

# 1 Development of leisure use of drugs

## 1.1 Recent findings on availability and use of drugs during leisure time

Recent studies on drugs used in the environment of music scenes and discotheques are scant. This used to be a focus of work during the spread of of ecstasy during the 90's. Since that time, consumption of this substance has stabilized or even declined. In parallel, the close connection between this drug and a certain type of music has dissolved. The big Techno-trend has been replaced by a host of small variations and music trends with different affinities to various substances. Measured by number of seizures and survey results, availability of ecstasy continues to be relatively high (cf. chapter 10.2.2).

Older studies and results already described in previous REITOX-reports, will not be repeated here. A recent study carried out by Baumgärtner and Wies (2005) gives quite a good overview of the topic for Hamburg. In terms of seize, location and structure, the city may serve indeed to give indications of possible future developments in Germany since drug trends in that area have again and again showed up relatively early and to a stronger extent than in other parts of the country. In this study, people who, as part of their job, have frequent contact with potential drug users and are also experienced in critically evaluating changes, were asked about developments and trends in Hamburg. Among the groups of professions surveyed were for example bouncers of discotheques, drug consultants and teachers. In the following, a few of the results of the survey will be presented.

In the classical domains "sports club" and "church/scouts", alcohol and, in second place, cannabis are common. According to informants, measures undertaken against alcohol use in stadiums have led to an increase in the use of cannabis instead.

The *night-life scene* falls into various sub-scenes in which alcohol and also cannabis are common. However, intentional use of cannabis as an intoxicant wasn't always found. Sometimes, cannabis serves as a social element. It also used at the end of the night and after the consumption of stimulants for subsequent relaxation. The "*techno/ Goa-scene*" appears to have an affinity for hallucinogenous substances. But poly-drug use is also very common. In the "*club-scene*", cocaine and ecstasy continue to play an important role due to their performance-enhancing and euphoriant effects. In the "*reggae/hip-hop-scene*", cannabis is the predominant substance serving also as a factor of identification. The "*gothic scene*" is strongly dominated by cocaine and amphetamines used for their performance and self-awareness-enhancing effects. In the "*heavy metal/rock-scene*", which is characterized by a somewhat older average age of its members, mainly alcohol and cannabis are consumed, sometimes in large quantities. Cocaine is also to be found.

## **1.2 Trends**

The spread of ecstasy has - as shown by the data from criminal prosecution and the health sector - stabilized. In some cases, consumers have replaced the substance by amphetamines, sometimes also by cocaine. For years, the number of drug-related deaths with a causal involvement of ecstasy has been below 20 per year which corresponds to a portion of one percent maximum (BKA 2005).

The techno-culture which was closely linked to the substance has split up in small sub-cultures. The big events have often been replaced by clubs. The end of the yearly "love parade" in Berlin is a sign of its phase-out.

Various research groups continue with their efforts to verify long-term, in particular neurotoxic effects of MDMA, and to find an answer to the question whether and how such effects can be reversed (e.g. Quednow et al. 2004), and more specifically, what is the connection between ecstasy use and use of other drugs or psycho-pathological disorders (e.g. Wartberg et al. 2004; Zimmermann et al. in Druck) .

Politicians reacted to this development already years ago by developing mediums for secondary prevention and motivating existing facilities to work with this target group. A large part of the specific measures developed in this context have been integrated in the curricula of experts or in the every day work of schools and care facilities so that the topic as such now ranks at the lower end of the list of political focus areas.

## **1.3 Measures of addiction prevention with regard to leisure time/nightlife activities**

In the non-organized leisure-time sector, addiction prevention – and especially measures relating to nightlife, is part of the regular offer only in exceptional cases. As incipient use of illicit drugs often takes place within certain sub-groups of teenagers and young adults like for example in the techno-party-scene, attempts are being made to get access to these sub-groups through specific outreach measures. The goal is to achieve self-critical grappling with own drug-use within the frame of a health-oriented party organisation.

The offer ranges from info stalls, counselling talks, cultural offers over relaxation techniques to structural measures, like for example alcohol-free beverages which are cheaper than alcoholic drinks, freely available cool drinking water, chill-out areas, cooperation with local players (e.g. relevant authorities), as well as trained staff for medical emergencies. Examples of these offers can be found under [www.partypack.de](http://www.partypack.de) (Cologne), [www.drugscouts.de](http://www.drugscouts.de) (Leipzig), [www.drogen-und-du.de](http://www.drogen-und-du.de) (Berlin), [www.party-project.de](http://www.party-project.de) (Bremen), [www.chill-out.de](http://www.chill-out.de) (Aachen), [www.alice-project.de](http://www.alice-project.de) (Frankfurt), [www.drobs-hannover.de](http://www.drobs-hannover.de) (Hannover). This development was initiated by local scene-based initiatives and has meanwhile found political support (Drogen- und Suchtbericht 2004).

There is a gap between scene-based projects and classic drug counselling facilities. On the one hand, financial straits of the Laender and municipalities lead to the closing of drug counselling facilities and cuts in various areas. On the other hand, scene-based initiatives are not as well established as the classic counselling facilities so that they are often not taken seriously as cooperation partners. In some places it is attempted to replace delimitation by cooperation. (Die Drogenbeauftragte der Bundesregierung 2004b). Examples of this are presented in the following:

- The project *“Healthy Nightlife”* initiated by the Federal Center for Health Education to network players in the leisure-time sector (representatives of drug-counselling facilities, scene-based initiatives, municipal authorities and party organizers) provides a forum for a supra-regional exchange between various institutions and organizations on proven strategies of addiction prevention with regard to risk-minimization during nightlife. Project members work on the introduction of minimum standards of addiction prevention at parties.
- In the year 2004, a manual on measures of addiction prevention for nightlife activities was developed based on experiences made at five techno-parties which took place in German cities under the motto *“NACHTS LEBEN – statt krank feiern”* (*Enjoy nightlife - without health risks* “). The manual consists of individual modules designed for drug counselling facilities, scene-based initiatives, youth welfare and health authorities as well as party organizers. Modules on sponsoring as well as examples of local approaches and checklists are to facilitate coordination of activities of addiction prevention deployed at such events.

It is also being tried to an increasing extent to build up a low-threshold contact to drug taking teenagers in order to inform them in a first step, support them in reflecting on their own use behavior and, if required, refer them in a second step to other services (see above).

Two innovative modules specially tailored to the target group of teenagers with drug affinity are to be found at the Internet portal [www.drugcom.de](http://www.drugcom.de): they are to help young people in assessing the personal risk they run when engaging in poly-drug use and support them in quitting or reducing cannabis consumption (“quit the shit“). Details on this are presented in chapter 3.3.2.

Furthermore, new approaches are being investigated with regard to further training programs for staff from the youth welfare/youth leisure time sector in dealing with teenagers displaying conspicuous behavior. An example for this is *“MOVE”*, an intervention concept to promote and support the willingness to change in young people with problem drug use (<http://www.ginko-ev.de/FstMH/rubrik.aspx?M=1&Page=144>).