



# Addiction 360°

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President of Malta

# Since last year's conference...

- ▶ A lot has changed.
  - ▶ Countries we once believed were strongholds of democracy have begun to enact policies and legislation which question the commitment of certain politicians, to universal human rights, and fundamental freedoms.
  - ▶ There are places in the world where conflict and precarity are escalating in unprecedented ways.
  - ▶ The phenomenon of human movement, which has been part of the history of humanity for millennia, is being hijacked by the rhetoric of populists and demagogues.
  - ▶ The effects of climate change are contributing to massive environmental changes around our world,
    - ▶ The unjust distribution of wealth, which gives prosperity to the few at the expense of the rest, is increasing social tension across our societies.



“  
conferences such as these,  
organised by students, give me  
hope for the future”

*Your active engagement with the social concerns of today will create a positive change for the future of our country and our world.*



# “I would also like to congratulate you for choosing to focus on multidisciplinary approaches”

- ▶ It is so necessary to bring diverse disciplines in synergy to address the needs of different aspects of academic and professional life.
- ▶ This ensures closer collaboration throughout the relevant academic and professional sectors, while enhancing each other’s knowledge gained in one field, through sharing.
- ▶ This approach also ensures the sustainable development of the much needed psycho-social sector in our country.
- ▶ All this will significantly contribute to a greater culture of **solidarity, peace and wellbeing in our islands.**



# “Our society will definitely become more resilient”

- ▶ Our educational institutions will become stronger and more relevant when we work in synergy on the most pressing social, cultural, economic and political concerns of contemporary life.
- ▶ “I urge you to continue, creatively and courageously, to explore the concerns faced by vulnerable people, families, and communities within our islands”.
- ▶ Please do continue to come forward, to work in synergy, and to make your voices heard for all the people who need your support.



# Today's conference...

- ▶ Another opportunity:
  - ▶ To share your expertise;
  - ▶ To foster new partnerships that strengthen your mission;
  - ▶ To achieve the objectives of inclusion, of participation, and of social justice.



# Addiction

- ▶ Addiction is a complex and multifaceted reality, faced by many individuals during their journey in life.
- ▶ Addiction does not always manifest itself in obvious ways.
- ▶ Addiction manifests itself in different ways, that are sometimes difficult to discern.
- ▶ Addiction affects people differently, and impacts people's lives and very differently too.



# My most recent experience...

- ▶ Earlier this week on a visit to the Caritas shelters at San Blas.
- ▶ Dozens of people shared their narratives with me, talking about their experiences and aspirations.
- ▶ First concern of many women I met was the wellbeing of their children.
- ▶ Men and women talked about the stress of being disowned by their families;
  - ▶ They talked about their hope for a better life.
- ▶ My experience also showed me how difficult it is for people living with addiction to take that essential step to reach out for help, and to make a practical and proactive change.





# Addiction

- ▶ Anything and everything that shifts out focus away from the path of wellbeing
  - ▶ Far-reaching implications for our loved ones, our communities, and society at large.
- ▶ Addiction means that we have been dangerously trapped, by things which damage our lives.
  - ▶ This may happen as a result of our own actions, or as a result of oppressive life circumstances and inequalities that unfortunately operate within our status quo.



“ I believe that during this conference you must discuss the problems that are underlying the dangerous addictions, which trouble our society. ”

- How can we all come together to identify solutions, which will promote greater justice?
- How can we educate our young people in the values that strengthen society?
- How can we do more to accompany people in difficulty, by providing support and hope for the future?



# Popular discourse...

- ▶ Centres on attempts to shift the blame of addiction onto the addict.
  - ▶ Too many people describe addicts as lazy or lacking in willpower, and of being selfish for inflicting their addictions on the rest of society.
- ▶ The discourse that surrounds addicts and their culpability is similar to the dangerous discourse that is sometimes used for the poor, and the causes of poverty.



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Unfortunately, society can be judgemental and unfair.

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- There is a prevailing danger, in contemporary society, to push the addict, the poor, and the vulnerable to the edge of our communities, and outside our circles of care.



# Unfortunately, society can be judgemental and unfair.

- ▶ It is easy to think that such individuals are not like us.
  - ▶ But all it takes is one debilitating disease, the loss of a job, or a serious experience of mental illness to begin a process that ultimately leads to precarity and its attendant risks.
- ▶ Unfortunately, the injustices which are built into our status quo further contribute to a pervasive culture of inequality.
  - ▶ While some people are able to change their circumstances, many are not.
  - ▶ We should not take it for granted that this means they did not try hard enough or that they have weak characters.
- ▶ To me, it means that great obstacles were stacked against them, and some of them were unable to overcome those obstacles.



“  
Some people make judgemental  
claims, that addicts should stop  
their addictive behaviour before  
it gets out of control.”



“ When drug abuse takes over, a person’s ability to exert self control can become seriously impaired. Brain imaging studies from drug-addicted individuals show physical changes in areas of the brain that are critical to judgment, decision-making, learning and memory, and behaviour control. Scientists believe that these changes alter the way the brain works, and may help explain the compulsive and destructive behaviours of ”  
addiction.

American Institute on Drug Abuse

- *This means that taking drugs damages a person’s brain, which makes it even more difficult to create the necessary change to overcome the powerful pull of addiction.*



# European Drug Report

Trends and Developments

2016

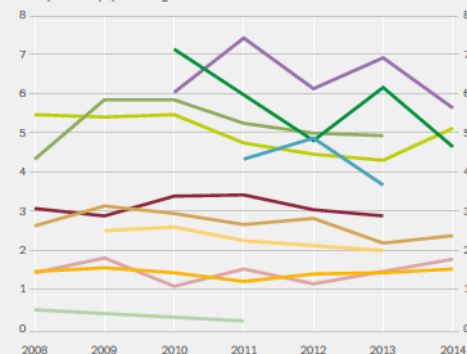
## European Union Drug Report

- ▶ Malta still have one of the highest indicators for high-risk opiates, mainly heroine, in the European Union.

FIGURE 2.8

National estimates of last year prevalence of high-risk opioid use: selected trends and most recent data

Cases per 1 000 population aged 15 to 64



Rate per 1 000 0.0-2.5 2.51-5.0 >5.0 No data





The President's  
Foundation for the  
Wellbeing of Society

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FREEDOM FROM ADDICTIONS

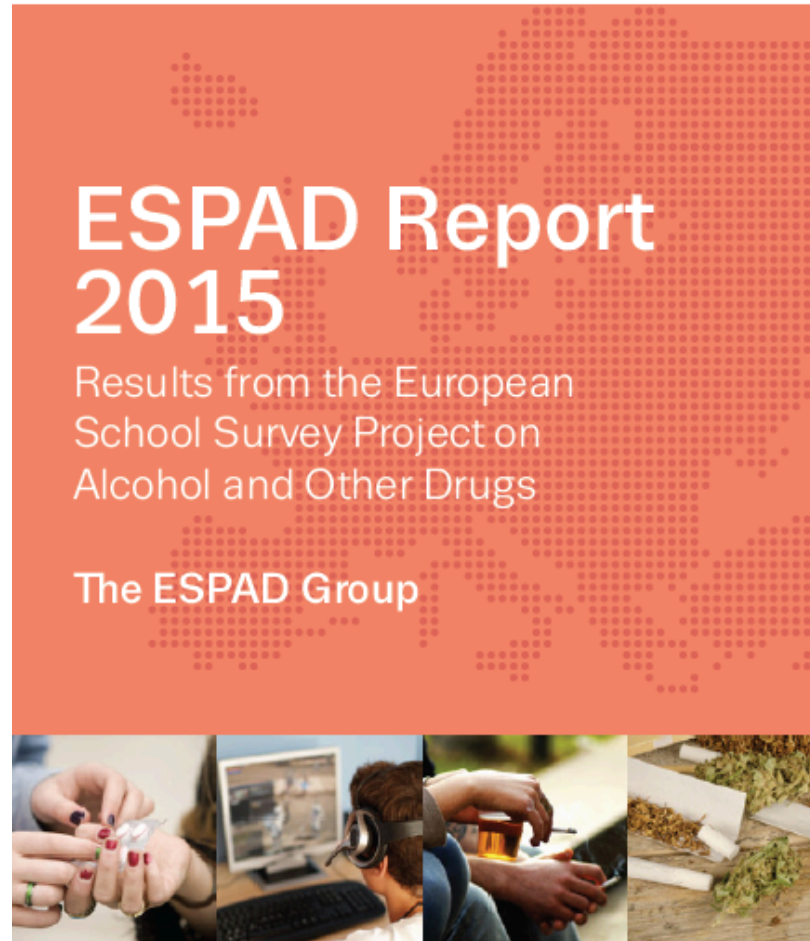
EXPLORING DRUG DRIVING LEGISLATION  
IN MALTA IN THE CONTEXT  
OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE

## Important indicators gathered by the Centre for Freedom from Addictions

- ▶ We must, as a country, do more to address the risks of “drug driving” in Malta. This means that more people are using drugs, or combining drugs and alcohol, when driving in our country.

## The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs

- ▶ With the internet now an integral part of daily life, the development of patterns of addictive use among children and adolescents needs to be closely monitored and investigated.
- ▶ Malta's Situation:
  - ▶ Boys spend 5.9 days on the internet weekly;
  - ▶ Girls spend 6.3 days on the internet weekly.





**NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FREEDOM FROM ADDICTIONS**

# PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE IN MALTA AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE AGED BETWEEN 18-30 YEARS

**A QUANTITATIVE STUDY**



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**We need to secure the active participation of all stakeholders.**

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**Including national authorities, communities, and civil society, to continue creating the relevant changes to update our legislation and our policies, and their implementation.**



# I appeal to you...

- ▶ Be aware, as students and professionals in the sector, of the benefits that society can achieve if we tackle the problems of addiction in a sensitive way, and ensure a continuous process of synergy.
- ▶ Such an approach, working in synergy, will not only improve the quality of life of affected individuals struggling with addiction, but will also provide more holistic support to address the negative impacts of addiction on families and communities.



“  
**I hope you shall continue,  
throughout this conference and  
beyond, to work towards the  
greater good of society, together.**”

**I urge you to continue, throughout your academic and professional lives, to dedicate yourselves to the empowerment of the vulnerable, and keep promoting a powerful and effective commitment to solidarity, to peace, and to wellbeing across our Maltese Islands.**



Thank You for your attention.

*H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca*

President of Malta

