

European Update

EMCDDA

Polish dignitaries visit EMCDDA and present drug-related programme of upcoming EU presidency.

The purpose of the visit is to present the programme of the six-month mandate (July–December), review recent changes in Polish drug policy and explore future cooperation and information-exchange between the EMCDDA and Polish bodies working in the drugs field.

<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2011/fs-2>

Europe

GW Pharmaceuticals Plc's (GWP.L) pioneering cannabis drug Sativex has been recommended for approval in the six other European countries targeted by the British company and Spanish partner Almirall (ALM.MC). National approvals are now expected in Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy and Sweden from mid-2011 onwards, with launches in Denmark, Germany and Sweden likely before the end of 2011. Sativex -- sprayed under the tongue as a treatment for spasticity in multiple sclerosis.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/22/gw-cannabis-idUSLDE72L0BL20110322>

Denmark

Police seized almost a million kroner and 24 kilos of hash in a massive raid in Christiania. Eight people appeared at a preliminary hearing charged with selling hundreds of kilos of cannabis. One is charged with storing 1.160 kilos of hash and 232.

<http://www.cphpost.dk/component/content/51421.html?task=view>

Ireland

A seriously ill Irishman living in the Netherlands has said he's preparing to end his life after losing a further bid to return home carrying medicine containing cannabis. Noel McCullagh (35), who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2006, has not been able to visit his parents, in Co Galway, after being repeatedly warned that he will face a drugs charge if he attempts to enter the State with his medication, which is on prescription from a Dutch doctor.

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/republic-of-ireland/sick-irishman-denied->

[entry-to-republic-of-ireland-with-medicinal-cannabis-i-cant-go-home-so-im-preparing-to-die-15137439.html](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/republic-of-ireland/sick-irishman-denied-entry-to-republic-of-ireland-with-medicinal-cannabis-i-cant-go-home-so-im-preparing-to-die-15137439.html)

The Netherlands

A Lithuanian professional footballer was caught with 162 kg of hashish on the Dutch border with Germany. Customs officials arrested the man, whose name has not been released, at the German village of Neuerhede, not far from the Dutch city of Groningen, as he was trying to cross into north Germany. The drugs have a street-value of 1.3 million euros and were packed into coffee bags. The footballer, who plays in Lithuania, had been planning to carry the drugs through Germany and Sweden into Russia. Officials say the haul is one of the biggest found in the Dutch-German border region for decades.

<http://www.nrw.nl/english/bulletin/lithuanian-footballer-caught-cannabis>

United Kingdom

Cannabis plants are being grown at a secret facility in the south of England in the hope of producing a new treatment for epilepsy. Researchers at the University of Reading have discovered that three compounds found in cannabis leaves can help to reduce and control seizures in epilepsy. They are now using extracts from the plants grown in huge industrial-sized greenhouses in the south of England to develop new drugs that could ease the misery of millions of epilepsy sufferers around the world.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/science-news/8440303/Cannabis-could-be-used-to-treat-epilepsy.html>

United Kingdom

Wales could be swamped by adults and children forced to work as sex slaves, beggars and cannabis farmers by ruthless human traffickers. That is the stark warning from the man charged with stemming the tide of human misery flowing from the world's poorest nations.

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2011/04/03/human-trafficking-tsar-warns-that-wales-could-be-swamped-91466-28447765/>

World Update

Australia

Melbourne is fighting a drugs epidemic, with 9000 overdoses a year. The complex cocktails cooked up by many drug users mean victims are becoming harder to treat. Figures reveal ambulance crews now struggle with the highest level of drug cases since the heroin epidemic of 1999-2000. Growing abuse of over-the-counter and prescription pharmaceuticals means most overdose victims now take longer to treat and require hospitalisation. <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/more-news/melbournes-9000-overdoses-a-year/story-fn7x8me2-1226036946406>

Australia

A 10-year review of cannabis cautions issued in New South Wales has found the state has saved about \$20 million. Over the past decade police have issued cautions to 39,000 people who admitted to possessing less than 15 grams of cannabis. State auditor-general Peter Achterstraat says 14 per cent of people who are charged end up in court again, compared to 5 per cent who received a caution.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/04/07/3185097.htm>

Dominica

Dominican authorities arrested 12 soldiers at at Gregorio Luperon International Airport for attempting to smuggle 33 kilograms of cocaine to Toronto in a Canadian child's suitcase. Eight of the soldiers were members of the Dominican army's counter-narcotics unit at the airport, while the other four worked security there.

<http://www.vancouver.sun.com/Dominican%20soldiers%20charged%20attempted%20cocaine%20smuggling%20Canada/4557708/story.html>

Honduras

Counter-narcotics agents in Honduras discovered a major cocaine-processing complex last month tucked in mountainous triple-canopy jungle near the border with Guatemala, a worrisome sign that Colombian drug lords are shifting their operations to the weaker countries of Central America. The jungle complex was the first large drug-processing laboratory found north of South America's Andean region, and it signals a major change in the cocaine business. Traditionally, the industry has processed leaves from coca plant in hidden labs in Colombia, then shipped the cocaine to North America and Europe.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/04/10/2160142/cocaine-lab-found-in-honduras.html>

Iran

While women in Iran may use drugs less frequently than men, they are more likely to die as a result. Also women who use drugs face extreme stigma and are more likely to experience unemployment, depression, and anxiety as well as general medical problems than are their male counterparts.

<http://blog.soros.org/2011/04/reaching-women-drug-users-in-iran/>

Malaysia

Malaysian police arrested two Pakistani nationals and seized heroin worth (35.4 million dollars). The suspects were due to be charged with drug trafficking, which carries the mandatory death sentence. http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/asiapacific/news/article_1631569.php/Malaysian-police-arrest-Pakistanis-seize-heroin

Myanmar

Drug production on the rise. A young man sits on the long tail boat, explaining how he smuggles amphetamines into Thailand from Myanmar. A sprawling border region, largely controlled by ethnic armies within Myanmar and corruption within the Thai security forces, has aided a thriving narcotics trade along the 1,800km border.

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=92436>

Puerto Rico

The mail from Puerto Rico supplies loved ones in Connecticut with a steady stream of tropical foods, gifts and other packages. For drug traffickers, it is also an irresistible pipeline for smuggling cocaine. The U.S. Postal Service and private overnight couriers have become popular among drug kingpins in Puerto Rico, a favored stepping stone for Colombian cocaine. Federal investigators say the criminals ship to areas with big islander populations for sale in local cities and beyond.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/AP9d74723b945f49b881878f21441c15c7.html>

Venezuela

Venezuelan Defense Minister Carlos Mata Figueroa pledged that his office will fully investigate the charges of corruption made by an alleged drug lord being held in Colombia. Figueroa's comments come in response to statements made by Walid Makled, an alleged Venezuelan cocaine trafficker arrested in Colombia last year, who has implicated numerous Venezuelan government and military officials of facilitating his drug business.

<http://www.nasdaq.com/aspx/stock-market-news-story.aspx?storyid=201104060032dowjonesdjonline000003>

Drug Webwatch

Report

Afghanistan's Drug Career: Evolution from a War Economy to a Drug Economy

German research paper looks into the beginnings and the evolution of drug production in Afghanistan during decades-long war. [http://www.swp-](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2011_RP04_mss_ks.pdf)

[Wberlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2011_RP04_mss_ks.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2011_RP04_mss_ks.pdf)

Conference

The first Substance Misuse Skills Consortium Conference - London

'An inspirational recovery-orientated drug and alcohol workforce: how to deliver the Drug Strategy commitments', the Substance Misuse Skills Consortium's first national conference, will take place in London on Monday 6 June 2011.

<http://www.skillsconsortium.org.uk/First%20Substance%20Misuse%20Skills%20Consortium%20national%20conference.aspx>

Survey

The General Pharmaceutical Council; (GPhC) is calling on patients, the public, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals for evidence supporting their experiences and views on the extemporaneous preparation of methadone. The evidence will help inform the way in which we develop our standards for pharmacy owners and superintendent pharmacists.

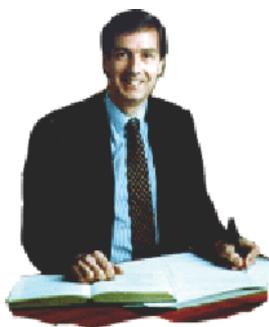
<http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/pdfs/consultations/meacallforevidencefinal.pdf>

Future Issues

I would like to express thanks to those persons around the world who have contributed to this issue in particular to Jim Young at Substance Misuse. Items for inclusion in future issues should be forwarded to paul@paul-cook.net

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