

SUMMARY

In commission of the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Justice INTRAVAL - bureau for social-scientific research and consultancy - has carried out a research into the trafficking in doping agents. The objective of this study is to render insight into what is presently known about the nature and extent of the illegal trafficking in doping agents in the Netherlands. Furthermore, specific indicators to be used in evaluating the effects of the alteration of the law concerning illegal traffic in doping need to be explored. Sixty-one interviews with key informants and specialists of various agencies have been conducted.

Firstly, the report elaborates upon the nature and extent of traffic in doping. Anabolic-androgenic steroids seem to be the most popular. According to the respondents doping trafficking mainly consists of traffic in counterfeit and unregistered substances. No significant changes have taken place since 1998 when a first study report on traffic in doping in the Netherlands was published. However, experiments with polydrug use, higher doses and new high-tech substances as well as the use of precursors seem to be highly popular at the moment.

On the basis of the interviews no clear picture can be drawn of the extent of the trade. It turns out that criminal investigation agencies lack sufficient knowledge of doping substances and keep defective registrations. The respondents can not give a full picture of the current situation. The trafficking seems to take place mainly in sporting schools and fitness centres. Internet hardly plays a role, although trafficking via the Internet is growing.

Secondly, indicators against which the developments in the doping trade and the effects of the 2001 alteration of the law can be measured are discussed. An inventory of sources is also given. At this moment the information from available sources is too fragmentary and insufficient to render clear and lucid insight in these indicators. Further systematic research, consisting of analyses of files and interviews in arrondissements and with users, is needed.

Finally, the most important findings of this study are summarized and possible indicators are explored. The current research concerns a quick-scan of an area in which much obscurity still exists and into which not much systematic research has been done so far. It proves to be impossible to draw conclusions about the nature and extent of traffic in doping from systematic registrations or well-supported assessments. Adequate registrations are not available and sufficient knowledge to assess the extent of the trade is lacking. This study shows that at the moment good indicators are practically absent, whereas reliability, validity and exhaustiveness of potential indicators are limited. Due to the limited amount and quality of registered data further use of available qualitative information from files and interviews with those involved is recommended in order to get better insight in the doping trade.