FEDERAL SCIENCE POLICY OFFICE

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Research programme in support of the federal drugs policy document

Project sheet for public institutions

This sheet should be filled out by the public institution. It describes the nature of the project, the tasks to be assigned to a scientific team and the time schedule. In addition, it lists the potential benefits from the research project for the public institution.

1. Name and address of the public institution proposing the project

Scientific Institute of Public Health (IPH)
Department of Epidemiology
J. Wytsmanstreet 14
1050 Brussels

2. Project topic

Poly-drug use and mental health in drug users demanding treatment

3. Project duration and start date[1]

1 year

4. Project description and context within the institution

4.1 Problem area (identification of short-term needs that should be covered by the research project)

International and national studies found out that increasingly users of illegal drugs use more than one substance. They use different substances at the same time (e.g. alcohol and cannabis or MDMA; cocaine and amphetamine) or with a short delay in time (e.g. cocaine and heroin). This phenomenon is called "poly-drug use". The combined use of illegal substances has a much larger impact on physical and mental functioning compared to the use of the separate substances. Data regarding the extent of this phenomenon, the profile of the users and the factors that trigger it are scarce. Actually in Belgium, data regarding the treatment demand (Treatment Demand Indicator) do not allow to describe the profile of poly-drug users because the data collection systems provide the treatment demand data to the IPH in an aggregated format.

[1] 1st September 2009 at the earliest.

Sometimes, drug use goes hand in hand with a reduced level of mental health: prevalence of mental disorders is higher in drug users compared to the general population. When a person is using drugs and has a mental disorder / psychiatric condition, this is called a "double diagnosis". The strength between poly-drug use and reduced mental health is not known, neither is the direction of causality. Data regarding the extent of this phenomenon and about triggers are scarce.

4.2 Objectives (research questions and aims)

This study will answer the following questions:

- What is the prevalence of poly-drug use in persons demanding treatment?
- What is the profile of these poly-drug users: SES, gender, financial situation, social support, history of drug-related treatment, others?
- What is the prevalence of "double diagnosis" in persons demanding treatment?
- Which mental disorders are prevalent in this group?
- What is the profile of these users with mental disorders: SES, gender, financial situation, social support, history of drug-related treatment, others?
- What is the extent of the overlap between both groups?
- Which factors suggest a direction of causality? It should be taken into account that the model differs by gender.

4.3 A description of your institution's strengths and weaknesses and the potential external opportunities and risks that should be considered. Use the table below to describe the context in which the project has to be developed and implemented. The questions are by no means meant to be exhaustive. They can be used as a guide to complete the table. The table aims at evaluating the feasibility of the project.

Strengths	• What can your institution contribute to the project? • How can your institution support the researchers (e.g. financial, logistic, expertise)? - The IPH, being strongly involved in TDI data collection and analysis, can facilitate collaboration between organisations. - The IPH is a scientific institute that has the knowledge to perform this study and therefore to support the research team that will do the study. - The IPH can facilitate the contact between the research groups and the European partners through the REITOX network of National Focal Points, a.o. meeting regularly in Lisbon. • Which other existing projects can be used to inform the proposed research project? - The programme DRUGS of the ISP is the "National Focal Point on Drugs" for Belgium, related to the European

	Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). Its researchers collect, analyse and distribute information related to drug use in Belgium, a.o. via the yearly National Report on Drugs.
Weaknesses	• Which internal elements hinder the institution to cope with find the problem presented? - The IPH, more specifically the programme DRUGS, is lacking the financial resources to do this research project. • Which issues or needs need special attention in the research project?
Opportunities	• Do you see any opportunities that might enhance the research project or maximise its impact? Which ones (e.g. collaboration with other partners)? - Intense collaboration with the treatment services, who are at the basis of the treatment demand data collection. - In will put the IPH in a more central position regarding this subject in the European context, a.o. in the European network of National Focal Points. • How do you plan to incorporate these opportunities? - The IPH will remain in close collaboration with the research team, a.o. during the meetings of the guidance commitee. - The IPH will support the research team with the valorisation of their results, a.o. through the organisation of a conference in collaboration with them and Federal Science Policy.
Threats	• Which external or environmental aspects could hamper the progress of the research project? - The research team needs to obtain the agreement of the Privacy Commission in time. • How do you plan to constructively influence these aspects? - The IPH will study the requirements of the Privacy Commission and prepare the procedure as far as possible.

5. Project assignment (research content)

5.1 Scientific assistance expected of the scientific team

The research team will do a study of the literature regarding poly-drug use on one hand and regarding the relationship between mental disorders and drug use ("double diagnosis") on the other hand, within the context defined by the research questions. They will take into account the results of the studies tat were financed by Federal Science Policy (see

http://www.belspo.be/belspo/fedra/proj.asp?l=en&COD=DR/05
http://www.belspo.be/belspo/fedra/proj.asp?l=en&COD=DR/06
http://www.belspo.be/belspo/fedra/proj.asp?l=en&COD=DR/08
http://www.belspo.be/belspo/fedra/proj.asp?l=en&COD=DR/18
http://www.belspo.be/belspo/fedra/proj.asp?l=en&COD=DR/21
http://www.belspo.be/belspo/fedra/proj.asp?l=en&COD=DR/26).

Moreover, in collaboration with the IPH, the research team will use the expertise available at the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction and the documents that it provides.

The researchers will use the data of drug treatment services to answer the research questions. Services located in the French and the Dutch Community will be included. The treatment center "De Sleutel" (Gent) is an example. The extent of the sample should allow quantitative analysis to answer the research questions, qualitative analysis is not acceptable.

Analyses can be done separately in the two Communities, but should be one in close cooperation, both regarding the approach of the analysis and regarding the statistical techniques used.

Including alcohol and tobacco as substances in the study is mandatory, although the main focus should be on the study of illegal substances.

The study should include the following steps:

- Literature review;
- Organisation of a seminar with at least 2 experts from another country;
- Selection of data files regarding persons demanding drug-related treatment and obtaining access to these data files;
- Analysis of the data, in close cooperation with all research groups involved;
- Interpretation of the results and formulation of conclusions;
- Presentation of the findings.

5.2 Role of the public institution prior to and during the project[2]

Guidance during the analysis and interpretation of the results, to optimize the use of the expertise available at the IPH.

[2] Indicate, among other things and if needed, when (month and year) the institution will provide data for which it is responsible.

6. Final outcome of the project and form in which it should be delivered

- Extensive report in electronic format.

- Writing and submission of a scientific article about this study.

7. Timing/schedule of activities (with indication of full-time equivalent - FTE)

For two fulltime researchers, each during one year, one in the Flemish Community and one in the French Community

MONTHS 1 and 2

1a. Review of the literature

1b. Organisation of a seminar with at least 2 experts from another country.

1c. Formulation of a tentative proposal for the analysis

MONTH 3

2a. Selection of data files

2b. Obtaining access to the data files

MONTHS 4 and 5

3. Data analysis and description of the results

MONTHS 6 and 7

4. Presentations of the results and tentative conclusions to the guidance committee and to representatives of the target population

MONTHS 8 to 12

5a. Additional analyses, formulation of the final results and conclusions

5b. Organisation of a conference and preparation of a scientific publication

8. Conceivable exploitation of finished product(s) (publication, seminar, database,...)

Final report, scientific conference (to be organised in collaboration with the IPH and Federal Science Policy) and publication in an international scientific journal.

9. Specific conditions

9.1 Suggested composition of monitoring committee

- Collaborators of specific health care services;

- Researchers working in university research groups working in the field of public health or epidemiology;

- A collaborator of the Federal Governmental Service Social Affaires;

- A collaborator of the Federal Governmental Service Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment;
- A collaborator of every Federal Governmental Service that is able and wants to support the project;
- A collaborator of the Federal Research Institute IPH, department of Epidemiology, programme DRUGS.

9.2 Confidentiality clause, if any

9.3 Others

The research project should be accepted by an Ethical Commission. The procedure to obtain Informed Consent should be taken care of.

(*Section to be filled out by the Federal Science Policy office*)

Estimated budget:

Contact person at the Federal Science Policy office: Ms Van Daele

Briefing: on 5th March 2009 at **10:00, A room of the Federal Science Policy office**

(Registration one week before by e-mail bonn@belspo.be; if there are no registrations the meeting will be cancelled)