37th Annual Conference

European Society for Social Drug Research (ESSD)

PROGRAMME

Date: September 29 - October 2, 2026
Venue: Aula Parva, Vilnius University, Universiteto str. 3

DAY 0 | SEPTEMBER 29

Pre-conference activities. Venue: Špunkė, Etmonių str. 3

18:00 - 21:00 **Informal networking / get-together**

DAY 1 | SEPTEMBER 30

Venue: Aula Parva, Vilnius University, Universiteto str. 3

08:45 - 09:15 **Registration & Coffee**

09:15 - 09:50 **Welcome Address**

Dr Aušra Pocienė - Associate Professor and Director, Institute of Sociology and Social Work, Vilnius University Faculty of Philosophy
Ganna Dovbakh - Executive Director, Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA)
Prof. Gary Potter - President, European Society for Social Drug Research (ESSD)
Linas Tavaras - technical and practical information

09:50 - 10:55 **Session 1: Heroin Markets and Changing Supply**

Chair: Gary Potter
• *What's happening to heroin? Career, cohort, age, and era.* – James Morgan
• *The impact of declining heroin quality on drug use trends in the North-West of England* – Rob Ralphs
• *Pricing and Supply Route Dynamics Following the Announced Heroin Shortage* – Davide Fortin

10:55 - 11:20 **Coffee Break**

11:20 - 12:25 **Session 2: Harm Reduction, Marginalisation and Service Provision**

Chair: Tom Decorte
• *Hepatitis C Among People Who Inject Drugs in Latvia: The Role of Incarceration, HIV, and Social Inequality* – Kārlis Rupainis
• *Between the prison and the streets: "carceral care" and social abandonment among homeless PWUD in Athens* – Ioanna Gouseti
• *How third-sector agencies in England promote harm reduction within the constraints of the government drugs strategy* – Viktorija Zelionaja

12:25 - 13:25 **Lunch Break**

13:25 - 14:30 **Session 3: Psychedelic Cultures, Practices and Meaning**

Chair: Mats Ekendahl

• *Socio-Psychedelic Imaginaries and Metamodernism: Interpreting Contemporary Psychedelic Culture* – Linas Tavaras

• *A Criminological Investigation into Psychedelic Drug Use: Soldiers, Shamans, and Supermarket Brands* – Richard G. Alexander

• *Tools, self-medication and pleasure: observations on the naturalistic use of psychedelics in 2020s Finland* – Mika Tsupari

14:30 - 14:55 **Coffee Break**

14:55 - 16:00 **Session 4: Peer Work, Recovery and Low-Threshold Services**

Chair: James Morgan

• *"We are not peer-led, we are peer-focused": organisational constructions of youth engagement and peer work in harm reduction* – Rebeca Marques Rocha

• *Stitching Stories for Recovery: Methodological Innovation in European Recovery Research* – Lisa Williams

• *Harm Reduction and Low-Threshold Services in Open Drug Scenes: The Case of São Paulo* – Aline Oliveira

18:00 - 20:00 **Special Documentary Screening and Discussion**

Venue: Lukiškės Prison 2.0, Lukiškės Lane 6

Free entry. Drinks and snacks are available for purchase at the venue.

Documentary by Rudi Somerlove, followed by a moderated discussion.

DAY 2 | OCTOBER 1

09:30 - 10:35 **Session 5: Drug Policy, Criminal Justice and Policing**

Chair: Bernd Werse

• *Shifts in Sentencing Severity for Drug Offences in England and Wales: Lessons for European Drug Policy Reform* – Lilly Crellin

• *Drugs, Death and Criminal Liability: Between Legal Classification and Social Perceptions* – Michaela Roubalova

• *Surveilled subjectivation: narratives of drug policing among people who use prohibited drugs in Sweden* – Mats Ekendahl

10:35 - 11:00 **Coffee Break**

11:00 - 12:05 **Session 6: Treatment, Care and Stigma**

Chair: Michaela Roubalova

• *European approaches to the treatment and care of co-occurring substance use and mental health conditions* – Erikas Simonavičius

• *Transparency in Maternal Substance Use Care: A UK-Wide Review of Health Trusts via Freedom of Information Requests* – Emma Smith

• *Using creative methods to address addiction stigma in women who use substances in pregnancy: Mum Points, an interactive play developed from the Stepping Stones Study* – Kelly MacBeth Mackay

12:05 - 12:15 **ESSD Board Election Results Announcement**

Announcement of the results of the ESSD Board elections and brief ESSD organisational updates.

12:15 - 13:15 **Lunch Break**

13:15 - 14:20 **Session 7: Changing Drug Practices, Trends and Risk Environments**

Chair: Lisa Williams

• *Findings from a Narrative Review: The Environmental Factors Influencing Initiations and Transitions into Cocaine Injecting* – Naomi Elizabeth Dickson

• *Early Signals and Risk Environments of Synthetic Opioids in Germany: Findings from a multi-source monitoring approach* – Franziska Schneider

• *The Scaffold Gap: Ontological Shock and Preparedness in Psychedelic Science* – Christian Tym

14:20 - 14:55 **Coffee Break**

14:55 - 16:00 **Session 8: Drug Narratives, Cultures and Representations**

Chair: Kristiana Deivisa

• *Retreat(ment): Narrating Personal Change through Authenticity* – Jesper Dunell

• *"Back then it was just a cool rap song about Xanax": Song lyrics and qualitative interviews with young people and drug counsellors on tranquilizer use* – Sofie H. Borup

• *Alpha-PVP Drug Phenomenon through the Lenses of the Finnish News Media* – Tiina Poutiainen

18:30 - 20:30 **Conference Social Dinner**

Venue: "La Boheme", Šv. Ignoto str. 4

Food is provided by venue, drinks will be available for purchase.

DAY 3 | OCTOBER 2

09:30 - 10:35 **Session 9: Emerging Drug Markets and Digital Risk Environments**

Chair: Zsuzsa Kalo

• *Selling Pills on Social Media: A Mixed Methods Study of Online Markets for Prescription Tranquilizers* – Tobias Kammersgaard

• *Exit scam: using game analogies to map sociotechnical dynamics in the darknet drug trade* – Ákos Szigeti

• *Sticky Associations in Illicit Drug Networks. Quasi-Experimental study into Persistent Drug Recommendations on Snapchat* – Kristoffer Aagesen

10:35 - 10:55 **Coffee Break**

10:55 - 12:00 **Session 10: Young People, Overdose and Drug-Related Harm**

Chair: Rob Ralphs

• *Drug, set, and setting in overdose events of Finnish young adults* – Teemu Kaskela

• *The case of adolescent substance use in a rural district of Lithuania: context and motivations* – Aušra Pocienė

12:00 - 12:05 **Short Break**

12:05 - 12:35 **ESSD Closing Session**

Announcement of the Early Career Researcher Award

Future ESSD conferences and activities and Closing remarks

14:00 - 16:30 ***(Non compulsory)* Everyday Lives of Communities of People Who Use Drugs**

Venue: Aula Parva, Vilnius University, Universiteto str. 3

Short documentary films featuring the personal stories of people who use psychoactive substances in Ukraine and the Balkans will be screened. These documentaries were created through the initiative of community members and NGO activists, aiming to showcase the direct, personal experiences and challenges faced by people who use psychoactive substances.

After screenings there will be an open discussion on harm reduction in Baltics and East Europe with Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA) and Young Wave.