwise law-abiding, and use this mechanism to protect themselves from 'dodgy real dealers'. This is an important element in the social construction of the responsible and respectable recreational drug user (Parker, Williams, & Aldridge, 2002). 'Social supply' is a relatively new concept, mainly studied in the UK, and defined by Hough et al (2003) as the non-commercial (or non-profitable) distribution of cannabis to non-strangers. This definition is nevertheless still discussed (Potter, 2009).

How this separate arena of transactions functions, what factors influence its shape, and what meaning(s) the participants give to it, are gaps in the existing (and very limited) literature. Like Coomber and Turnbull (2007), we aim to analyse drug use patterns among young people. In addition, this research will focus on the construction of these supply networks and the extent to which one can talk of 'social' supply. Although the study focuses on the Belgian case, it forms a theoretical contribution to the development of the concept "social supply".

Methodology: Internet use by drug users creates opportunities not only to recruit drug users but also to engage them in a dialogue. This paper will discuss the possibilities and problems of three new technologies – social network sites, forums and blogs –, evaluate the integration of social network analysis in this field and explore the merits and limits of a qualitative study of virtual networks.

When engaging with a social group, first and foremost, notions of privacy need consideration as the discussion whether the internet is a public place is still on-going. The lack of physical presence and separate physical settings influences the control and relationship between the researcher and the participant. This can lead to a more balanced relationship although identities can be easily altered, requiring a flexible definition of the target population ((Barratt & Lenton, 2010). In that regard, we evaluate the opportunities to reach hidden populations. To conclude, the paper discusses the extent to which social network analysis can take place in a virtual world, and how virtual threads are intertwined with 'real' connections.

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Change in minimum age for coffee shops and prevalence rates

There has been much discussion about the influences of drug policy on drug use, including prevalence rates. In 1996 the minimum age for Dutch so-called 'coffee shops' was raised from 16 to 18 years. This study examines the effect of that change on the prevalence rates among 16 and 17 year olds in Amsterdam. Data from a school survey, held several times between 1993 and 2007, was used. This resulted in 908 respondents in the ages 16-17 years. After 1997, a downward trend can be seen in cannabis use prevalence rates although not all changes were significant. When looking at prevalence rates per subgroup (sex, ethnicity, educational level), different developments in prevalence rates could be seen. Data analyses showed that changes in population were more important in explaining this downward trend than the change in policy.

The outcome of the analyses will be discussed shortly, but the emphasis will be on the consequences this has for the discussion about the influence of policy on the use of drugs. The results will be put into an international perspective.