

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

### *Investigation of Demand*

When the CSD project was launched, drug demand was an underinvestigated area. Therefore, it was necessary to gather information through the course of the project. The basic sources used were two series of in-depth interviews between September 2002 and September 2003. The first group included 30 interviews with civil organizations and doctors treating drug addicts. The second included long-term heroin users, second and third level dealers, police and special service officers (50 interviews). The interviews with persons identifying themselves as possessing drugs and willing to share key information (namely, second, third and fourth level dealers and senior officers) were conducted by two members of the research team. Interviewers that had to tackle second and third level dealers were selected to match special criteria previously defined by the team so that they could manage the complexity of the task. Second, third, and fourth level dealers were accessed after a preparation stage through the intermediary of people close to the dealers.

There were also some supplementary sources of information:

- Press conferences, press releases, and special reports published by local and national police departments as well as by special services and civil organizations.
- Articles and investigative journalism. Over 4,000 articles from the period after 1992 and especially those after 1996 were analyzed.

### *Sociological Assessment of Demand*

The first surveys of drug use in Bulgaria appeared in the mid 1990s. They were primarily targeted at high school students in the biggest cities. Most of them are rather probing than population surveys. In the period 1999–2001 the first population surveys were again conducted among high school students in the bigger cities. The outcomes allow for an assessment of some of the most endangered groups, yet they do not provide information about drugs use and abuse throughout the country.

### *Types of Surveys on Psychoactive Substance Use*

The following types of surveys on psychoactive substance use have been conducted up to the present moment:

***Probing surveys among students*** – they cover different regions and age groups and give a general overview of the situation and trends of drug use among high school students, but they don't have any representative value.

**Population surveys among students**—up to now, several such surveys of different age groups or regions have been carried out, two of them providing reliable and comparable information about psychoactive substance use:

- *“Use of psychoactive drugs among high school students in Sofia”*—the survey comprised 1,398 students from 9 to 12 grade in Sofia schools during the period May-June 2002. It was conducted by the National Center for Addictions and the Prevention and Treatment Centre for Drug Addicts in Sofia and is representative for high school students in Sofia aged 15–19.
- *“Students and Psychoactive Substances: Use, Trends and Problems–Plovdiv 2002”*. The survey was wider in scope, comprising 1,533 students from 6 to 12 grade, between the ages of 12 and 19. A double cluster sample was used to select 74 classes in 39 general and vocational schools in different parts of the city. Students were surveyed thoroughly via a direct group anonymous questionnaire. Field work was performed in the period December 2002 – January 2003. The survey was performed by the National Center for Addictions in cooperation with the Municipal Drugs Council in Plovdiv.

**Population Surveys on Psychoactive Substance Use Among the Adult Population of the Country for Specific Age Groups (for instance the 15–30 group):**

- *“National Survey “Youth–2000”* of the National Public Opinion Center provided data on young people’s attitude to the decriminalization of soft drugs.
- *“National Population Survey in Bulgaria on Psychoactive Substance Use and Abuse”* conducted by the Center for the Study of Democracy and Vitosha Research in the period **December 2002–January 2003**. This was the first national population survey providing information not only about the country’s population as a whole, but also about young people aged 15–30 as the most endangered group.
- *“National Population Survey in Bulgaria on Psychoactive Substance Use and Abuse”* conducted by the Center for the Study of Democracy and Vitosha Research in the period **June–July 2003**. It followed the methodology of the European Monitoring Center on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and is the first survey in the country that can be used for comparisons in an international context.

**Qualitative Surveys**—these provide additional and detailed information on attitudes and practices of certain groups of current and potential psychoactive drug users.

**Methodology of National Surveys, Conducted by the Center for the Study of Democracy and Vitosha Research**

While taking into account many different viewpoints, the team of authors has attempted to find common ground for an **assessment of the actual drug consumption in the country**. For this reason, the first national population survey on psychoactive drug use and abuse was conducted. Even if population-based surveys are often unreliable due to stigmatized and hidden patterns of drug use, they are the type of surveys that provide a comprehensive representation of the situation in the country as well as reference material for later in-depth studies.

- **“National Population Survey in Bulgaria on Psychoactive Substance Use and Abuse” December 2002 – January 2003.** The survey used two separate samples. *The first sample* was representative for the total population aged 15 and above (N = 823), while *the second sample* was representative for the age group 15–30 (N = 1098). The type of sample used was a double cluster sample, while the survey method was standardized face-to-face interview. Some highlights of the survey content were *the penetration rate, the prevalence, the attitudes to use and abuse of the different types of narcotic substances.*

Two groups of questions were used to answer the main inquiry about the number of psychoactive substance users:

- **Direct standardized questions** to which only a portion of present and one-time users would reply and admit to using the particular groups of drugs. Experts who drafted the questions were fully aware that asking directly about use and addiction could not be effective even in countries with high drug use rates and liberal legislation on soft drugs. Yet such questions have become standard since they allow an objective estimate of the size of the user group. Moreover, the team developing the tools has forecasted that in the long run the information gathered through these questions could be used for comparative purposes. Another reason was their comparability to similar surveys in European and American countries with traditions in that field.
- **Indirect questions.** It was assumed that respondents would more easily reply to questions about psychoactive drugs use of friends and acquaintances than about their own practices.

- **“National Population Survey in Bulgaria on Psychoactive Substance Use and Abuse” June – July 2003.** This has been the second national population-based survey carried out by CSD and Vitosha Research this year. It differs from the first one in its use of the exact questions developed by EMCDDA, thus being good grounds for longitudinal and international comparisons. It comprised 1,057 respondents aged 18 and above, which should be taken into account when comparing results from the two studies. The type of sample used was double cluster sample, while the survey method was standardized face-to-face interview.

- In addition, two **qualitative surveys were conducted.** The first one covered *dependent heroin users and regular soft drug users*, while the second one comprised *experts and drug care workers.*

The surveys carried out in the country up to now are evidently heterogeneous, varying as to methods and scope. This impedes comparisons and requires that data interpretation reflects each survey's specific features and scope.

It is common practice of the mass media to take unfair advantage of survey findings and extrapolate concrete data (representative for high school students for instance) to make inferences about the population as a whole. It should once again be underscored that all surveys quoted in this study should be referred exclusively to the portion of society that has been surveyed avoiding any generalizations about the overall population.