

## Substance Abuse in the Republic of Croatia and National Program for Drug Control

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**Aim.** To establish the proportions of drug abuse problem in Croatia, with special reference to illicit drugs abuse, in order to assess the quality of implementation of National Program for Drug Control on the basis of relevant indicators.

**Method.** Collection and review of data on the extent of particular drug abuse among adolescents (aged 13-19), epidemiological data on treated drug addicts, and the data from the police and justice.

**Results.** Drug abuse epidemic in Croatia started with the beginning of the war in 1991. Tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption among adolescents have also become more frequent. In the last 10 years, the number of illicit drug addicts increased from 1.0 per thousand population in 1991 to 2.7 in 1999. The extent of drug use varies within the country. The situation is most serious in the coastal area. Data for 1999 indicate a possible cessation of the epidemic spread, but on the high level of incidence (around 1,500 new drug addicts per year, out of whom 85% are heroin addicts).

**Conclusion.** Although a lot was done due to the initiative of the experts in the Government Commission for Suppression of Drug Abuse and the Government Center for Prevention and Outpatient Treatment of Addiction, many measures on the National Program agenda were not carried out due to the insufficient political support and scarcity of mobilized resources. Since the illicit drug abuse is the most serious problem among the adolescents today, it must be set high on the list of national priorities.

**Key words:** *addictive behavior; adolescent behavior; alcohol drinking; Croatia; drug costs; drug and narcotic control; heroin dependence; marijuana abuse; opioid-related disorders; program evaluation; smoking; tobacco*

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