

## Commentary

September 24, 2009

### *European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction: New Website Focusing on Drugged Driving*

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) launched a newly updated website ([www.emcdda.europa.eu](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu)) highlighting drugged driving. The site tracks related projects in the European Union (EU), publications, news and other online resources dealing with drugged driving.

Among the website's additions is the latest issue of *Drugs in Focus* entitled, *Responding to drug driving in Europe*. In it, EMCDDA calls for evidence-based and enforceable drugged driving laws and outlines key issues for policymakers and researchers.

#### Highlights:

- Surveys on the prevalence of drugs in drivers should be carried out in all EU member states. At a minimum, all drivers involved in fatal accidents should be tested for alcohol and other drugs of abuse.
- Because studies on drugged driving need to be comparable if results are to be compiled, the EMCDDA and the European Commission have contributed new international guidelines on study design that take into account differences between countries' legislation and testing policies.
- Legal definitions of driving under the influence of drugs differ among EU member states. The basis for determining that a driver has broken the law should be clear for all stakeholders and the public.
- National laws and their enforcement need to include both ensuring road safety and meeting the needs of individuals, including the need for substance abuse treatment and monitoring for drivers found guilty of drugged driving. Providing the public, including all drivers, with clear information on psychoactive medicines that affect driving ability may reduce drugged driving.
- There is no final agreement on a reliable on-site oral fluid drug testing device. Enforcement officers need more training in spotting signs of impairment due to drug use. Despite a call by the European Commission in 2002 for mandatory training for traffic

police on drugged driving, by 2007 only four countries (Belgium, Portugal, Sweden, UK) reported the recommended training.

- National drug education campaigns need to better reach their audiences. Drivers may not be hearing the key messages about driving after using drugs or they may be ignoring these messages.

Reducing drugged driving has taken root as an international priority for law enforcement and public health. The fact that EMCDDA, which provides information to policymakers, professionals, and researchers on current drug problems across the EU, has focused on drugged driving is an alert to the international community that every nation must address this large and growing highway safety problem.

Increasing drugged driving research is essential in order to solve the complicated puzzle presented by drugged driving in varying countries. Defining new drug prevention policies and implementing them with enforceable laws is another key step. While drugged driving laws vary from country to country (and even state to state in the U.S.), creating legislation to reduce drugged driving by holding impaired drivers accountable will improve highway safety and save lives throughout the world. IBH applauds the leadership of the EMCDDA and supports an international approach to the global problem of drugged driving. The U.S. has much to learn from the EU when it comes to recognizing and reducing drugged driving. This new website provides a wealth of useful information to all who are concerned about this important issue. It also underscores the European leadership on drugged driving

For more information about drugged driving and about how to reduce it, visit EMCDDA's website [www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/driving](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/driving), and the IBH websites [www.StopDruggedDriving.org](http://www.StopDruggedDriving.org) and [www.ibhinc.org](http://www.ibhinc.org).

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