

YOUNG PEOPLES' TRAJECTORIES


***A MIRROR OF THE CONTEMPORARY MULTIFACETED RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN DRUG USE AND OFFENDING BEHAVIOURS***

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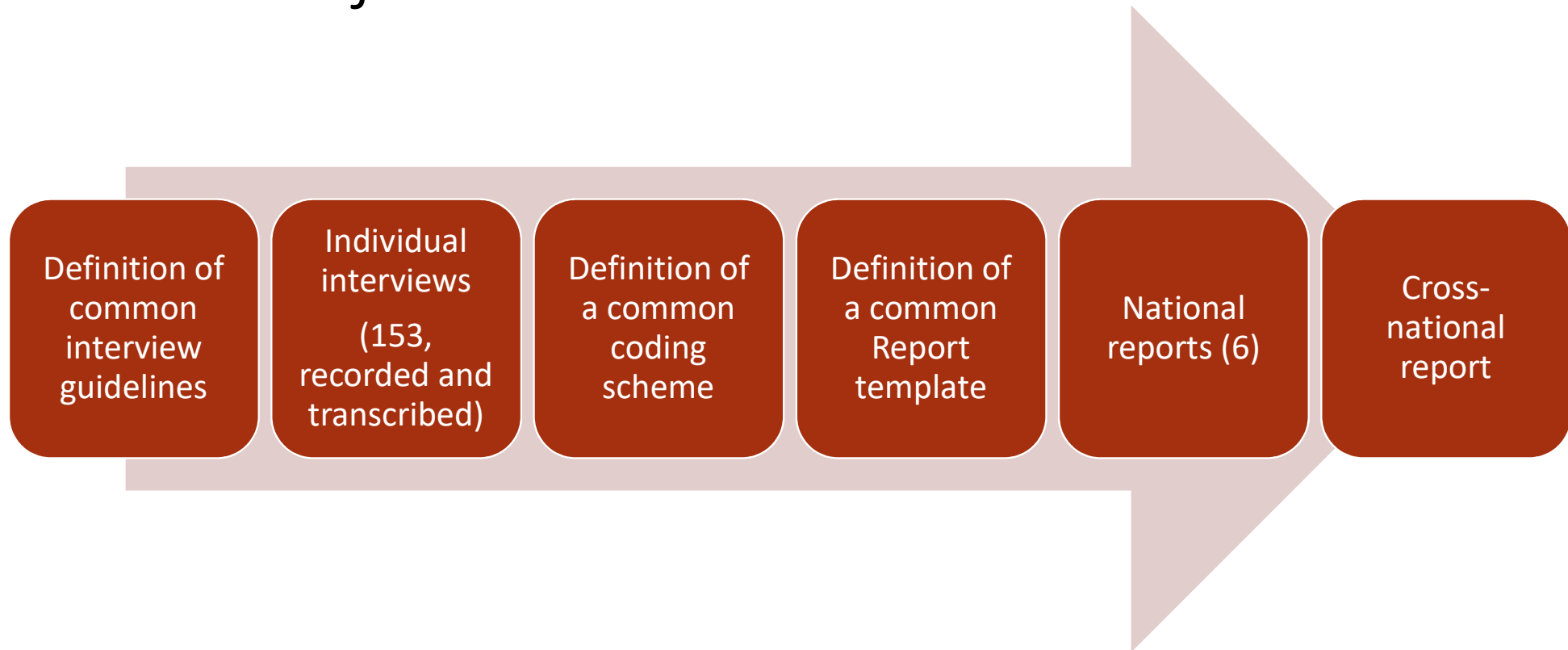
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WP5-Trajectories Objectives

- Investigate and describe the drug using trajectories of young people in touch with CJS
- Identify factors associated with onset/continuance/cessation of drug use, polydrug use, and use of NPS (including entering the CJS)
- Understanding the relationship between use of drug and offending behaviors

WP5-Trajectories Methods



ALL REPORTS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE on the Outcome section
<https://www.eppic-project.eu/the-project/#outcomes>



Topics under investigation

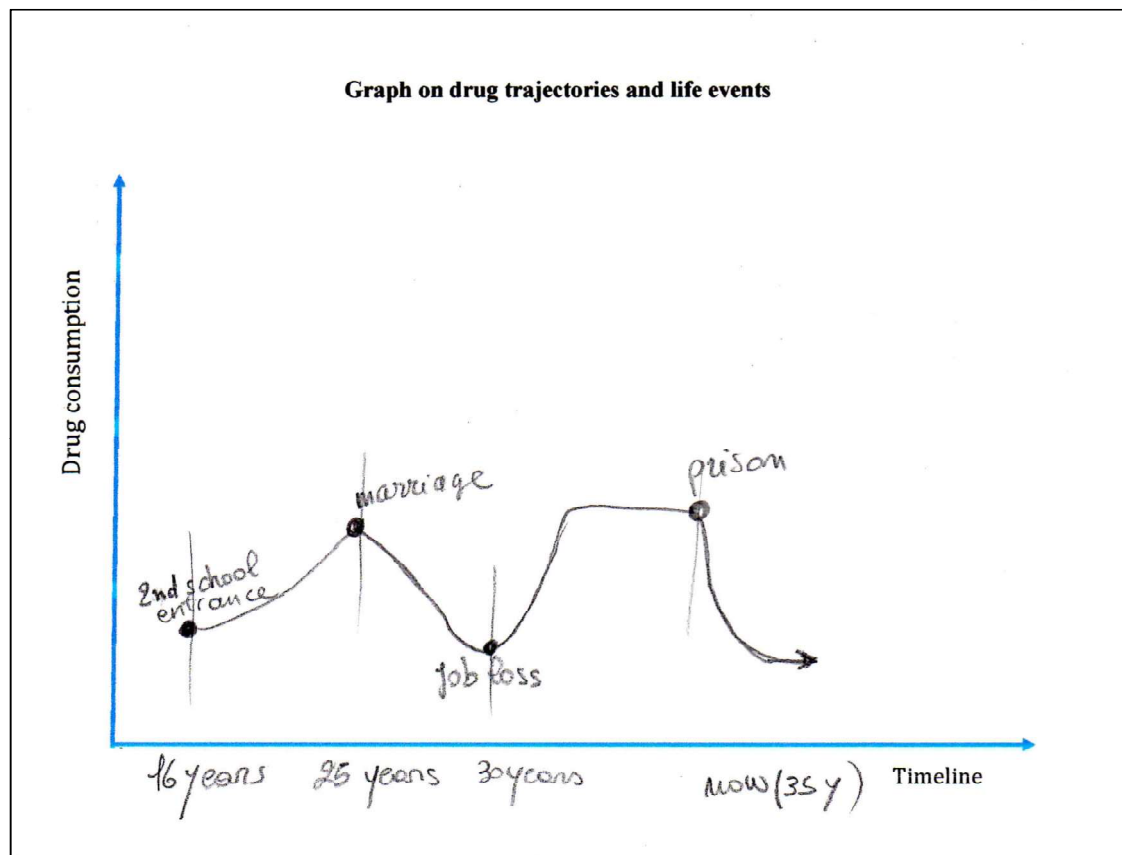
- Onset of consumption
- Changes/turning point, factors of increase/decrease (drug, set, setting, life events, among which entering the CJS)
- Meanings of consumptions
- Self-control strategies and rituals
- Role of peers/relatives
- Physical & social environment
- Culture/Subculture
- Experiences/suggestions about interventions

Methods

- The **trajectory-based approach** was chosen as suitable to catch the complexity of the issue (Simpson 2002; Hser, Longshore & Anglin, 2007)
- Time span: September 2017 – August 2018



Obtaining authorization and recruiting interviewees was not simple in any of the countries. For this reason, not all the partners were able to achieve the intended national sample (40 interviewees)



The interviewees were invited to draw a **graph** and comment on it, focusing especially on changes in their drug use and the factors relating to them.



Sample (no. 198), SES characteristics

Gender		Age		Partner		Children		Immigrant background	
Male	Female	14-18	19-25	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Austria									
22	4	8	18	1	25	1	25	20	6
Denmark									
27	3	-	30	13	17	3	27	12	8
Germany									
11	1	10	2	0	12	0	12	10	2
Italy									
39	2	3	38	14	27	4	37	19	22
Poland									
31	20	20	31	12	39	8	43	0	51
UK									
27	11	31	6	10	27	3	34	0	38
Total									
157	41	65	129	49	145	19	175	61	133



THIS IS NOT A COMPARATIVE RESEARCH, BUT A CROSS-NATIONAL SAMPLE, WHICH ADDED VALUE IS TO PROVIDE MANY EXAMPLES OF SUB-SAMPLES CHARACTERISED BY DIFFERENT PATTERNS (different SES, social context, CJS, markets...)

Sample, measures and number of penalties



Country	First penalty		Measure
	yes	no	
Austria	8	18	Prison (15) Alternative measures – Out-patient psychotherapy (4) Home arrest (0) Community – In-patient care facility (community-living) (7)
Denmark	7	22	Prison (21) Alternative measures (5) Home arrest (2) Community (1)
Germany	7	5	Prison (2) Alternative measures (10)
Italy	20	21	Prison (29) Alternative measures (9) Home arrest (2) Community (1)
Poland	16	25	Prison (22) Forensic psychiatry (9) Youth Sociotherapy Centre for juvenile offenders (4) Alternative measure (psycho-social interventions) (16)
United Kingdom	18	15	Prison (3) Alternative measures (35)

Main results - Drug use patterns before entering the CJS

CANNABIS (1)



- A significant part of the sample had only used **cannabis**
- Doses changed among interviewees and over time; however, many interviewees ended up smoking joints instead of cigarettes, many times a day, reaching in some cases 10 grams a day.

It is like smoking cigarettes. (DEN_8)

- Most interviewees considered using cannabis as a 'normal' activity, a lifestyle, also because cannabis was largely available
- Different kinds of **pleasurable effects** were reported, such as relaxing, disinhibiting, appreciating more intensively any other activity, enhancing performance (school and job)

I use it to make the brain work better (...) Marijuana always gives me a good advice (IT_36_PRI_M_22).

Main results - Drug use patterns before entering the CJS

CANNABIS (2)



- However, the pleasurable reasons for smoking cannabis were often strictly associated with two main **underlying “negative” motives**, namely
 - 1) perceived stress related to various problems (with parents, school, partners; mental health problems: above all depression, but also aggressiveness and the need to cope with violence, loneliness and/or traumas)
 - 2) boredom due to an unstructured daily life → many interviewees (not attending school nor having a job); described their daily lives as mainly consisting of hanging around in the streets or parks

I smoke marijuana to reduce stress in my brain, I used to get very aggressive and then I hit them until they bleed. When I smoke I keep calm”. (AT_4_PRI_M_18)

I’m hanging around, you know. I meet these friends and those guys and then we hang around together and see if something happens. We smoke weed and sometimes one of us knows of an opportunity to make some money. Or we do nothing, and that’s too boring. I don’t know what else to do. (GER_10_ALT_M_16)

Main results - Drug use patterns before entering the CJS

CANNABIS & COCAINE



- In Denmark and Italy the most commonly used drug after cannabis – and often in addition to it – is cocaine: the large majority of interviewees reported the pattern of **combined use**
- Many reported daily use of cocaine, but most frequently cocaine was used only in social situations and together with friends.
- Use motives: being more active; enhancing atmosphere; avoid boredom; escape problems; relieve pain; addiction (> referred to crack cocaine).
- Cocaine was also associated with loss of control and offending (it would makes you “brave” and “aggressive”).
- Within the Italian sample, crack use was mainly reported by detainees. Many of them had been caught during a peak in crack use, e.g. 3-4 days of continuous smoking, without sleeping.

As long as you snort it (COCAINE) every day for a week, it is not leisure, it becomes a habit. You want to remove the pain. Your head hurts, your spine hurts, your heart hurts (...) if you want to quit, you suffer. You suffer physically, but more mentally, because you are always obsessed with it.
(IT_35_PRI_M_23)

Main results - Drug use patterns before entering the CJS



OTHER SUBSTANCES

- Overall, only a minority of interviewees were **poly-drug users** (i.e. consuming regularly more than one type of illegal drugs)
- In most cases, the substances used were cannabis and cocaine
- The use of drugs other than cannabis and cocaine, was not reported as extensive nor regularly, with exception of Poland (NPS) and UK (party drugs)
- The use of NPS was even less frequent, generally represented as risky and with negative effects → therefore used only once or occasionally
- Reported NPS: synthetic cannabinoids (e.g. Amnesia) and synthetic hallucinogens (PCP, N-BOMe)
- Alcohol was almost always associated to the use of drugs, with exceptions of a sub-sample of only-cannabis-users

That's what brought on my panic attacks, ever since I took Ching [synthetic stimulant], I always took panic attacks since that, legal highs are really dangerous. (UK_12_ALT_F_18)

Main results - Drug use patterns before entering the CJS



OTHER SUBSTANCES

Differences across countries identified **several minority patterns of use**

- Only in Poland most of interviewees used other drugs besides cannabis, mostly stimulants – above all amphetamines – and NPS.
- Also young people in the Austrian sample had occasionally experimented with NPS. Some of them, after buying them from the dark-net, had also begun to deal NPS.
- In UK NPS were associated by interviewees with the homeless and prison populations.
- In Italy, crack use was reported mostly by detainees and immigrant interviewees
- Heroin use was reported in Poland (by female detainees), Italy (associated to cannabis and cocaine) and UK
- Stimulants (amphetamine, methamphetamine, speed), dissociatives (ketamine) and/or psychedelics (ecstasy, mushrooms) were usually related to disco clubs and rave parties and their use was associated with recreational purposes (< psychonaut motives)
- Prescriptions drugs were reported in Italy (Rivotril), Denmark (benzodiazepines), and UK

It is safer to order drugs from the dark-net than to deal in the streets. No police, and no physical fights. (AT_19_PRI_M_19)

Main results - Drug use patterns in the CJS



QUITTING PATTERNS

- **Reported mainly by detainees** who represented the prison as an occasion:
 - to quit with all kind of substances, something that is not easy outside, “where drugs and troubles are constantly around” (for some this means not even prescriptions and substitution treatment)
 - to be treated (PO and AT)
 - to access services and even getting a job (UK)
- Prison drug policy is another main motivator to stop using drugs → violations of this norm can impact on the duration of the sentence and rights of prisoners (e.g. leave permits)
- By contrast, reasons to quit are not mainly related to availability → drugs can enter prison by different ways such as leave permits, ingestion, corrupt assistants, and drones

[There are] people who used drugs outside and in prison; they start with methadone, and Suboxone, and then they are not able to quit. (IT_05_PRI_M_24)

I think it's actually been better. If I wasn't on a tag, I think I would have been out on the streets more. I would have been up late. I wouldn't have had like a clear mind... I don't think I would be working where I'm working right now.... Because [they] have actually been really supportive. I mean they got me that job. (UK_13_ALT_M_17)

Main results - Drug use patterns in the CJS



DECREASING PATTERNS

Decreasing pattern of drug use (→ usually this means using only cannabis and using lower quantities) is **the most frequently reported pattern** across countries and attributed to:

- A function of the sentence
- A decreased availability (prison)
- Maturation and free will to change due to negative side effects of use of drugs (including getting arrested)
- Changes in substances /desired effects → cannabis and tranquillizers are seen as “more suitable” for prison life compared to stimulants (DE)
- Changes in substances/ lower prices → NPS cheaper and less detectable in urine tests (PO, UK)

I tried NPS. It was too strong for me. I had depression and anxiety. I did not like. (...) I do not like NPS, but in prison they are the cheapest. (PL_35_PRI_M_23)

Main results - Drug use patterns in the CJS



PERSISTING PATTERNS

- Motives to continue to use illicit drugs in the CJS are somehow the same as for using drugs outside it, with the addition of the stress directly due to being in this system
- Having troubles with the justice system seemingly can increase or at least reinforce drug use in order to
 - cope with the stress of not being free
 - cope with solitude
 - be able to sleep
 - cope with boredom (especially in remand prisons)
 - have a good time with inmates.
- Many interviewees across countries, especially those under alternative measures, continue to use drugs either because they don't care about possible sanctions or because they do not consider this issue to be too important with respect to the final sentence and not harmful (> "only smokers").
- Some interviewees did experience (new) drugs just in the CJS!

When I was in prison, the only thing on my mind was when I would get out of there so I could smoke a joint. And then it just escalated again. (DE_15).

Main results – The relationship between drugs and crime



The link between drugs and offending became one of the main issues related to the use of substances, a sort of self-evident concept which led to the development of the terms “drug-related” or “drug-driven” crime (Seddon 2006).

Three main explanations (Bennett and Holloway 2009):

1. “economic”: crime represents a means to get money to buy drugs.
2. “pharmacological” : offending is a consequence of impairment in cognitive function due to the drug properties
3. “lifestyle”: crime (dealing) and drug use as parts, and instruments, of the same system and culture

BUT → the connection between drug use and offending varies by cultural context (Bennett and Holloway’s 2009), by time and by types of drugs (Parker & Newcombe 1987)



Added value of the EPPIC data: young people, different countries, different substances and use patterns

Main results – The relationship between drugs and crime



ECONOMIC EXPLANATION (1)

- Still valid, for some
- Dealing cannabis in order to support its daily use was the most recurrent reported pattern, thereby calling into question the use of the 'addiction' concept as a main explanatory model

If you smoke every day, you automatically need to smoke more and more cannabis to get high in the same way. (...) I liked it a lot! [smoking cannabis]. But I couldn't afford it. I worked for my step-dad and earned money, but not enough to allow me to smoke everyday. Therefore, I started to sell drugs. (DEN_19)

- The normalisation of cannabis consumption has led to normalisation of supply in close social networks (Coomber et al. 2016)
- BUT the aim of dealing can go beyond the original reasons → once having discovered how you can make money easily....

After that, when I saw that to get money it was sufficient to do so [dealing to schoolmates], I became more obsessed by money than by drug itself. (IT_39_ALT_M_19)

Main results – The relationship between drugs and crime



The dealing experience

- Dealing is not only about money, but something that gives young people respect and status, providing them with a recognisable role and boosting their self-esteem.

I really liked being able to work. Being able to do something that would make me feel more adult, that would make me be noticed, also because I had serious problems with bullying before (...). Then I realized that the dealer was just, almost a role in the school society, that is... there was the nerd, the bully, the normal guy and the drug dealer, who - as opposed to how he was seen years ago (as) a bad person – I mean, even the consumers were disgusted by the drug dealer, especially because the drugs were different. Now marijuana, let's say it's like alcohol for people. (IT_40_ALT_M_17)

- It is also a means of financial independence and self-affirmation in a situation of relative deprivation and frustration (Seddon, 2006; Irwing-Rogers, 2019)

In general, people like me earn about 50 € for working 6 hours. You stand there 6 hours and you pack bags. But when you work for security companies you earn 15 € per hour. Well, 15 € are better. But nevertheless many opt for the criminal way. It's easier, it's faster. And nobody plays the boss who treats you like a dog. (GER_06_ALT_M_18)

- But in other cases offending experiences (> thefts and robberies or drug dealing) occurred before young people had used any kind of illegal drugs → > interviewees living in deprived neighbourhoods and subject to social exclusion.

I did not have money for shoes, I went to school with perforated shoes, and wet socks. So I started to sell hashish to buy a new pair of shoes, not for other reasons. (IT_37_PRI_M_23)

Main results – The relationship between drugs and crime



PHARMACOLOGICAL MODEL

- Many possible links (aggression, courage to offend and judgement impairment) did emerge by data, related to many different kinds of drugs, thereby showing that is not (only) a matter of substance, but also of doses and consumption styles

I came to prison for theft with burglary. If you want to take so much [amphetamine], you have to steal every day, every night, unless something bigger is earned. [...] I spent so much that it would probably be enough to buy an apartment. (PL_39_PRI_M_23)

! not necessarily linked to a condition of “addiction”, as was emphasised in early studies and by the ‘official view’ (Allen, 2007)

- Though boundaries between cannabis and other drugs were highlighted...

Joints did not make me do crimes (...) when I smoked I was too frightened to do it (...) but when I took cocaine I was the one to say: “Let's go, we need money” (...) It made me feel powerful, very awake. (IT_41_CO_F_18)

- We wonder if it would be necessary to review the concept of "judgment impairment" (Bennett & Holloway, 2009)

I acted in a different way because if I wasn't high, I wouldn't have wanted to fight probably. But because I was high and he said something that pissed me off and I felt like he was going to try hitting me, so that made me even more paranoid...smoking weed make me even more paranoid. (UK_07_CO_M_16)

Main results – The relationship between drugs and crime



LIFESTYLE MODEL (1)

Sometimes it is difficult to say if the use of drugs or offending came first, as they both originate in the same context or from the same need/pain.

1. Both behaviours can relate to economic and social disadvantage → dealing as a the only opportunity at hand to get an income, drugs as a means to cope with the deprivation and anguish of precarious lives

I was a barber in Tunis. I knew how to cut hair, but I did not have any documents for which [to work], no one took me on, so I started selling a bit of hashish. I started selling, and using it at the same time. Then after 3 years I started using cocaine because I was holding it, I was dealing it, and so it went on. (IT_03_PRI_M_23)

When you use Rivotril you sleep well, you don't feel much pain, you know? I started for this reason. When I started to sleep on the street, I started to use Rivotril, to make me rest during the night. (IT_36_PRI_M_22)

- When referring to deprived neighbourhoods, not all the interviewees reported family and/or health problems, but almost all underlined the key influence of their peers and community in beginning to imitate these behaviours:

Everybody around me is involved in that [in crime]. So I always saw what is possible and started to do my own things [petty thefts]. (GER_09_ALT_M_16)

Main results – The relationship between drugs and crime



LIFESTYLE MODEL (2)

2. However using drugs and committing crimes can become part of lifestyles (street culture) among young people who are not experiencing economic poverty and including:
 - the desire to maintain a sort of hedonistic lifestyle
 - lack of concern for consequences of their actions
 - impulsivity and sensation seeking

By doing these crimes, I always had lots of money in my pockets, so I started to buy it [cocaine] often, and use it. (...) Then – this is obvious - having money in your pockets, you go to one place, to another, in night clubs, you know, among alcohol and women (UK_22_PRI_M_21)

Robbery also brings adrenaline and you can become addicted to it, as from drugs. When I was counting money, I felt incredible euphoria. I stole under the influence of stimulants. I felt that nothing could happen to me. (PL_34_PRI_M_24)


Conclusions



Many connections are possible – based on different substances, cultural context and economic conditions - but none is sufficient alone, nor fixed...

Drug & crime related to poverty and social exclusion	Drug & crime related to youth street culture
<p>Offending is perceived as an obvious choice given the lack of legal income opportunities</p> <p>Use of drugs is seen as an alternative way to cope with pain, mental health symptoms and suffering related to complicated life conditions</p> <p>BUT! ≠ degrees of social exclusion</p>	<p>Both offending and drug use as the outcome of certain attitudes that are part of youth cultures, including the pursuit of hedonism and sensation seeking</p>



 **Relative deprivation:** Young people suffer from living in a “bulimic societies” that raise aspirations and desires while providing scarce opportunities for economic success and recognition (Irwin-Rogers, 2019; Young, 2003)

Conclusions



- In both cases, youth behaviours are **not the result of personal choices!**
- The results highlight the **contradictions inherent in societies** where the use of (certain) drugs is prohibited, but also socially accepted and widespread (> cannabis)
- Both issues need to be addressed at **policy level** as young people themselves suggested.
- Intervention should aim to increase **awareness and agency** among young people, helping them to live in a contradictory society.



For more information about the project, visit the EPPIC website:

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