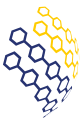


Part of the Toolbox on

PARTY DRUGS AND CRIME



**Effective
approaches**



EUCPN
EUROPEAN CRIME PREVENTION NETWORK

**EU
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HR**

“

The goal of this paper is to provide insights into the approaches taken to risks at recreational settings and the evidence that is available for them. We can conclude that multi-component interventions are recommended, as the different actors offer a broad perspective to help tackle problems and produce a wide range of interventions.

”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication could not have been realised in its current form without the views of experts in the field from across the EU. Therefore, we would like to thank the members of the EUCPN for sharing information on the situation in their Member State by answering our questionnaire. Furthermore, we would like to express our gratitude to following professionals for taking the time to participate in an interview and to provide feedback:

Citation

EUCPN (2021). Party drugs and crime: effective approaches. Part of the EUCPN Toolbox on Party Drugs and Crime. Brussels: EUCPN

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Part of the project 'EUCPN Secretariat', March 2021, Brussels



With the financial support of the European Union's Internal Security Fund - Police

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All the papers which make up the EUCPN toolbox on party drugs and crime are available for download at

<https://eucpn.org/toolbox-partydrugsandcrime>.

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PREFACE

This paper was written in the light of the Croatian Presidency of the EUCPN. Croatia justifies its choice to focus on drug use in recreational settings as follows:

“Within the area of crime prevention, the Presidency focuses on the prevention of party drug-related crime. In the last few years, party drugs are becoming more popular amongst young drug users. It is precisely the young population, which is prone to experimentation and consumption of new drugs on the market. Besides crime related to production, distribution, possession and procurement of party drugs, different types of crimes are becoming widespread amongst drug users such as vandalism, traffic offences, property crime and violent behaviour.”

In general, offenders are more likely to use drugs and drug users are more likely to offend. However, as there are differences between recreational and problematic drug use, as well as several drug user target groups and types of crime, greater nuance is needed. Several categories are used in order to define drug-related crimes. This paper focusses mainly on approaches for the prevention of psychopharmacological crimes and of some drug law offences as negative consequences of going out and using drugs in recreational settings. Easily accessible databases and high-quality guides related to the prevention of risks at recreational settings are also discussed.

In Europe, drug use is principally approached from a health perspective. Nevertheless, the target group of this paper are varied actors from the criminal justice sector: policymakers, crime prevention practitioners and law enforcement.

This paper is one of four parts of the toolbox in the topic of party drugs and crime.

- Party drugs and crime: understanding the phenomenon
- Party drugs and crime: effective approaches
- Darknet drug markets: the criminal business process explained
- Darknet drug markets: recommendations drawn from a barrier model

01 PARTY DRUGS AND PARTY SETTINGS

The definition of party drugs, an explanation of risks in recreational settings, a description of party settings and other topics are discussed more in depth in the report *“Party drugs and crime: understanding the phenomenon”*. This chapter is a summary of that report.

- › EUCPN (2021). Party drugs and crime: understanding the phenomenon. Part of the EUCPN Toolbox on Party Drugs and Crime. Brussels: EUCPN. <https://eucpn.org/toolbox-partydrugsandcrime>

“Party drugs”

Providing the term ‘party drugs’ with a clear cut definition is challenging, given that the category of ‘party drugs’ does not refer to a chemical reality. This category instead refers to *“drugs used with the intention of creating or enhancing recreational experiences”* and highlights the fact that these are the drugs of choice during recreational activities.¹

The cliché concerning the demographics of drug offenders and drug users states that these are social outsiders operating on the margins of society. Nevertheless, new empirical research and large crime surveys suggest that drug consumers, sellers, transactions and the drug market itself exist within all strata of society.²

Risks in recreational settings

There is a range of risks related to recreational settings. Although they are not exhaustive and are overlapping, two main categories can be distinguished: health and social problems and drug-related crimes. Alongside health problems such as unconsciousness, unintentional injury, unsafe sex, brain damage and addiction, there are also possible social problems such as aggressive behaviour and public nuisance.³

The EMCDDA uses four categories to define drug-related crimes: psychopharmacological, economic-compulsive, systemic and drug law crimes.⁴ With regard to party settings and the associated risks, psychopharmacological crimes and drug law offences are most relevant. Psychopharmacological crimes are committed under the influence of a psychoactive substance, as a result of its acute or chronic use. Drug law offences are crimes committed in violation of drug (and other related) legislation.⁵

Risks in recreational settings	
Health and social problems	Drug-related crime
Health problems	Psychopharmacological crimes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unconsciousness - unintentional injury - unsafe sex - brain damage - addiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - violence - sexual assault
Social problems	Drug law offences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public nuisance - aggressive behaviour - regretted sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use - possession - driving under influence - dealing

Party settings

Within recreational settings, the prevalence of drug use varies according to the type of setting, the type of music and the type of target groups.⁶ Even though recreational drug use is intertwined with counterculture, it is no longer limited to it. Increasingly, the consumption of these substances to enhance recreational experiences is expanding into more mainstream settings.⁷

There are several arguments in favour of focusing interventions primarily on settings, and not just on the use of so-called party drugs itself. The use of drugs is more prevalent amongst people frequently attending recreational settings as opposed to the general population. Nevertheless, risky behaviour is broader than the use of drugs alone.⁸ The range of risks related to going out takes place in and around party settings. It is therefore preferable to speak about recreational settings and the associated risks instead of limiting the discussion to the use of party drugs.⁹

The recreational setting can be viewed as one of the important domains for the socialisation of young people next to school or family settings. The party setting, and its stakeholders, influence the development of values, norms and habits concerning safety, such as using drugs, sexual intercourse, driving, violence...¹⁰

Furthermore, with the goal of achieving positive behavioural change, it is better to have targeted efforts. Overall, to gain effective awareness raising, the message should be of immediate significance and the source of the message should be viewed as trustworthy.¹¹ In connection with this topic, it is beneficial to target young people inside party settings rather than in school or through television. Furthermore, professionals active in and around the recreational nightlife can influence the setting. In this regard, they are ideally positioned to have a constructive impact on the socialisation of young people and carry out a unified message of responsible and safe behaviour.¹²

Stakeholders

The stakeholders themselves can be subdivided into several categories: from private actors such as the entertainment industry itself to public entities such as social services and law enforcement. These stakeholders have their own perspective on the use of psychoactive substances in recreational settings and the risks of recreational settings.¹³ For the entertainment industry, it is a way to make a living, for drug treatment services, going out might pose a risk of health problems amongst party-goers and from the perspective of law enforcement services, recreational areas represent a potential concentration of offences relating to illicit drug possession.¹⁴

The recreational industry has a direct impact on the shape of party settings and how events are experienced by participants. Examples of stakeholders in this category include club owners and managers, DJs, the waiting staff or flyer distributors.¹⁵ Whenever the entertainment industry views recreational settings merely as spaces for consumption and as commodities to generate profits, these environments have the potential to become very unsafe.¹⁶

From the perspective of drug treatment and health services, party settings are important locations of convergence: it is within this setting that drug consumption patterns are developed and where these services can find their 'clientele'. Within drug treatment services, there is a shift from traditional intervention to a focus on problematic users, in other words from a primary to a secondary approach. Although the traditional approach on site remains important to support the group of recreational drug users, there is a need for another approach to support the problematic group of drug users in the form of treatment and counselling.

Many police forces have evolved to police services, entailing more proactive approaches, prevention, closer proximity to and closer collaboration with the community it serves.¹⁷ Police services have their work cut out for them when it comes to enforcing the law concerning drug-related crime in party settings.¹⁸ Police services are an important player, yet only one of many actors. Similarly, the resources at the disposal of police services are substantial, yet not enough. The various actors in the area of prevention must therefore work together and pool their resources.¹⁹

02 POLICY AND POLITICS

The relationship between policy and science


“Drug use is associated with vice and vices are associated with ‘the other’, seen as a threat and as a security issue. It is this which explains the passionate and value-driven nature of debate on drugs: it is at core a debate about culture and our sense of right and wrong – unlikely to be dealt with simply as a matter of purely technocratic, evidence-based, scientific discourse.”²⁰

Drug use is a politically sensitive topic, in which the relationship between science and policy is often challenged. One could argue that the principles of evidence-based medicine should be implemented to social policy domains, however a prevailing belief among politicians is that decisions are made based on more than evidence alone. Public opinion plays a part in decision making as it can be considered as a political risk to go against it.²¹ At the present time, public opinion with regard to drug users is rather negative. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial if society understood the relationship between drug use and youth culture and that troubled drug users could have the courage to reach out to parents or health care workers for help without fearing negative consequences.²²

Likewise, the media has an impact on the political debate by producing overly simplistic misrepresentations of the issues at hand, often as a result of giving the floor to opposite extremes while paying less attention to more centred views. For example, arguments for regulating the use of drugs in a manner similar to the way in which alcohol and tobacco regulated are not arguments for legalisation, however they might be interpreted that way because of a simplistic representation of policy options. Furthermore, some are concerned that reported stories containing exaggerations might create unnecessary pressure on policymakers to act quickly on the basis of insufficient evidence.²³

Media coverage of a drug-related death can be damaging to both the venue affected and to the wider image of the night-time industry. While a venue may operate for years without incident and have in place adequate measures to counter drug-related harm, a single DRD is likely to attract more negative media attention than all their combined years of maintaining good practice, and strengthen the public association between a venue, the wider industry and drug use. Disproportionate media interest in drug-related deaths, particularly when related to ecstasy in the night time economy, further pressurises police and authorities to “be seen to be doing something”. Consequently, incidents that might otherwise be judged as being accidental deaths or not in the public interest to investigate, warranting no significant action from police or authorities, are for more likely to be investigated in detail.²⁴

The pressure which politicians and policymakers may be under is reflected in statements made by some after retiring. Politicians often admit to views on drugs that are quite different from what they preached while in office. An important reason for this is the need to conform with the political party's view. This offers politicians one of two choices: resigning or accepting the policy and hopefully making some minor improvements.²⁵



The Global Commission on Drug Policy is a group that aims to inspire better drug policy globally. The driving force behind the Global Commission includes former Heads of State and Government who are aware of the failure of the current drug control regime and who chose to advocate for drug policies based on scientific evidence, human rights, public health, security and leaving no-one behind.²⁶

Another challenging factor in the relationship between politics and science is the mismatch between timescales. While collecting scientific evidence takes time, politics move quickly. Additionally, electoral cycles have their impact on policy decisions or, at least, on declarations of intent by politicians.²⁷

Finally, while some scientists may argue that politicians ignore evidence, politicians argue that often there is no evidence to answer key questions and that a lot of research is not relevant. On top of that, some politicians find it their role to link evidence to a certain narrative and wider vision. Understandably, information is interpreted through a personal set of values and experiences in life.²⁸

All these factors show how the relationship between policy and science, especially within the policy domain of drugs, is complicated.

Need for a balanced policy

Overall, the objectives of the European drug control policy are to be integrated, balanced and evidence-based. A balanced drug policy refers to a balance between repression and prevention. The fact that this balance is of paramount importance for civil organisations related to the EU drug policy is illustrated by many comments received in response to the new EU Agenda on Drugs 2021-2025 in its original draft.

The Agenda states that “The EU needs a paradigm-shift in drugs policy. Therefore, this Agenda strengthens the EU approach to drugs and delivers a bold drugs policy agenda to drive concrete and ambitious change. It steps up efforts on all dimensions of drugs policy, in particular on the security side where it is more robust and provides for concrete actions to address previous shortcomings.”²⁹

This ambition did not pass unnoticed and prompted an open letter published by a coalition of 29 civil society organisations and community networks. In the open letter, they express their concerns regarding the hasty and non-participatory policy-making process, which resulted in a document that stands in contrast to the balanced and multidisciplinary approach of the two previous EU Drug Strategies. The Council’s Horizontal Working Party on Drugs agreed to revise the Agenda.³⁰

According to that coalition, the first key point of criticism concerning the content of the Agenda is that a balanced approach has been lost, as four out of eight priority areas concern security and supply control interventions, while the other four areas are distributed between prisons, prevention, treatment and harm reduction. Furthermore, the coalition regrets the deprioritisation of human rights and public health, the dropping of support for key international documents – of which some were championed by the EU, the reduction of the space for civil society and people who use drugs, the weakening of the external dimensions of drug policy by not setting clear guidelines for EU intervention or support for key international documents and finally, the deprioritisation of scientific evidence, in spite of the EU’s leading role in fostering scientific knowledge and research on drug markets and drug use.³¹

The EU Agenda on Drugs 2021-2025

A) Enhanced security - disrupting the drug markets

- > Strategic priority 1. Disrupt and dismantle major high-risk drug-related organised crime groups operating in, originating in or targeting the EU Member States and address links with other security threats
- > Strategic priority 2. Increase detection of illicit wholesale trafficking of drugs and drug precursors at EU points of entry and exit
- > Strategic priority 3. Increase effective monitoring of logistical and digital channels exploited for medium and small-volume drug distribution and increase seizures of illicit substances smuggled through these channels in close cooperation with the private sector
- > Strategic priority 4. Dismantle drug production and processing, prevent the diversion and trafficking of drug precursors for illicit drug production, and eradicate illegal cultivation

B) Prevention and awareness raising

- > Strategic priority 5. Prevent the uptake of drugs, enhance crime prevention, and raise awareness of the adverse effects of drugs on citizens and communities

C) Addressing drug-related harms

- > Strategic priority 6. Enhance access to treatment options that meet the range of health and rehabilitation needs of people who experience harm from substance use
- > Strategic priority 7. Increase the efficiency of risk and harm reduction interventions to protect the health of drug users and the public
- > Strategic priority 8. Develop a balanced and comprehensive approach to the use of drugs in prisons (reduce demand and restrict supply) ³²

FROM ZERO-TOLERANCE TO MULTI-COMPONENT INTERVENTIONS

Within the EU, risks in recreational settings are approached from various environmental and regulatory perspectives. These might range from zero tolerance, environmental strategies and harm reduction to multi-component interventions. The implementation of most of these approaches is recommended as part of a comprehensive response to prevent risks in recreational settings.³³

Some approaches to risks in recreational settings are better supported by scientific evidence than others. As far as responses in recreational settings are concerned, the majority of that evidence relates to alcohol, while only a limited number of evaluations have been made of interventions relating to illicit drugs. Nevertheless, insights from alcohol-related studies are in general also informative for other drug-related problems.³⁴ Additionally, it is challenging overall to find good quality evidence for approaches to drug-related behaviour in recreational settings, because the body of evaluation research has only just started to grow. In part, this has to do with limited investments in preventive and harm reductive approaches.³⁵ According to research in the Belgian context, in terms of public direct costs, 75% goes to aid/assistance, 24% to safety, 0.5% to prevention and 0.1% to harm reduction. In the context of recreational settings, this translates to the presence of first aid services, law enforcement services and peer support organisations based on volunteers.³⁶

Zero tolerance

“Zero tolerance’ is a popular, catchy notion that leaves no room for doubt and can be flexibly applied in many different situations without having to be clearly defined. It has a strong symbolic potential and it resonates well with the current problems and ostensible solutions as articulated by politicians, populists and police.”³⁷

A zero-tolerance approach towards drugs in recreational settings is characterised by searching thoroughly for illicit substances, possibly supported by drug sniffer dogs and (plain-clothes) police units in and around a given location. The aim is to ban these illicit substances from the recreational setting. Even though actors from the criminal justice sector understand that this is a utopia, the approach does confirm that within recreational settings, psychoactive substances – with the exception of alcohol - are prohibited.³⁸

Implementing a zero-tolerance approach is not cost effective and has a high impact on the capacity of the local police service. Policy capacity deployed to search for drug users at an event cannot be deployed to carry out alcohol- and drug checks in traffic on the roads surrounding that event. Thoroughly frisking visitors is time consuming, given the various options to hide substances. Private security does not have the mandate to take this over. Also, the capacity of drug sniffer dogs is limited. Overall, this is an expensive method to search and punish drug users that overall have a recreational relationship with drug use.³⁹

The probability of a recreational drug user getting caught at a festival is approximately 2%. With such a low rate, a zero-tolerance approach is not effective. Furthermore, punishing people for undesirable behaviour might lead to defensive reactions from those who behave this way. One reason might be that the use of party drugs has a meaningful function for someone, such as enhancing a festival experience and enjoying a good time with friends. In this case, the behaviour is not at all perceived as undesirable by the person in question. Additionally, the decision to stop the use of party drugs is mainly related to work or family obligations, and is, to a lesser extent, driven by weighing up pros and cons. In other words, deterrence will not work in this case.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the approach may lead to dangerous adverse effects. Drug users will adapt their consumption pattern, rather than changing their intention to use. Some immediately consume the substances they are carrying when they spot law enforcement performing thorough searches. This might result in overdoses. Others consume the drugs at home, before travelling to the event. This entails potentially dangerous situations on the road. Another way is buying party drugs at the event. This is undesirable as the offered substances might be of questionable quality or might trigger an impulse to try new drugs.⁴¹

Overall, policing and law enforcement interventions form a crucial part of most approaches to preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm in nightlife and are necessary in order to increase compliance. Examples of law enforcement interventions are visits to high-risk nightlife venues, age verification checks to ensure that venues are not serving underage drinkers, the use of sanctions to enforce licensing legislation regarding the entertainment industry (e.g. revoking a venue's licence to serve alcohol) and intoxication checks of drivers to stop driving under influence.⁴²

However, in order for policing and law enforcement interventions to establish positive effects, certain conditions need to be met. Law enforcement interventions must be carried out on a regular basis and need to be linked to real deterrents. Additionally, they should be combined with preventative measures and form part of a wider approach.⁴³ Also, police interventions that are based on partnership approaches being community-wide or problem-oriented, are more effective than solo reactive police interventions as a means of reducing drug law offences and drug-related calls-for-service. More partners are available in macro-level problem areas such as neighbourhoods or cities, than in micro-level areas such as buildings or street segments, which means that focusing on macro level areas is more effective.⁴⁴

Environmental strategies

Risks in recreational settings can be heightened due to the physical and social environments within party settings that are permissive towards excessive consumption. Environmental strategies target those factors that contribute to higher levels of intoxication. Such factors consist of tolerating intoxicated behaviour, discounted drinks, poor cleanliness, loud music, crowding and poor

Venue conditions	Staff and management factors	Regulation of sale and alcohol promotions
Access and security admission policies	Managerial approaches	Pricing and availability
Under-age checkouts	Involvement of key stakeholders.	Increasing the prices of alcoholic drinks and reducing the prices of non-alcoholic drinks
Limits on numbers of partygoers	Collaboration with police	Controlling opening hours and the density of premises
Intoxication and drug checkouts	Patrons health-care	Special promotions
Signs with policy statements	Code of practice and other agreements.	Avoidance of special promotions.
Inside the venue: physical environments	House policies and management	
Room temperature and ventilation	Code of practice and other agreements.	
Cleaning of spills, broken glasses and other hazards.	Serving staff	
Clearing away empty glasses and bottles	Server training	
Layout and Design	Door and non-serving security staff	
Random checks of toilets	Non-serving security staff training	
Music volume	Tackling drug dealing	
Availability of chill-out areas and/or seating areas.	Entertainment staff: DJs and speakers	
Avoidance of queuing in bar and toilet areas	DJ and Speakers training	
Inside the venue: social environments		
Identification of intoxicated patrons.		
Level of permissive-ness		
Codes of conduct. Description: Written		
Dispersal policies		
Exit control and transportation.		
Relocating staff.		

Table 2. Overview of key components safe settings

-serving practices. There is evidence that measures that create safer spaces and venues by reducing crowding, providing chill-out rooms and free water, serving food, enforcing rules on behaviour and restricting access for minors have a positive impact. Additionally, providing safe late-night transport back home is an important measure for the purpose of preventing driving under the influence and its harmful consequences.⁴⁵

In the manual created by Club Health (see next chapter), which sets out standards for safe recreational environments, an extensive yet orderly overview is given of interventions that are considered key, are recommended or are only recommended under special circumstances. In Table 2, an overview is given of only the key components for safe recreational settings.⁴⁶

The staff of party venues, managers, servers, security and DJs shape the experience of partygoers and have an impact on the risks in recreational settings. The idea is to train staff in several areas such as alcohol legislation, the psychoactive effects of drugs, the impact on violence, refusing to serve intoxicated partygoers, responding to drug dealing and first aid. Partly because of a high turnover rate amongst staff in nightlife settings, evidence of the effectiveness of staff training is inconclusive.⁴⁷

Harm reduction

The EMCDDA defines harm reduction as “*interventions, programmes and policies that seek to reduce the health, social and economic harms of drug use to individuals, communities and societies*”.⁴⁹ Harm reduction is regarded by some as controversial because it is perceived as abandoning the fight and merely focussing on the management of harm. Nevertheless, in the field of drug use, the harm-reduction approach is well developed.⁵⁰ Since 2003, the EU has acted in favour of the prevention and reduction of health-related harm. Consequently, national drug policies are increasingly reflecting the pro harm-reduction perspective that exists within the EU’s drug strategy.⁵¹ At the present time, however, direction in which the new 2021-2025 strategy may shift is not yet clear.



STOP-SV: A TRAINING PROGRAMME TO PREVENT NIGHTLIFE-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is one of the risks in recreational settings and the prevention thereof is a key priority in several countries. Therefore, an evidence-based prevention programme was developed and evaluated in order to understand its effects.

The main objective of STOP-SV is to increase the capacity of nightlife workers to recognise and prevent sexual violence in recreational settings and to increase their ability and willingness to respond by means of positive bystander intervention. To reach this objective, a train-the-trainer module of 20 hours was developed so that local stakeholders could train nightlife workers using a training module lasting two hours. The training covers understanding sexual violence in nightlife settings, nightlife and vulnerability and prevention and response.

The programme was evaluated thoroughly. The results show that post-training, participants were significantly less likely to agree with sexual violence myths and more ready to intervene with a greater degree of confidence.⁴⁸

An example of harm reduction within party settings is providing young people with information material as a form of peer support. Communication about risks of substance use is a balancing act between providing clear information that allows people to make choices that are less harmful and using terminology that might attract people to dangerous drug use.⁵² The evidence of behavioural change effects resulting from these interventions on their own is scarce. Peer educators disseminating this type of information may be seen as more credible. These activities can be supported by websites and apps providing more detailed information on drugs, alcohol and related harms, and tips on avoiding them.⁵³



QUALITY NIGHTS PROMOTING SAFER NIGHTLIFE

Quality Nights encourages clubs and event organisers in Belgium to promote a healthy and safe nightlife. Clubs and event organisers can make a commitment by signing a charter on a voluntary basis and at their own initiative. The club or event organiser agrees to provide at least the six basic Quality Night services in order to receive the Quality Nights label. These services include trained staff, selling or offering free condoms, free water, sharing of health information (hearing damage, safe sex, road safety, early warnings...), offering free ear plugs and taking the initiative to organise safe transport back home. Additional Quality Night services that may be offered are a chill-out room, a first aid post, a cloakroom, responsible climate control, the sale of (healthy) food and the sale of a wide range of non-alcoholic beverages.⁵⁴

Many people working in the drug treatment services sector advocate for drug checking services.⁵⁵ Drug checking or pill testing is a service that enables individual drug users to have their drugs chemically analysed. Together with advice and often a brief counselling or intervention, the user receives information on the composition of the sample.⁵⁶

At the present time, there is little evidence in support of drug checking. Based on self-reported intentions, the percentage of drug users who would discard a drug that had tested positive for unusual or hazardous contents varies – from two out of three users in Austria to one in three users in Canada.⁵⁷ Drug testing is controversial as some wonder whether it might give the false impression that the tested drug is safe.⁵⁸ Even when the composition can be identified as safe, providing advice remains complex because of poly drug use.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, apart from the drug checking itself, it offers two other beneficial opportunities for harm reduction. It provides an opportunity to communicate with a group of drug users that remains otherwise invisible. This is additionally beneficial because young drug users find information received one-on-one more trustworthy than general government communications and they are more likely to share it with their peers. Furthermore, the data compiled does provide a valuable insight into the composition of drugs available present on the street. These insights can be used to send out public warnings about those dangerous drugs. It is worth mentioning these warnings are mainly effective towards recreational drug users and have potentially no or negative effects on problematic drug users that might even seek out these dangerous substances.⁶⁰

CHECKIT!



'Checkit!' is a non-governmental organisation with a mobile laboratory that can be transported to festivals and nightlife events. In addition to on-site drug checking, the staff provide service users with objective information about the risks associated with the substances submitted and offer brief counselling.⁶¹

Overall, according to the EMCDDA there is insufficient evidence to conclude the effectiveness of harm-reduction approaches even though there are moderate-quality reviews.⁶²

Multi-component interventions

In most cases a multi-component or integrated intervention combines aspects of community mobilisation (i.e. awareness campaigns to create support amongst stakeholders and the general public), policing and law enforcement, an agreement between party venues to work together and share information with the police and a training programme for staff that develops their abilities to provide responsible service, resolve conflicts and provide first aid.⁶³

In order to set up a multi-component intervention, working collaboration groups of key stakeholders and several agencies are created. These coalitions include representatives from local authorities, police, health services, probation services, drug and alcohol action teams, education services, local businesses and residents. The success of the interventions is enhanced because the actors involved tackle problems and find solutions from a broader perspective and apply a broad variety of interventions.⁶⁴ Additionally, partnerships between stakeholders can facilitate the implementation of effective nightlife interventions by creating a high level of recognition and support.⁶⁵

The number of evaluated multi-component interventions is growing. Evidence shows that a range of coordinated interventions delivered by means of a multi-agency partnership are more effective than single interventions and have therefore been shown to be the most effective interventions in nightlife settings.⁶⁶ These multi-component approaches are capable of reducing several of the risks associated with recreational settings, such as violence, intoxication and driving under the influence.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the complexity of multi-component interventions makes it difficult to pinpoint and attribute their effectiveness to a concrete single component.⁶⁸

Furthermore, an accompanying more broad-based approach to psychoactive substances that focusses on the reduction of use amongst an entire community, and not only in party settings, is an ideal climate for multi-component interventions to prevent risks in recreational settings.⁶⁹



Stockholm förebygger Alkohol- och Drogetproblem

STAD

STOCKHOLM PREVENTS ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROBLEMS

STAD is the flagship of multi-component interventions in the context of creating safer recreational settings. Currently, it is an educational resource and research centre for the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse. Nevertheless, it started out as a project in 1995.⁷⁰

The project STAD consists of three key strategic actions. Firstly, to bring about community mobilisation, a committee was created to raise awareness and increase knowledge with regard to alcohol-related harms within the community. Important stakeholders of the community, such as the local police, the local council, the licensing board, owners of establishments, health authorities and trade unions were part of the committee. The second strategic action consists of implementing training programmes dealing with the serving beverages responsibly. Members of the serving staff receive training on the subject of alcohol-related harms as well as training about identifying and refusing alcohol to intoxicated partygoers. The final strategic action is about enforcement. The licensing board and the local police collaborate to regulate and enforce established laws more effectively.⁷¹ The effectiveness of the project in reducing the risks in recreational settings has been proven by several studies.⁷² Concretely, violent crimes have decreased by 29% in the intervention area since the start of the project.⁷³

04 SOURCES OF EVIDENCE AND PRACTICES

Within Europe, the EMCDDA and several projects have worked towards the goal of providing policymakers and practitioners with the best available evidence and examples of evaluated practices within the field of preventing risks recreational settings. These efforts have resulted in easily accessible databases and high-quality guides. Here, we present some of the most interesting databases and guides.

Healthy Nightlife Toolbox

Originally a European Commission funded project, and now under the auspices of the EMCDDA, the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox offers an easily accessible wealth of information on substance use and risks in recreational settings. The overall focus lies on the reduction of harm from alcohol and drug use among young people. The website offers three separate databases. The first database holds details of evaluated interventions, the second allows you to search reviewed academic literature on risks in recreational settings and a third database provides background information on several issues related to the nightlife. Additionally, the info sheet *“Responding to drug and alcohol use and related problems in nightlife settings”* explains the different types of interventions ranging from education for nightlife users, drug testing and training of staff to policing and enforcement interventions.⁷⁴

<http://www.hntinfo.eu/>



Club Health Project

The Club Health – Healthy and Safer Nightlife of Youth project is a consortium of 35 partners that aims to reduce diseases, accidents, injuries and violence among youth with a focus on specific nightlife environments. Besides other products available on the website, Club Health developed a set of standards to improve the health and safety of recreational nightlife venues. The manual provides an orderly and comprehensive overview of the environmental factors that influence the safety of party settings. These factors concern venue conditions, staff and management and alcohol promotions and the regulation of sale. Furthermore, for each environmental factor it is pointed out to what extent there is evidence for effectiveness in scientific literature and according to the practical experience of the recreational industry. The manual is available in 11 languages (EN, DE, IT, EL, NL, ES, POR, FR, RO, HU and SLO).⁷⁵



<https://www.club-health.eu/>

STAD in Europe

The original STAD project can be called the flagship of multi-component interventions in the context of risks in recreational settings. The effectiveness of the project in reducing the risks in recreational settings has been proven by several studies.⁷⁶

The comprehensive manual offers practical information and the specific steps needed to initiate and implement the STAD approach in a given community. The different chapters focus on the purpose, 'how-to' and instruments needed to conduct a needs assessment, to form partnerships and mobilise communities, to provide training staff and enforcement officers, to apply enforcement and to monitor and evaluate the implemented STAD approach.⁷⁷



Health and social responses to drug problems. A European guide.

This EMCDDA publication encompasses a wide range of topics catering to diverse target groups with different needs. The document is a guide to health and social responses to drug problems in Europe, covering a much broader topic than risks in recreational settings alone. Responses to drug problems are approached from different perspectives: patterns of use (e.g. stimulant use and polydrug use), particular target groups (e.g. vulnerable young people) and different settings (e.g. nightlife, festivals and other recreational settings). The guide also aims to improve implementation by focusing on how to use evidence or on the role of quality standards.⁷⁸



https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/6343/TI_PUBPDF_TD0117699ENN_PDFWEB_20171009153649.pdf

Xchange Prevention Registry

Xchange can be described as an online registry of evidence-based prevention programmes. The scope of these programmes is much wider than the risks associated with drug use in party settings alone. Beside substance use issues, the database also includes delinquency and violence prevention among young people. As well as providing an insight into the effectiveness of interventions, the registry also offers an insight into the transferability of a programme by sharing the experiences of professionals who have implemented the programmes in different European countries.⁷⁹

<https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice/xchange>

Search for programmes

by age group: 20-25 years

by setting: Environmental s

by outcomes targeted: All

by risk factor: Individual and p

Search results

Programme title	Date added	Countries where evaluated	Xchange rating
STAD - (Stockholm prevents Alcohol and Drug problems): an environmental strategy in nightlife environments focusing on the improvement of the compliance of alcohol legislation regarding overserving and age limits.	22.04.2020	Sweden	Possibly beneficial

https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice_en

Best practice portal

The Best practice portal is designed to help you find practical and reliable information on what works (and what doesn't) in the areas of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and social reintegration. It will help you identify tried and tested interventions quickly, allocate resources to what's effective, and improve interventions applying tools, standards and guidelines.

Get in touch with the Best practice portal team

- Briefings**
Policy and practice briefings
- Implementation**
Xchange, HNI, EUPC, ESI
- Evidence**
A database of practice evidence
- Standards**
National and international standards and guidelines

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this paper was to provide insights into the approaches taken to risks at recreational settings and the evidence that is available for them. Drug use is a politically sensitive topic, which troubles the relationship between policy and science. Besides evidence, public opinion, the media, party politics and timing influence decision making.

Within the EU, risks in recreational settings are approached from various environmental and regulatory perspectives. These might range from zero tolerance, environmental strategies and harm reduction to multi-component interventions. Despite the widespread implementation of the zero-tolerance approach, evidence shows it is not (cost) effective and might even lead to adverse effects. There is evidence of positive impact of environmental measures that create safer spaces and venues for partygoers. Overall, according to the EMCDDA there is insufficient evidence to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of harm-reduction approaches, even though there are moderate-quality reviews. The harm-reduction approach is somewhat controversial, however in Europe it has earned its place within overall drug policy.

We can conclude that multi-component interventions are recommended, as they are indicated as the most effective way to approach risks in recreational settings. One element that can make a multi-component intervention a success is a working collaboration group in which several stakeholders, ranging from local authorities, police, overall health services, and drug and alcohol action teams, to education services, local businesses and the community are represented. Combined, these different actors offer a broad perspective to help tackle problems and produce a wide range of interventions. Additionally, through community mobilisation, support for the approach is created among stakeholders and the public.

Finally, it is challenging to find good quality evidence of approaches to drug-related behaviour in recreational settings, because the body of evaluation research has only started to grow. Luckily, within Europe, several sources of evidence and good practices are easily accessible. Still, efforts to evaluate such practices should be further encouraged by providing guidance and funding.

ENDNOTES

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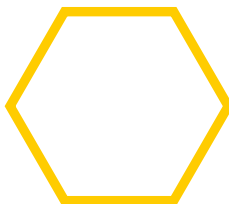
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