

4. CONCLUSION

A number of transformations have taken place in Bulgaria as this society has become aware of the challenge of drug use. Public opinion has obliged institutions to take resolute measures for curbing the drug market, among them amendments to legislation, institution of the National Drugs Council, and adoption of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2002-2008.

Bulgarian institutions are presently implementing a variety of programs on almost all aspects of narcotic drugs demand and supply. However, the state's financial and human resources are insufficient to successfully tackle the whole gamut of drug issues. The authors of this report believe that the most severe problems should be made a priority. The present analysis has helped draft several guidelines for effective counteraction of the drugs market.

- **Expanding the methadone program.** Although the program started back in 1995, by mid-2003 it has treated as few as 300 people, and has not been applied outside of the capital, Sofia. Despite high public attention it is practically "closed" for new participants. The reasons seem to be no other than the mercenary interests of individuals and institutions. The program is notably inexpensive (expenses for an average daily dose of methadone per participant amounting to 0.60–0.80 BGN). If all willing individuals were allowed to join it, hundreds of people could be saved and thousands would leave the drug market. Hopefully, this would administer a blow to drug organizations and improve the crime situation in the country, especially for those offenses usually committed by drug users in pursuit of their daily dose (house burglary, car theft, robbery). According to some estimates, the number of potential participants in Sofia is between 2,000 and 3,000 people (which is one third to a half of all heroin addicts). The group could expand to 4,000–6,000 if participants from other big cities are included.
- **Centralizing the anti-drug effort.** Division into numerous scattered units is a problem not restricted to enforcement bodies. Lack of coordination could be overcome if the long-awaited agency—which would integrate the efforts of police and special services—is actually established.
- **Closing the "open doors" along the borders of Bulgaria.** Certain points of entry into the country such as Varna, Bourgas, and a few smaller border-crossing points are letting shipments into the country without applying regular control. Installing X-Ray security at the points of busiest commodity flow would lessen the risk of drugs and precursors penetration.
- **Introducing a system for institutional efficiency, monitoring, and control** at the agencies dealing with drug diffusion, prevention and treatment. At present, there is little clarity about the way of assessing the efficiency of responsible institutions, or the success/failure of particular measures.