



AWAKEN

ROMANIA
BUCHAREST

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The first statistical data about drug use in Romania are from 2003, when National Antidrug Agency (ANA) was created, under the department named „National Center for the Organization and Assurance of the Information and Information System in the Health Sector” . In 2008, due to a major changes in ANA’s policy, part of the staff decided to start a new private organism, which is Color Mind Clinic.

Our specialist were actively involved in both in the elaboration of legislation on drug users and in the formulation of the treatment methodology. The first law regarding on preventing and combating trafficking and illicit drug use dates from years 2000 and establishes the legislative framework for the treatment of drug users in Romania. In 2005 were published the Standards of the National System of Medical, Psychological and Social Assistance to Drug Users as a guide for treatment, then Clinical guidelines for substitution treatment for opiate addiction, Basic concepts regarding substance abuse disorders and others.

The project AWAKEN is generated after 15 years of clinical experience that reveal the lack of information that people have before using a substance.

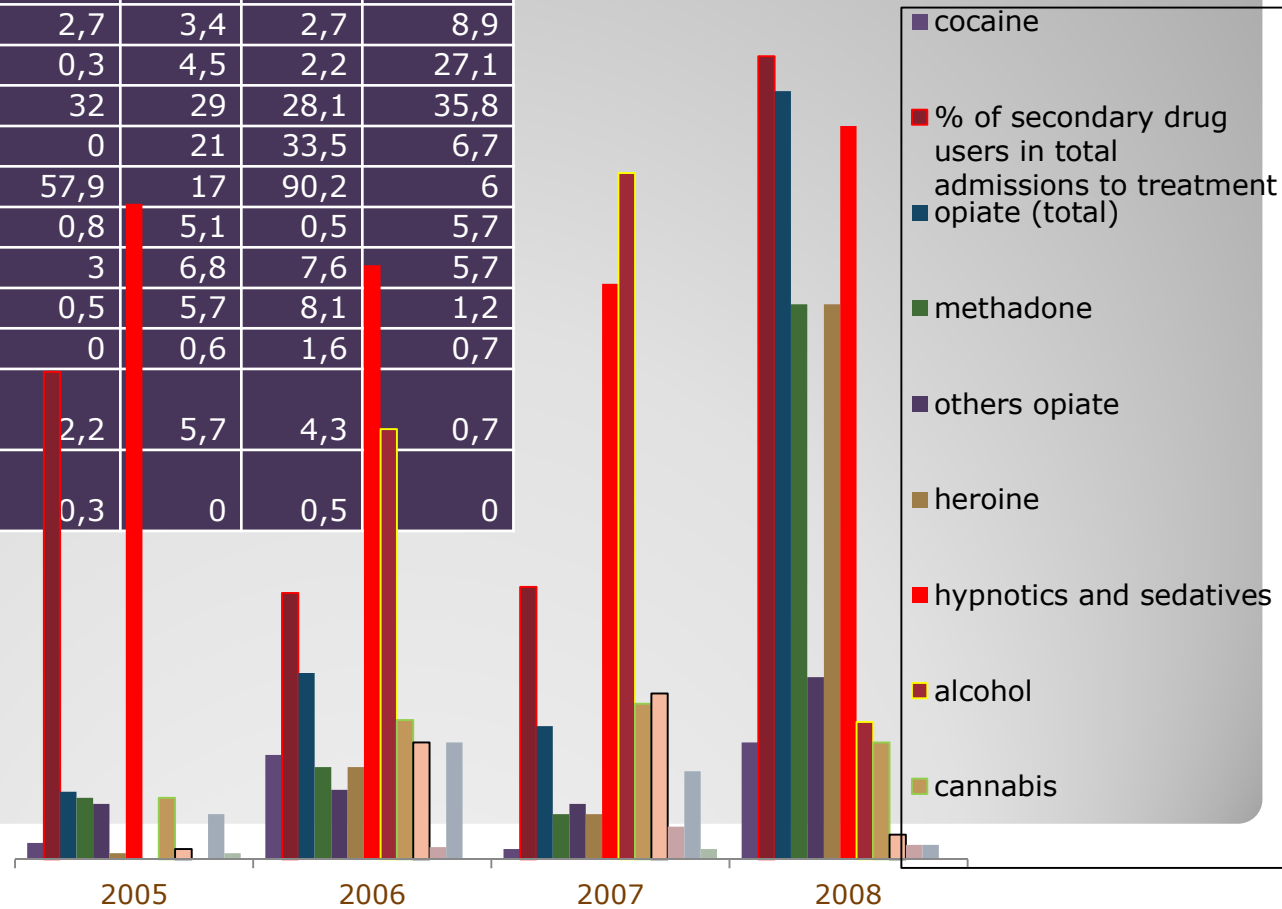
Between 2003 – 2010: heroin is the main drug for which was requested assistance. On the second place was cannabis, hypnotics and sedatives. Only few request for cocaine (approximately 1%).

In 2010 new substances with psychoactive properties (SNPP) are becoming predominant among drug users, both in old consumers and in new cases. In 2011 and 2012, the request for treatment was for the SNPP mainly, and heroine was on the second place, but retakes the first place from 2013.

In 2013, the main drug for which assistance was requested was cannabis and only experimental consumption of SNPP is recorded. Studies shows that only 2% of the general population aged 15-64 included in the sample experienced SNPP consumption, while only 0.3% of the interviewed people reported SNPP consumption in 2012.

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of secondary drug users	366	176	185	597
% of secondary drug users in total admissions to treatment				
opiate (total)	23,8	13	13,3	39,2
opiate (total)	3,3	9,1	6,5	37,5
methadone	3	4,5	2,2	27,1
others opiate	2,7	3,4	2,7	8,9
heroin	0,3	4,5	2,2	27,1
hypnotics and sedatives	32	29	28,1	35,8
alcohol	0	21	33,5	6,7
others substances	57,9	17	90,2	6
cocaine	0,8	5,1	0,5	5,7
cannabis	3	6,8	7,6	5,7
stimulating	0,5	5,7	8,1	1,2
hallucinogenic	0	0,6	1,6	0,7
volatile inhalants	2,2	5,7	4,3	0,7
type of secondary drug not specified	0,3	0	0,5	0

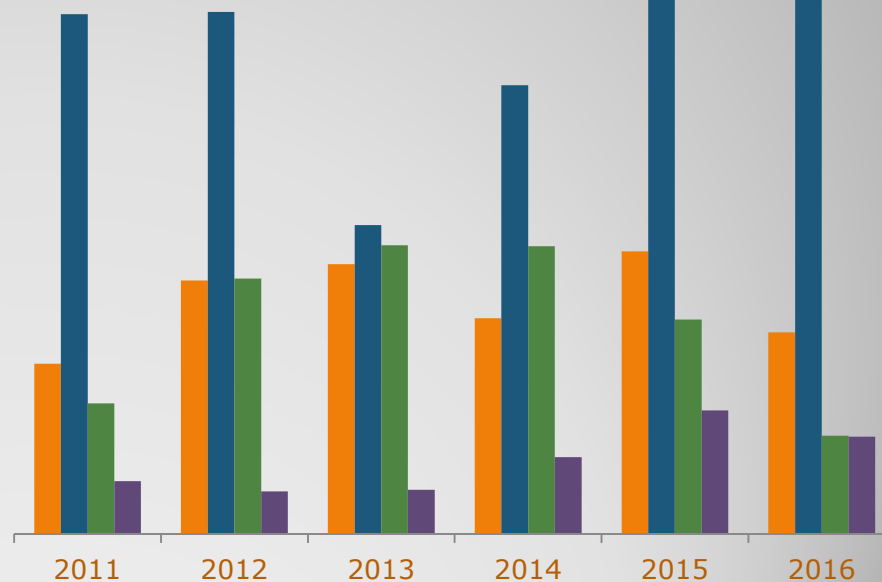
The evolution of the proportion of polydrug users, total and drug type, from total admissions to treatment



Source: National Center for the Organization and Assurance of the Information and Information System in the Health Sector

Type of consumption that generated medical emergencies						
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Multiple drug use	476	709	755	604	791	564
Exclusive alcohol consumption	123	2316	2681	2952	1289	1458
Exclusive use of illicit drugs	1455	1461	864	1256	2323	1949
Exclusive drug use	365	715	808	805	600	275
Exclusive consumption of unknown substances	148	119	123	215	346	272
Harvested samples	11	53	23	14		
Total	2578	5373	5254	5846	5349	4518

- Multiple drug use
- Exclusive use of illicit drugs
- Exclusive consumption of unknown substances
- Exclusive consumption of unknown substances



Source: National Center for the Organization and Assurance of the Information and Information System in the Health Sector

Despite those dates, unfortunately, there is no effective communication between the relevant structures to allow access to the database on drug substance determinations on the “market” (identification of active substance or quantitative determination, impurities, fluctuation in active substance use). Data is also not collected at national level to allow for the fluctuation of dual diagnosis incidence.

Based on our experience, if until 2013-2015, the treatment demand was predominantly on the diagnosis of addicts and the consumption of one or two substances (especially heroin, commonly associated with benzodiazepine consumption), over the past 3 years we have seen an increase in the incidence of treatment demands for polydrug use (heroin, THC, SNPP, LSD, MDMA, cocaine, benzodiazepine and others), correlated with an increase of dual diagnosis: polydependence along with acute psychotic episode (acute and transient psychotic disorder), unspecified psychotic disorder, manic episode, bipolar affective disorder, borderline personality disorder.

IS THERE A NEED FOR DRUG TESTING???

The lack of information that people have before using a substance was highlighted outside the clinic, too. We also enjoy attending a number of EDM during the years, in Romania, and are a great occasion to observe the drug consumption habits among the young (and not only) consumers. And what we observed at the EDM events, was the same: the lack of information about the substance they use, about how to use it, how to give a little help in order to party safe.

Most of the people were trying a drug for the first time during a EDM. As the events were 4-5 days long, it was plenty of time and space to give them the liberty to experience different combinations of substances: ex. mixing LSD with Ecstasy and speed, adding "a touch" of alcohol and a puff of cannabis. The image of some really young and naive participants tripping really bad on these kind of mixture was something rather common each night and day...

This is how Awaken started!

IS THERE A NEED FOR DRUG TESTING???

2016

After 3 years of research and documentation, AWAKEN was born and implemented as a pilot project.

- We obtained the support of National Antidrug Agency
- Only two festivals accepted our presence at their events: Waha and Transylvaliens
- 6 flyers with information about substances were created –, both in Romanian and in English: alcohol, cannabis, Ecstasy, magic mushrooms and LSD
- Both festivals having a rough total number of 5600 participants, we have reached around 4.8% of them.

2017 - we got in contact with Energy Control and organized a visit at their office in Barcelona. As a result of our visit, we developed making 3 important steps:

- We had our first direct contact with drug testing
- Developing our volunteers program. After the selection, our team was settled at 5 volunteers.
- Training the volunteers: we offered a 2 day training of Harm Reduction with Rafael Berger, EC. That was a complete training on harm reduction, basic pharmacology of relevant drugs, drug myths, setting up a harm reduction service at festivals, interaction with users and psychedelic care.

Having a bigger team, we prepared extra information for the summer festivals, than the previous year:

- Informative flyers on 8 substances, both in Romanian and English: alcohol, cannabis, Ecstasy, LSD, magic mushrooms, speed, Ketamine and cocaine – all including harm reduction tips
- Informative flyers about food/eating during the festival: why is it good to eat, what to eat, when to eat
- Informative flyers about drinking water during a festival: why to drink water, how much water to drink, and when to drink it
- Informative flyers about sleep: why is sleep good during a festival, and when to sleep
- Informative flyers about safe sex: a reminder about the safe limit during a sex experience at a festival. Each flyer comes with a condom attached.
- Informative flyers about protecting the hearing: why, when and how to protect the hearing at a EDM (by the way, these were a total success!)
- Lots, and lots of stickers: some of them saying “Drink water, eat, sleep, you are human!” Another success 😊

The summer of 2017:

- Awaken attended 3 festivals: Waha, Transylvaliens, Sons of Gaia (the last one asked for our services)
- an approximated number of 6500 attendees.
- We had 415 unique visitors out of 6500 participants, reaching 6.38% of them
- The “top” substance flyers that we shared were in this order: alcohol, magic mushrooms, cannabis, LSD
- The flyer less asked: Ketamine
- 2.32% of participants were asking for condoms (132 persons)
- 3,29% of participants were asking for earplugs (168 persons)
- In 2017 we were recognized by a part of attendees: “Oh, you were at Waha last year! I know your flyers! You are doing a great job!” or “Do you also have drug testing kits?”

2018

- There were changes in the volunteers team, some left, some are new. We had a team of 4 constant volunteers
- We obtained support from the National antidrug Agency regarding the substance identification

The summer of 2018

- Awaken attended 3 festivals: Waha, Transylvaliens, Apsara
- We used the same materials as in 2017
- We had 378 unique visitors out of 5800 participants, reaching 6.51% of them
- The "top" substance flyers that we shared were in this order: LSD, cannabis, speed, magic mushrooms
- The flyer less asked: alcohol, ketamine
- 4,96% of participants were asking for condoms (288 persons)
- 4,19% of participants were asking for earplugs (243 persons)

Some of the reactions:

- “Are you Romanian?”
- “Are you from the police?”
- “I do not use drugs, I am not interested about your project! But I know a friend, so can I take some flyers for him?”
- “Wow! Is this happening in Romania and is made by Romanian people???? You are great! You should have started it years ago, there is a huge need for this kind of project!!! Very well done!!!”
- And, back then, in 2016, another reaction: “Do you also offer drug testing?” – well, a few asked about it back in 2016.
- With these reactions in mind, we knew that we have to do more for these people, as they really needed more in order to have a safe party. We knew that we need a team and more information to offer!

Challenges:

!! misinformation about substances, what they do, what they contain, purity

!! people are hesitating when comes to an open talk about substance use

!! growing number of EDM events all over the country

!! most of the festivals do not have ambulance service, only first aid

!! both ambulance staff and festival staff are totally unprepared for any psychedelic emergency

!! lack of funds to support the harm reduction services

!! missing information about the purity of the substance or the presence of any adulterants

!! an urgent need for more motivated and devoted volunteers

PRECONDITIONS

- A good, solid and devoted team
- A better and active support from National Antidrug Agency and emergency medical services
- A better understanding of harm reduction and safety among festival staff
- Openness of the festival organizers and community to the drug use subject

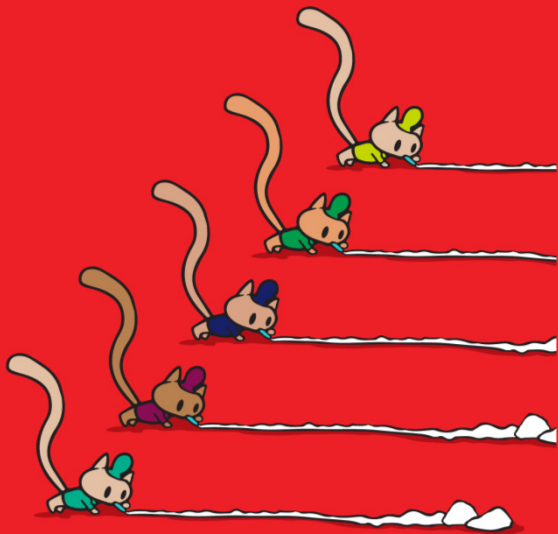
VALUABLE EXPERIENCES

- The experience of our team
- The contact with the drug consumers
- The recognition that harm reduction is a need for all the festival participants
- Our team of volunteers

CONCLUSIONS

Thought the actual context seems legally and socio-cultural problematic, drug testing services can be implemented step by step, especially with the shared knowledge of organizations with experience in the field

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