



## **Breaking Addictive Silence**

### **ALICE RAP<sup>1</sup> Quick Addiction FACTS**

**Addiction rates and their health toll in the EU are huge, the cost is massive and policies irrational and paradoxical**

**- It's time to speak up for informed change**

#### **Addiction rates and health toll:**

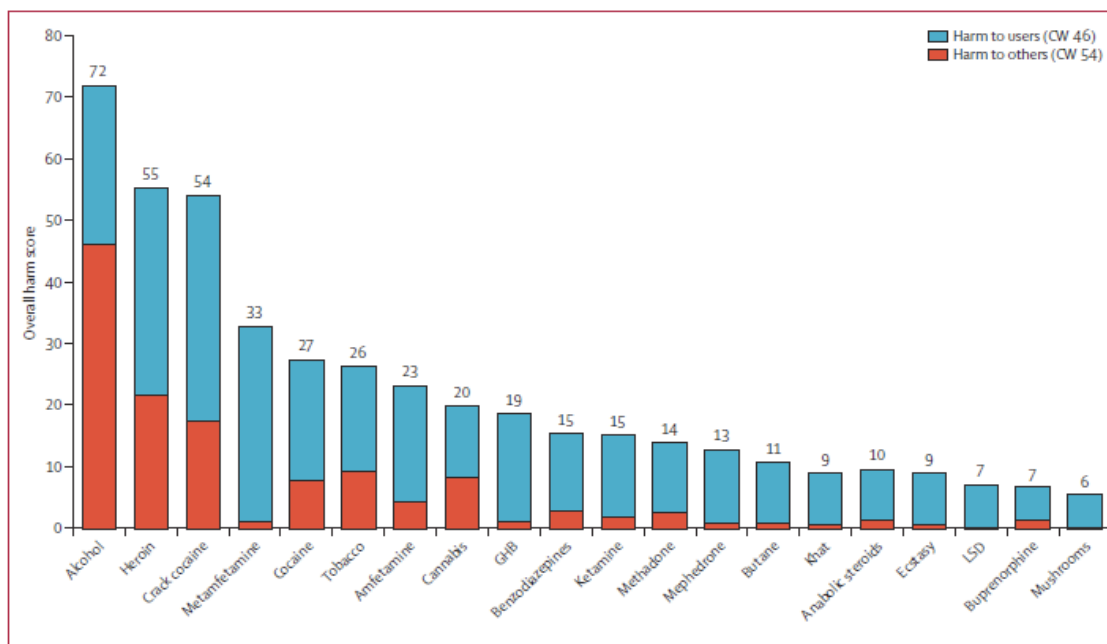
- 1 in 10 people in the E.U. are suffering from an addiction to a legal or illegal drug, including alcohol and tobacco.<sup>2</sup>
- Around 2 million Europeans (0.5 %) use cocaine and over 2 million (0.6 %) use amphetamines.
- It is estimated that between 1.2 and 1.5 million Europeans use heroin or other opiates problematically (of these, 670 000 Europeans receive treatment for their problems).<sup>3</sup>
- 1 in 5 deaths of all premature deaths and ill-health in the E.U. is due to addictions<sup>4</sup>.
- E.U. citizens drink more alcohol per-capita than in any other Region in the world <sup>5</sup>and, between 8 and 10% of all Europeans' diseases and injuries are related to alcohol<sup>6</sup>
- In Western Europe, an important proportion (about 10% in men and 3% in women) of cases of cancer can be attributable to alcohol consumption.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Economic drain:**

- Alcohol and tobacco cost the EU at least €250 billion a year<sup>8</sup>in terms of poor health, crime and lost productivity. Adding in harm to others and the costs of the illegal trade doubles this figure to something like €500billion a year<sup>9</sup>.
- At least one tenth of all costs in Europe's health systems flow into the treatment of various addictions, and this is only the tip of the iceberg. In addition, there are costs of untreated addiction, prevention and crime, which increasingly have global dimensions.
- The illegal (and untaxed) drug trade is 1% of total global commerce.<sup>10</sup>
- Online gambling – comprising games of chance and betting on the Internet – has grown significantly in recent years, both in terms of the opportunities on offer and the take-up rate.<sup>11</sup> Around 15,000 websites have already been identified and total annual revenues exceeded EUR 6 billion in 2008 and expected to double in size by 2013.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Irrational paradoxical policies:**

- The most harmful addictive substances are those which are classified the most lightly and therefore the most readily available and socially acceptable in our societies. A study in the United Kingdom found alcohol to be the most harmful recreational drug, combining effects on the individual and society<sup>13</sup>



(Nutt et al, 2010)

- Even though only half the world's population drinks alcohol, it is the world's 3rd leading cause of ill-health and premature death, after low birth weight and unsafe sex, and the world's top leading cause of ill-health and premature death amongst 25-59 year olds.
- Prisons are filling to bursting with drug users at huge cost to global society. In the U.S.A. the most enthusiastic nation for imprisoning for drug offences, the percentage of Federal prisoners serving time for drug offenses was 55% (over 500,000 people) in 2004. In contrast, custodial sentences in Portuguese prisons dropped by 16% following the decriminalisation of drugs in 2001.

For more information please contact:

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<sup>1</sup> Addictions and Lifestyles in Contemporary Europe Reframing Addictions Project (ALICE RAP) is a 5-year EU funded initiative that will weave the work of over 100 scientists from 67 institutions in 25 countries into a integrated evidence base for informed policy action. <https://sites.google.com/site/aliceraproject/>

<sup>2</sup> Andlin-Sobocki, P. and Rehm, J. (2005). "Cost of Addiction in Europe." *European Journal of Neurology*, 12(S1): 28-33.

<sup>3</sup> ECMDA Annual Report, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> WHO Global Health Risks report 2009.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission. (2007) Attitudes towards Alcohol. Special Eurobarometer 272b / Wave 66.2 – TNS Opinion & Social

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/alcohol\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol_en.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Schütze et al. (2011) Alcohol attributable burden of incidence of cancer in eight European countries based on results from prospective cohort study. *BMJ*, 2011;342:d1584

<sup>8</sup> Alcohol prime costs: Anderson & Baumberg. *Alcohol in Europe*. European Commission 2006.

Tobacco prime costs: The ASPECT Consortium (2004). *Tobacco or health in the European Union: past, present and future*. European Commission

<sup>9</sup> Adding in harm to others, estimates taken from: Laslett A-M, Catalano P, Chikritzhs Y, Dale C, Doran C, Ferris J, et al. The range and magnitude of alcohol's harm to others. Fitzroy, Victoria: AER Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, Eastern Health, 2010  
Drug costs, estimates taken from: UK government strategy unit drugs report 2003 (costs to UK society from illegal drugs and alcohol quite similar).

<sup>10</sup> UN World Drugs Report 2005

<sup>11</sup> Council of Europe resolution: <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta10/ERES1777.htm>

<sup>12</sup> EC Green paper consultation on gambling:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/358&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

<sup>13</sup> Nutt et al. (2010) Drug harms in the UK: a multicriteria decision analysis. *The Lancet*, Volume 376, Issue 9752, Pages 1558 - 1565