



14th FESAT Newsletter Dec 2008



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2008 FESAT activities continue !

Earlier this year the Board prepared an application to obtain a grant in the framework of the European Commissions plan "Drug prevention and Information (2008-2012).

We are delighted to inform you that this application was successful.

The awarded grant will be issued to FESAT in late December 08.

Since the last newsletter:

- A Seminar for Junior Helpline workers was held in Lisbon on the 29th & 30th Sept 08.
- Please note that the FESAT email address has already changed to info@fesat.org
- The FESAT Board have continued to work through Conference calls to fulfil the goals for 2008.
- FESAT is happy to **welcome** another new member ! **Tel-Verde** is a free telephone helpline within the National Anti-Drug Agency, **Romania**. It has been running since 2005.
- Work has begun on improving the FESAT website
- The board will meet in January to finalise plans for our next Conference, to be held on 14-16 May, 2009 in Oslo, Norway.

News from FESAT Network members



Norway - RUStelefonen 08588

New Drugs? RUStelefonen have noted calls about Tramadol (an opioid). Although not a new drug, this is rarely used on the streets in Norway. They have also had callers asking about Nobligan, a medication within which Tramadol is the active ingredient.

Technical changes?

- We have talked about getting a chat service going – in one form or another.
- We are translating the automatic answers of our drugs SMS service in the 5 most used languages in Norway.

Changes in the drug laws or drug policy debate.

- The Norwegian minister of Health has suggested that we start discussing the possibility of giving out heroin to the heaviest users. This suggestion has of course been debated for and against in the media.
- There have been lots of arrests for large scale home-growing hash. The police say it is well organised, but that they now have it under control

News from FESAT Network members



THE NETHERLANDS - Alcohol Infolijn & Drugs Infolijn

May we introduce to you, our new colleague...Bzz the chatbot

A chatbot (or chatterbot) is a type of conversational agent, a computer program designed to simulate an intelligent conversation with one or more human users through auditory or textual methods. These computer programs are also known as Artificial Conversational Entity (ACE). In association with Soa Aids Nederland we have created a chatbot about drugs, alcohol and (safe) sex. The name of the chatbot is Bzz. Bzz scans for keywords within the input and pulls a reply with the most matching keywords or the most similar word pattern from its database. Bzz is easy to use. All a user has to do is add bzz@chatmetbzz.nl to his contact persons in MSN messenger. Then Bzz is always available for questions. Our target group is teenagers from 13 to 18 years old. Not many of teenagers call the Dutch Drugs or Alcohol Info line, but we hope that with chatbot this will change.

We want to gain experience with this new medium and we want to examine if this is a good way to transfer information about drugs and alcohol to our target group. Bzz is now still in a test phase. The official launch will be on the 15th of January.



BELGIUM - De DrugLijn

Hoaxes and Drug Myths: Strawberry Meth (Strawberry Quick)

During the end of October and the first weeks of November an alarming e-mail started to circulate in Belgium. The e-mail warned parents and teachers for a "new drug" which would be called Strawberry Meth or Strawberry Quick. The drug was said to look like a pink powder and taste like strawberry (hence the name). The drug was said to be offered to small school children as candy, which would have led to the hospitalization of several young kids.

The e-mail first circulated in a french version, but it was only a matter of time before it translated in Dutch and spread throughout Flanders.

Any drug professional reading this kind of story would of course have serious doubts about these kind of stories. A short investigation soon revealed that this story was indeed complete nonsense, the e-mail was a hoax, a so-called urban legend. This story has been circulating *over the internet worldwide and already created controversy in the USA in 2006 and 2007*. The American DEA confirmed on several occasions that this was a hoax story. There isn't any proof of this drug actually existing and no one ever recorded actual hospitalisation of children who would have consumed this drug.

Nevertheless these kind of e-mail have a huge potential for creating panic amongst parents of young children and add to the clichés people have on drugs, drugs dealing and addiction.

In callaboration with the Ministry of Health, both our French speaking colleagues of **Infor-Drogues** as our own helpline (**De DrugLijn**) took immediate action to try and stop the further distribution of this hoax. Both Drug Helplines posted a warning on their websites, informing people about the truth behind the story and strongly requesting them to stop forwarding this e-mail to their families and friends.



FRANCE - Drogues Alcool Tabac Info Service

Similar to the Belgian case we have received several questions about a “strawberry” (names: “strawberry met” or “strawberry quick”) looking like crystal meth and in circulation in schools. Some parents had received a warning via e-mail. This is a **hoax** and French sanitary authorities published a communiqué refuting this new legend.

Baptiste Cohen, Director of Drogues Info Service for more than 13 years, left our service in October. The direction of Drogues Info Service is temporarily in the hands of **Danièle Dehaye**, the financial and administrative director of the service. The next director is yet to be named.

In November, the service compiled a service plan, which envisages new developments for the coming years. One suggestion is for the creation of dedicated helplines including one for those addicted to games and one for those having problems with drugs in the workplace. Short targeted campaigns could focus first on parents and then women with alcohol problems. These proposals will be discussed and determined by our board in early 2009.

We will launch a website in early 2009 www.drogues-info-service.fr It will feature Information about drugs, interactive platforms, a national directory of the drug and alcohol centres and a space dedicated to the young. We hope to have more about this in the next FESAT newsletter!

Changes in the drug laws or drug policy debate.

- Etienne Apaire, President of the French Inter-ministerial Mission for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction(MILDT) and the Prime Minister launched the 2008-2011 National Drug Plan (in French). Clarifying and reinforcing the law, enhancing the role of parents and educators, reducing the incidence of drug use in the workplace, adapting campaigns to migrants and overseas territories populations, reinforcing the struggle against all sorts of trafficking and laundering, reducing drug related harm are some of the strong lines of this new plan.
- Health Minister Roselyne Bachelot announced a pilot project, in some low threshold centers, looking at the risks of injecting among IV drug users. At the same time she remembered that the priority was that drug users don't start injecting.
- The health ministry raised protestation from anti-alcoholic associations when she said that she will not ask to forbid advertisement for alcohol on the Internet. On the other hand she wants to forbid the selling of alcohol to under 18's (in France young people between 16 and 18 can buy wine and beer but not strong alcohol).
- Since July, Saliva screening for drivers is possible alongside the roads of France. Before that date only urinal screening was possible, preceeding a blood screening if the first result was positive.



GERMANY - Drogennotdienst Berlin

We are gathering information on Tilidin, a medical Opiate and Spice? We are interested to know if other helplines hear of these substances.

There has been increased media interest in 'spice' as a new drug. Drogennotdienst is currently conducting a questionnaire for clients specifically asking for their experiences with 'Spice'.

News from FESAT Network members



LATVIA - Riga Addiction Prevention Centre

- During the first half of 2008 we received the calls about the use and effects of the following plants: *Salvia Divinorum* (20 calls); *Sida Cardifolia* (3 calls); *Kratom* (2 calls); *Ipomea* (1 call); Ma Huang (1 call).
- The Department of Health is considering cancelling the legal status of *Salvia Divinorum*.



GREECE - OKANA SOS Helpline

- Since the last FESAT newsletter, we have recently received calls about gambling and internet addiction. There has been an increase in calls regarding cocaine use. Also we received several repeated calls from family and relatives of heroin users as well as from the users themselves.
- During the same period the National Telephone Company found the technical solution so that the number 1031 (without the Athens prefix "210") is reached by all cities and villages in Greece. Before this people who lived outside of Athens had to add the prefix 210 to our number and had to pay an additional charge.
- We are currently in negotiations with mobile phone companies and are hopeful that they will fund our helpline number (1031), so that it will be free to callers.
- OKANA's SOS Helpline participated in recent FESAT Seminar for Junior Helpline staff in Lisbon. Ms Antigone Proiou shared with us her valuable experience.
- We have set criteria for volunteer work in our helpline. We thought that having concrete criteria will help the volunteers understand their role, significance and limits as well as helping us to understand better what they need from us and ultimately how we can improve the quality of what they provide on our Helpline.
- We have compiled data since our inception and hope to produce a report in the next few months.
- We now have weekly supervision meetings for all helpline staff, volunteers included. This process will soon be evaluated. We also designed a "training project" with brief presentations on various subjects, such as a chat model service, alcohol & gambling addiction, coping with crisis calls etc.



IRELAND - Drugs / HIV Helpline

- We are seeking details of a good online support group for over-the-counter opiate users (Solpadeine etc) for English speakers
- A recent alert issued by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (www.hpsc.ie) urged clinicians and other health professionals to be on the lookout for symptoms of botulism in injecting drug users, following 4 suspected cases of the disease.
- The Minister of Health spoke recently of the need to expand The Control of Substances Legislation to stop 'damaging' substances from being placed on the market in an uncontrolled fashion. So called 'Head shops' which formerly sold magic mushrooms sell stimulant products marketed as 'party pills' or 'legal highs'

Summary of Evaluation of Junior Helpline workers Seminar in Lisbon Sept 2008

Ten people who are relatively new in Drug Helpline work attended a free training offered by FESAT. When asked for their general impression of the training seminar, attendees commented that it was that the content was useful and finding out about Helplines across Europe was interesting, however it would have been better if the Seminar had gone on for longer, perhaps for a third day or for it to be repeated a few times a year?

When asked whether the seminar met their expectations most felt that it had and that it was extremely interesting and informative. There was disappointment expressed by some that the programme had had to be changed.

Those who attended were asked what topics they would like to be covered during the next FESAT event and they suggested New Technologies; Coping with stress; Harm reduction; Dealing with funding problems; Crisis calls and marketing/ promotion of Helplines.

News from the EMCDDA



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Report: Drug Use, Impaired Driving & Traffic Accidents

Drug use, a growing challenge for EU road safety, says EU drugs agency

(11.12.2008 LISBON) As Europeans prepare for the festive season, the EU drugs agency (EMCDDA) releases today its latest report on drugs and driving. While alcohol remains the number one substance endangering lives on European roads, more drivers are now found to be using illicit drugs and psychoactive medicines, presenting a growing challenge for policy-makers. The report, *Drug use, impaired driving and traffic accidents*, a review of the latest research in this field, explores the potential impact on road safety. <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/themes/driving>

Latest on the Drugs Problem Across Europe

Annual report 2008 from the EU drugs agency was launched recently.

Information package and event details can be accessed through: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/events/2008/annual-report> . It features the latest facts, figures and trends on drugs in Europe. The report offers an overview of the drug situation across the 27 EU Member States, Croatia, Turkey and Norway, and details the current legal, political, social and health responses.

Vulnerable groups of young people

Published in Nov 08, this examines the policies and interventions developed in 30 countries⁽¹⁾ for vulnerable people aged 15-24yrs. ⁽¹⁾ 27 EU Member States, plus Croatia, Turkey and Norway <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/selected-issues/vulnerable-young>

For more information on the EMCDDA visit www.emcdda.europa.eu

Future Conferences brought to your attention by our members

Invitation to the First International E-Mental Health Summit 2009

14-16 Oct 2009

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

www.ementalhealthsummit.com

ISSDP, 3rd Annual Conference of the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy

2-4 March 2009

Vienna, Austria

www.issdp.org/vienna2009/

2009 National Drug Treatment Conference (UK)

19-20 March 2009

London, England

www.exchangesupplies.org

Joining the Dots: Criminal Justice, Treatment & Harm Reduction: 1st Conference for the Connections Project

25-27 Krakow, Poland

www.connectionsproject.eu/conference2009

IHRA, International Harm Reduction Conference

18-23 April 2009

Bangkok, Thailand

<http://www.ihra.net/>

12th EFTC European Federation of Therapeutic Communities

2-5 June 2009

The Hague, The Netherlands

<http://www.eftc-bepartofthesolution.eu/>

This newsletter is a compilation of contributions from FESAT members. The Board of FESAT acts as editorial committee. Thanks to all who contributed.

Do not hesitate to photocopy or forward this newsletter to your colleagues or any other relevant persons.

The Board of FESAT wish all of our colleagues across Europe and beyond a very Happy Christmas and wonderful 2009

