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LIVING with HEROIN

**Identity, Social Exclusion and HIV
among the Russian-speaking Minorities
in Estonia and Latvia**

by Paul Downes

TALLINN 2003

Paul Downes

LIVING WITH HEROIN:

Identity, Social Exclusion and HIV among the Russian-speaking Minorities in Estonia and Latvia

Published by the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights:

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www.lichr.ee

Co-published by the Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra with funding part provided by St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Research Committee:

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ISBN 9985-9410-4-7

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Acknowledgments

Access to the heroin addicts was with the assistance of Nelli Kalikova, M.D. (Head of Tallinn Aids Prevention Centre and Member of the Board of Management of the AIDS Information and Support Centre, Tallinn, Estonia). Nelli also provided me with access to the most recent data on HIV rates in Estonia and elsewhere and generously gave her time in detailed conversations/interviews with her concerning the issues examined throughout. My colleague, Dr. Mark Morgan, Head of Education Department, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Co-author, European Schools Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) and Vadim Poleshchuk, Legal Information Centre for Human Rights, Tallinn, also provided me with valuable support.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the U.S. Embassy Democracy Commission, Estonia, in funding the translation and publication of the Estonian and Russian language versions of this book, and the Research Committee, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Ireland for their support in funding the publication of the English version of the book. I would also like to thank the European Society for Social Drug Research for providing me with financial support to present a paper on the theme of this book at their annual conference in Helsinki, September 2002.

I would like to thank both the addicts who agreed to be interviewed and the students from Concordia International University, Estonia, who conducted and translated the interviews. I would also like to thank Dr. Aleksandra G. Davidaviciene, Pedagogic Institute, Vilnius, Lithuania, Mr. Andris Gailitis, Latvia State Drug Abuse Prevention and Health Care Center, Riga, Mr. Boris Koltchanov, MINELRES, Latvia, Ms. Baiba Vilcina, Information Centre of the Naturalisation Board, Latvia, Mr. Michail Moroz, Kopli Methadone Maintenance Centre, Erika St., Tallinn, Estonia, Dr. Vlad Romano, Institute of Health Services Management, Bucharest, Romania, Dr. Marina Kuzman, Croatian National Institute of Public Health, Ms. Elena Vesselovskaia, Project manager NGO "Vozvrastcheniye", St. Petersburg, Russia, Ms. Deborah Olszewski, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), Dr. Jane Fountain, (Drugscope), Principal Lecturer, Centre for Ethnicity and Health, University of Central Lancashire, Assistant Professor Thoroddur Bjarnason, University at Albany, SUNY, Co-author, European Schools Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD), Dr. John Sweeney, National Economic and Social Council, Ireland, Ms. Airi-Alina Allaste, Institute of International and Social Studies, Tallinn, ESPAD Researcher, and Dr. Ann-Louise Gilligan, Co-ordinator, Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin.

Paul Downes

Section one

Introduction

In February 1999, Nelli Kalikova M.D., Director of Tallinn Aids Prevention Centre in Estonia gave a speech at Concordia International University, Estonia and warned of an impending HIV epidemic in Estonia. Her warning was based on both the exponential rate of increase of Hepatitis B and C cases among Russian-speaking intravenous drug users in Estonia at that time and parallels with the growth of the HIV epidemic in Odessa in the Ukraine¹. The figures she quoted from Tallinn Aids Prevention Centre were that 98% of heroin addicts in Estonia were of Russian-speaking origin. The HIV epidemic arrived in Estonia within a year and a half, being first observed by Tallinn Aids Prevention Centre in August 2000. Eastern Europe now shows the world's steepest HIV curve (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, December 1999) and HIV rates have been and are expected to increase substantially in a number of countries in this region (Dehne et al 1999; European Centre for Epidemiological Monitoring of AIDS in Europe 1999; Hamers et al 1997, p.1372).

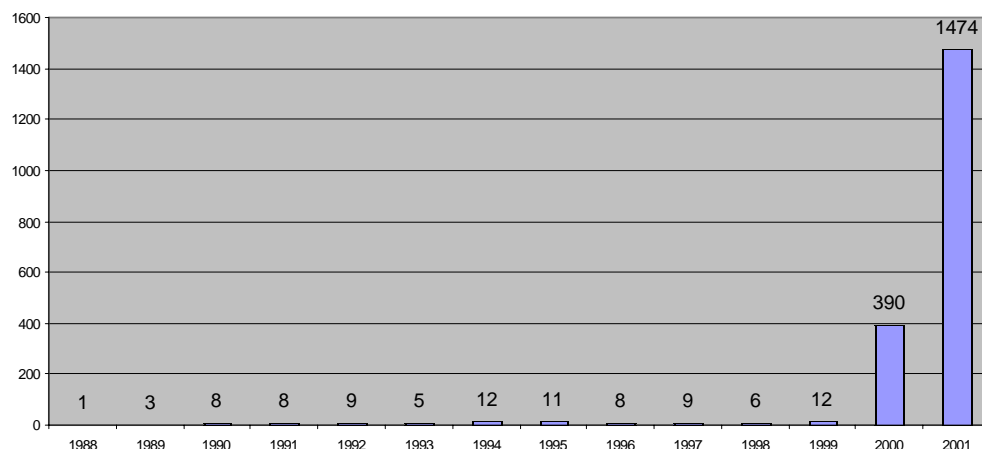
Shortly after Nelli Kalikova's speech, a Russian-speaking student at Concordia University, Anita Bezrukova, presented, in my criminology class, the following written account of a conversation she had with an 18 year old Russian-speaking heroin user in Estonia:

I'm 18 years old and I don't have a future. My parents lost their jobs, they have so many problems that my presence makes them upset. They could not take care about me when I was little, and now...I prefer to come home as rare as possible. I don't have education. Of course, it's my fault but when I was 7 or 8 it was funny to play games, to smoke...Teachers are busy with 'good boys and girls', I understand them. After all, their salary is too small and they have a right to forget about guys like me. I went to technical school and there I met hundreds of guys with the same problems like me. Do you think some of them know Estonian ? Maybe one or two...I cannot write in Russian without mistakes, what can I say about Estonian ? I will not get a passport, I will never have a job. I cannot go to Russia - there are thousands of unemployed. I don't care what happens tomorrow, I want to have something to forget that I live for nothing and I'm not good enough for society. I know I will die but it's good

The need for psychological understanding of injecting heroin addicts in the Post-Soviet context is all the greater given the central role of intravenous drug users (IDU's) in the recent history of the spread of HIV in a large number of the former Soviet states. For the Baltic States in recent years, intravenous drug users have constituted 73% of HIV cases in Estonia (Official statistics December 2000), 70% of HIV cases in Latvia and 54.5% in Lithuania (Baltic HIV/AIDS Info Newsletter, February 2000). The centrality of intravenous drug users to increases in HIV rates is also evident in numerous other former Soviet republics, with IDU's constituting 70% of HIV cases in Georgia (Official statistics 2001), 83.4% of HIV cases in 1997 to 64.7% in 1999 in the epidemic in the Ukraine (Official statistics 2000), while IDU's account for more than 80% of HIV cases

¹ Where the police use their powers to arrest the heroin users rather than giving more focus to the arrest of the heroin dealers

Figure 1.2 HIV positive cases in Estonia (1988-2001)



The interviews

With Nelli Kalikova's cooperation, I decided to try to organise more intensive, standardised open-ended interviews (see also Barker et al 1994) between heroin addicts and university students during 1999-2000, to attempt to understand different aspects of living as the addicts experience it. It was by no means certain that the addicts at Kopli methadone maintenance centre in Tallinn, Estonia would wish to engage in the interviews - their distrust of officialdom made it very important to explain that the interviews were not going to the police (see also Downes & Murray 2002) and that any identifying information about their lives revealed in the interviews would not be made public. The Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Russian-speaking student interviewers from Concordia International University also emphasised to the addicts at the centre that they were not trying to judge them, that they were simply trying to understand them and that they were free to refuse to answer any or all of the questions. Some of the addicts refused to have the interview tape-recorded. In such situations their answers were written down verbatim by one of the interviewers and this was explained in advance to the addict being interviewed so that he would not become surprised or threatened. Often the heroin addict's initial reluctance to talk to anyone was overcome simply by conversation with the students prior to the interviews. Sometimes a shared cigarette helped loosen the social barriers to open conversation. The fact that the interviewers were almost exactly the same age as the addicts, and were not approaching them from a hierarchical position of being some outside authority, also undoubtedly helped the addicts to relax and open their worlds on the basis of an assumed connection between interviewer and interviewee. Some students observed that during the interview the addict they were speaking with would not sit down but would always remain standing, pacing up and down, when talking. It was not always possible to ask every planned question in each interview as much depended on the concentration of the interviewee. Yet it was also clear from the overwhelming willingness of a large number of the addicts to talk after an initial reserve, that there was from their side, a need to be listened to.

Entrenched divisions of social class might place a huge barrier between a university student and a heroin addict in many cultures, so that there would be a prior subcultural hostility between interviewer and interviewee. These walls of hostility would make open communication virtually impossible. For example, studies of the experience of heroin addicts in Ireland (Delaney-Reid 1988) and the United States (Gould et al 1974; Hanson et al 1985) rely not on student volunteers but on ex-addict interviewers. However, a feature not just of Estonia, but arguably throughout at least some other states in Eastern and Central Europe, is that these social class divisions are not yet so embedded in the society. Even if there are extreme gaps between rich and poor in these states, the cultural distance between rich and poor may not be so extreme. So whether the student interviewer was from Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, or a Russian-speaker from one of these states, was not a matter of much importance with regard to barriers to openness. 24 of the 27 interviews, including the 16 at the methadone maintenance centre, took place in the Russian language in 1999 and 2000 shortly before the HIV epidemic started and were translated by the student interviewers. As well as the 16 interviews which took place in the methadone maintenance centre, 17 addicts at the centre also declined to be interviewed. The relative ease of communication between university student and heroin addict opens up the potential of university students to be involved in both information gathering and primary prevention programs concerning drug taking in Eastern and Central Europe. The voice of such students in prevention programs would arguably have more influence on those at risk of drug taking than in other cultures where a more radical cultural split occurs between social classes.

Research in Ireland (Stimson 1973) and the U.S. (Gould et al 1974) has emphasised the diverse range of lifestyles and personality profiles of heroin addicts. The U.S. research of Hanson et al (1985) observes the need to examine the experience not simply of heroin addicts in treatment but also those who are not. After the methadone centre interviews proved feasible, it was possible to broaden the interview sample to include some non-treatment addicts. Three of these were of ethnic Estonian origin. Two others were half Estonian/half Russian and Lithuanian (living in Estonia) respectively, while all the others were from the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia. However, all the addicts interviewed were male.

The psychological approach adopted in the interviews is a phenomenological one, emphasising the experience of the individual. What is central is how the individual heroin addict makes sense of his/her experience of the world - how (s)he understands himself/herself and constructs meaning within the world around him/her. It follows the tradition of R.D Laing (1959) who emphasised an existential-phenomenological approach for understanding people with schizophrenia so that focus on their experience of the world treats them as people - and not narrowly as abstract categories. Laing criticised the attitude to the patients which saw them simply as a 'conglomeration of signs and symptoms' and thereby losing sight of their humanity.

Other approaches which could be termed phenomenological, in so far as they focused on heroin addicts realities and social worlds, include the study of Hanson et al (1985) which examined the experiences of street addicts in Chicago, New York, Washington and Philadelphia. However, the questions asked in our 27 interviews examine the individuals' emotions and social relationships in more depth², as well as their attitudes to the social world and political context they find themselves in. Delaney-Reid's (1988) phenomenological focus on heroin addiction in the Irish context was overwhelmingly concerned with the addicts experience of the drug itself. Our interviews concentrated more on their attitudes to drug taking rather than on the different experiences from different drugs.

² Hanson et al's (1985) phenomenological approach did not, for example, explore the relationship between parental attachment and its influence on subsequent trust and openness with peers.

Gould et al's (1974) examination of heroin addiction tries to 'describe the phenomenon as it appears to itself'. They focused on 'perspectives in action', namely, accounts of action where the account was intended to make the action meaningful to the heroin addicts themselves or others in a similar situation to the heroin addicts. This phenomenological focus on *action* differs from our interviews. Our interviews did not examine direct social interactions between the addicts and for example, their families or other addicts. For our interviews, this does lose the virtue of independent corroboration of the addicts' accounts of their social relationships as well as their interaction with institutions such as school. However, despite the limits of self-report methods (see e.g., Barker et al 1994, pp.86-7 on the advantages and disadvantages of self-report) the addicts' account of their experience and their interpretation of interpersonal relationships does have its own independent validity as the interviewees' constructions of the past and present still affect their present and future behaviour, thoughts and emotions (see also Shaw 1996 on constructivist perspectives and qualitative research). Gould et al (1974) emphasise the importance of clear separation between descriptive accounts of heroin addiction and subsequent analysis from the interpreter of the descriptive account. This point is taken into account in the presentation of the interviews separately from the later analysis. Gould et al (1974) follow Weberian methodology which emphasises the value neutrality of description. While this is acceptable in so far as opinion and fact are not mixed in the presentation of the interview responses, the theory ladenness involved in all observation, including observation of discourse, must be acknowledged. Such theory ladenness, as well as the theory ladenness in the very questions organising observation, is well recognised in philosophy of science and psychology (e.g. Kuhn 1970; Lakatos 1970; Feyerabend 1988; Gergen 1982; Eiser 1994). So value neutrality has its limits within observation itself.

One explicit value laden perspective within the open-ended interview questions is that the questions are designed to focus on humanistic concerns regarding the heroin addicts. They are treated as human beings who are heroin addicts rather than heroin addicts who happen to be human (see also Hanson et al 1985). Many of the questions asked to them are questions that have relevance for the lives of all human beings. The non-hierarchical relation between interviewer and interviewee, together with instructions to the interviewers that it is not their role to make moral judgement on the addict's answers during the process of the interview itself, echoes Rogers (1951, 1974) humanistic therapeutic interviewing approaches. The importance of a humanistic approach for the context of the Baltic States is evident from the following words in the current programme of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (formally endorsed by the Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in Riga, in May 2000) to prevent a widespread HIV epidemic in the region:

The stigmatisation and social marginalization of injecting drug users constitute major barriers for public support to HIV prevention, and should be counteracted

However, it has been suggested that the social marginalisation of injecting drug users is not simply or even primarily a problem of public support, but of governmental and political indifference expressed through their failure to react with sufficient speed to prevent the problem in Estonia (Kalikova 2002a) and Riga Municipality's failure to understand the problem in Latvia (Upmerce 2001, Deputy Director of Latvia's Aids Prevention Centre, Baltic Times, July 12 – 18, 2001). Nelli Kalikova states that governmental inertia concerning intravenous drug users and HIV in Estonia has been worse than in Lithuania and Latvia, and that due to governmental delay 'we [have] lost now five years in this work' and that there is a need to explain to politicians that 'every wasted day we lose the battle...now every day [it is] harder and harder to stop it' (Kalikova 2002, Director of Tallinn Aids Prevention Centre, personal communication).

Interpretation of the Interviews

Maremmanni (1999) refers to the stigma experienced by heroin addicts in many European countries in the 1970's and 1980's as 'severe' (p.2). Interpretation of the interviews with the heroin addicts needs to go beyond perspectives which start from the assumption of the heroin user as a criminal. An assumption of the user as a criminal has served to oppose the needs for needle exchange and substitution treatment for heroin addicts, needs recognised by the Baltic Sea Action Plan as central to HIV prevention. One tradition within criminological analysis of deviance (e.g. Sutherland 1939; Cohen 1955; Merton 1957) is to focus on what *causes* the supposedly deviant behaviour i.e. what factors affecting the individual or within the individual induce a person to take drugs. However, a social constructionist focus emphasises other concerns such as how the reality of society constructs and interprets certain social situations and actions as not fitting in with an artificial and often arbitrarily defined normality (e.g. Becker 1963; Cicourel 1967; Berger & Luckmann 1967; Lemert 1967). This latter focus was also particularly emphasised in Laing's later work in psychology (e.g. Laing 1967). A more recent approach in psychology emphasises focus on risk and protective factors such as social support, to help develop prevention programs and to help guide treatment (Rutter 1985; Zimmerman & Maton 1992; Cohen & Wills 1985; Wills & Shiffman 1985; Fitzmahon 2000). This risk and protective factors approach has more in common with the first (etiological) tradition than the social constructionist one. However, the issue of how the individual's construction of his or her social reality is a risk or protective factor also brings at least the potential for a rapprochement with the second tradition as individual construction of reality logically leads to examination of the society's construction of reality as well. A benefit of the protective and risk factors perspective, in comparison with the simple causality perspective, is that it is arguably more solution focused.

Interpretation of the interviews needs to accommodate all three perspectives at least to some extent. At the individual level (section 3), the focus in the first tradition is usually on what makes the heroin addict *different* from the general population. A more neglected focus is on features of many of the addicts which make them *similar* to the general population. These similarities can also offer insight into protective factors relevant to developing treatment and prevention approaches. This focus on their similarity to the general population echoes the approach advocated by Cowen (1994) which focuses not so much on an at risk person's or group's presumed deficits but considers their entire range of competencies and interests as avenues for change. The social context level (section 4-5) is not to be conceived of as rigidly separate from the individual level. All three traditions strongly recognise their dynamic interrelation. The interaction between individual and social context levels of explanation is central (see also Bronfenbrenner 1979). Empirical research on the levels of drug taking in Eastern and Western Europe will also serve as a backdrop for interpretation of the interviews.

Ethnicity: Russian-speakers in the Baltic States

A key social contextual factor, relevant to themes in the interviews and to analysis of heroin and HIV in Estonia and Latvia, is the proposals for reform of both education systems as tools for integration between ethnic Estonians/Latvians and their respective Russian-speaking minorities. Russian-speakers, or their parents or grandparents, mostly came to Estonia and Latvia under the Soviet regime, a flow of immigration engineered from Moscow. During the past half century the share of minorities climbed more than four times from 8.2 % in 1934 – to 38.47 % in 1989 in the territory of Estonia within present borders. In the years following World War Two, the share of minorities in Latvia doubled (Poleshchuk 2001a). At the time of restoration of their independence in 1991, a large part of the populations of both Estonia and Latvia were ethnically non-Estonian and non-Latvian respectively. The figures for Estonia in 1993 revealed 40% ethnically non-Estonian (i.e. predominantly Russian-speakers) (Zaagman 1999), a figure which on 1 January 2000, as reported by the National Statistical Office of Estonia, has declined somewhat to 34.73 % of the total population³ (Poleshchuk 2001a, p.11). The largest ethnic group among ‘non-Estonians’ is Russians (28.07 % of total population), followed by Ukrainians (2.53 %). The remaining ethnic groups make up about 4 % of total population. Almost half of the population of Latvia in 1993 were ethnically non-Latvian (Zaagman 1999), a figure which was 42.1 % of the total population⁴ on 1 January 2001, as reported by the Board for Citizenship and Migration Affairs (Poleshchuk 2001a, p.12). The leading minority ethnic group in Latvia is Russians (29,4 % of total population), followed by Belorussians (4 %), Ukrainians (2.7 %), Poles (2.5 %) and Lithuanians (1.4 %). There are at least 175,000 stateless persons in Estonia, and approximately 551,000 in Latvia, according to official sources (Poleshchuk 2001a, p.14). In other words, close to 15% of the total population of Estonia and 20% of the population of Latvia are stateless (Poleshchuk 2001a). 60% of ‘non-Estonians’ (i.e. predominantly Russian-speakers) are without Estonian citizenship (Poleshchuk 2000), while 551,000 stateless people in Latvia is approximately 55% of all the (ethnically) non-Latvian population. Contrary to Estonia, the number of citizens of other countries in Latvia is insignificant (Poleshchuk 2002, personal communication).

Thiele (1999) observes that although the right to a citizenship or the protection from statelessness was first set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948),⁵ there is not a legally binding duty in international law upon the Estonian or Latvian state to give citizenship to an individual born on its territory, even if their parents were also born on its territory during the Soviet annexation:

The rights of a stateless person to a nationality can be deduced from this general principle, but not the duty of the state of residence to unconditionally grant it nationality to this person

(Thiele 1999, p.8⁶)

³ The total population of Estonia in the beginning of 2000 was 1,439,197 (Poleshchuk 2001a, p.11)

⁴ The total population of Latvia is 2,360,434 (Poleshchuk 2001a)

⁵ Art 15.1 states that: ‘Everyone has the right to a nationality’

⁶ See also, Report of the Secretary General ‘Situation of Human Rights in Estonia and Latvia’ in UN Doc. A/48/511, p.7, para.29

In Lithuania, the demographic situation is quite different from Estonia and Latvia. When independence was restored, the ‘non-Lithuanian’ component of the population did not exceed 20%, being mainly ethnic Poles (9%) and Russians (8%). At this time the Government of Lithuania, unlike in Estonia and Latvia, offered free choice of citizenship for all permanent residents, except Soviet military and security personnel and their families.

The term ‘Russian-speaker’ masks the fact that this group is not simply of one ethnic origin, as it comprises Ukrainians, Belorussians and also Jews, as well as Russians. Järve & Wellmann (1999) acknowledge that the term ‘Russian-speaker’ is:

...often criticized on political grounds for masking diverse needs of various ethnic groups and for promoting the hegemony of ethnic Russians in dealing with minority issues (p.5)

Nevertheless, they adopt this term noting that it is ‘common in contemporary non-academic and academic discourse’ (Järve & Wellmann 1999, p.5). A further oversimplification within the term ‘Russian-speaker’ is that it masks the differences between citizens (of Estonia or Latvia) who are Russian-speaking, stateless aliens (grey passport holders) who are Russian-speaking, and Russian citizens who are resident in the Baltics. The term used in the Report of the Government of Estonia (2000) concerning education reform is ‘non-Estonian’, although the Estonian report does recognise that the term ‘non-Estonian’ is not an ideal term. The term ‘non-Latvian’ is also used in the Latvian Education Reform documents. Terms such as non-Estonian or non-Latvian are to some extent a legal fiction as *many so-called non-Estonians or non-Latvians in official State documents are in fact citizens of Estonia or Latvia* (from a Russian-speaking background). In legal or civic terms they are in fact Estonian or Latvian, even if they are not ethnically Estonian or Latvian. It is arguable that the terms ‘non-Estonian’ and ‘non-Latvian’, which have been used in previous government documents (and elsewhere) regarding integration, are discriminatory as they privilege ethnic nationality over civic/legal nationality in social and official discourse⁷.

While the term ‘Russian-speaker’ will be used throughout this book despite its oversimplification, it must also be acknowledged that the term ‘minority’ has no universal definition in public international law (Thiele 1999, p.1). Legal definitions of a minority are complicated by issues such as to whether minorities include only citizens of a state (see e.g. Thiele 1999, Asmal 1987)⁸. For the purposes of this book, reference to the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia includes both citizens and non-citizens (see also Van der Stoehl, High Commissioner, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in Zaagman 1999, p.14).

⁷ Even some recent Estonian research refers to ‘*Russian* children in Estonian schools’ (Kalmus & Pavelson 2002, p.229, my italics) despite the fact that most of such children are Estonian citizens

⁸ According to Thiele (1999), the broadest consensus in theory and practice regarding definition of a minority is by Capotorti (1991), developed in response to a request of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in 1977 to report on the international state of discussions on the scope of Art. 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 16 December 1966 which is still the only universally-binding instrument in public international law regarding minorities. Capotorti defined a minority as “[a] group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the State – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language” (Capotorti 1991, p.96).

It is important to clarify at this stage some extremely important aspects of the heroin problem in the Baltic States that are beyond the scope of this book. Current drug prevention programmes in the schools, local communities and media are not examined. This omission is a statement not of their unimportance but precisely of their extreme importance which are worthy of a book all of its own. Other important aspects to the heroin problem which are beyond the scope of this book are examination of a) the factors governing availability of drugs within and between the Baltic States, b) the impact of criminal justice policy upon the heroin problem and c) evaluation of the optimum types of treatment and counselling to be made available for those with an addiction problem.

Section 2

Heroin addicts: Interviews

INTERVIEW #1: With Deniss¹ (Russian-speaker, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

No, in Tallinn we have only two facilities sponsored by government that offer “rehabilitation” services if you wish to call it like that: the one in Kopli² and the other one which is always overcrowded and hard to get into. So, the only place left to go is in Kopli and still they only give us methadone - a substitute for heroin.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

Not one of my friends has ever stopped using drugs. Some of them are already dead - that is the way they stopped using them.

Do you make a big distinction between soft and hard drugs?

Yes, of course. If I only used soft drugs I wouldn't be here right now.

How did you find school? What would you change/have changed first in your school if you had the power?

School for me was a horror movie. I dropped out then I was in the 8th grade. Teachers irritated me, I didn't want to study and I didn't want to go to school at all. If I had the power I would firstly change pupils' attitude to school and teachers' attitude to pupils. I would make their relationship warmer than it was in my school.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

Mother - she always understands me.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to? Do you think most people trust each other?

I don't have any friends who can understand me or with whom I can talk freely about what lies on my mind.

Do you understand yourself?

I mostly do understand myself, but there are times when I feel that no one, including myself understands me.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time? Do you trust your friends or classmates? Do your friends understand you?

I don't think that I will have the same friends in 5 years because right now most of my “friends” are heroin addicts with whom I just do heroin together, so they are not real friends of mine and of course they do not understand what I feel. Maybe they just pretend that they understand.

Do you think many people your age are depressed? Are people your age happier or less happier than adults are?

¹ All names have been changed for purposes of confidentiality

² Kopli methadone maintenance centre, Erika St., Tallinn, in fact does not receive Estonian government funding

I don't know about other people and I can not talk about how they feel. I am already an adult and I don't feel happier than before.

Do drugs make you happy?

Maybe earlier they made me happier, but now they only take away the pain of not using them and distort my life.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

I think love exists but not as beautifully as it is described in fairytales which my mother read me when I was a little boy.

What would you like to change in the world?

My life. I want to turn everything around and start from the beginning, from childhood.

What would you like to change in people around you?

I would like people to be more kind-hearted and I would like to eliminate drugs in the society.

Is the world basically nice place?

No. It is black and white; there are not any colours in it.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

I don't know about statistics, but it is true, Russian-speakers are mostly heroin addicts, Estonians like "Ecstasy", "Speed" more. Those drugs are more suitable for parties. Heroin is for the daily use; you don't go anywhere, you are just using heroin. "Ecstasy" you can take once a week, once a month. You take heroin every day. Of course, there are people who take speed every day also.

Do you have any dreams for the future?

I want to stop using heroin and start my life from the beginning.

What you think you will be doing in the future?

Firstly I need a job place, because, if you want to stop using drugs, you must have some occupation, you must not just sit at home and do nothing, you have to do some work. When you have nothing to do, then you start to use drugs.

Would you like to have a family of your own one day?

In the future, probably, but not now.

What do you imagine your children to be like? What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I will not have children for 5 years, at least, because I need to clear my organism. I don't want to have sick children. If I found out, that they are taking drugs, first thing I would do I would help them. I would show them from early childhood how bad is heroin. I would not just say, that heroin is a bad thing, as my parents were telling me, I would show them what it is in real life - what does it mean, what is happening after taking it. They must themselves decide if they want to take drugs or not, but I will explain to them properly about that.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

I wouldn't go to any schools. Firstly, I don't want to talk in the big auditorium. Secondly, I'm not well prepared for that.

Do you like Estonia?

Yes, I do like Estonia. I was born here, I never lived anywhere else, and I would prefer Estonia, to the other countries (i.e. Russia). I like Tallinn, I like people in Tallinn, and it is a better place, than the ones in Russia.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

I cannot evaluate myself fairly, only people who know me can do that.

If you were the leader of the Estonian government, what changes would you make in

Estonia, to make everyone happier?

If I were the leader of the Estonian government, I would find more resources to fight against drugs. I would give more money to the hospitals, where heroin addicts are cured. I would give more possibilities to the drug addicts to be cured, because they get almost nothing from the Estonian government. Besides Erika St., and one other place, there are not any centres for drug addicts. If you subscribe yourself to the list to get methadone, you must wait for six months till you can get it, in the other place the queue is even bigger. So, it is almost impossible to get treatment. A lot of people think, that drug addiction is not a sickness, they think, that there is no need for those people to live at all.

What colours do you prefer? Why?

Black. I associate it with headaches.

What are the things that irritate you?

Alcoholism, drug addiction, my friends, with whom I am doing heroin. They only call themselves friends, they are not real friends. Real friends have to help the other friends, my friends can only help me by taking me heroin, when I feel bad.

Does the routine nature of everyday life upset you?

Yes, of course it does. And I cannot change that I need more money in order to go to the cinema, for example, or do something else. Of course, if you have a lot of money, you can do everything you want. But anyway, even if you have a lot of money, the routine comes into every person's life.

Do you believe in a God?

Yes, there is something deep in my soul, but I don't go to the church every Saturday or Sunday. Every person has his own God in his heart, maybe not everyone is talking about that...

What makes you happy?

In my childhood sports made me happy, now - heroin. Love...? Yes... probably love is happiness in some way.

What makes you feel most sad?

That it is impossible to get out. To get out from everything, which is around me. I will never stop using heroin. There are only some people, who are using heroin and then quit it. In drug addict's head there is always a little thought about this pleasure which can be reached with the help of drugs, and it is impossible to forget this. You will never throw this thought out of your head. After some years of abstinence, you can close your eyes and remember the needle. This is called needlemania.

INTERVIEW #2: With Boris (Russian-speaker Age 26, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

No, I am not happy with the facilities for curing drug addicts in Tallinn. There are not enough rehabilitation centres and so many drug addicts.

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

My first drug experience was sniffing glue while skipping my literature class in high school. Then my friends offered me to try marijuana and so on and so forth.

Why do you think people use drugs in general? Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

People use drugs to get away from the reality. Yes, the teenage years are the time of crisis, because a lot of teenagers feel that adults/their parents don't understand them.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

Nothing can stop people taking drugs, even doctors and police.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

One of my friends quit heroin, but he left the country and I haven't heard anything from him.

Do you make a big distinction between soft and hard drugs?

Yes, but I feel that the person starting from innocent marijuana can simply finish up taking hard drugs.

How did you find school?

For me school was interesting, but I still didn't like to go there. Maybe it was because of my classmates/peer pressure - everyone in school said that they would rather do something else than go to school.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

Yes, many people understand me, but no one can help.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to? Do you think most people trust each other?

I think, that I have a couple of persons whom I can trust and talk to. Otherwise, it would be a bigger stress when you have no one to talk to.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time? Do you trust your friends or classmates? Do your friends understand you?

I don't have friends now, but I hope to find some friends in the future though, the friends who will understand me, who will help me in stressful situations of my life.

Do you think many people your age are depressed? Are people your age happier or less happy than adults are?

No, I don't think so. I don't think that many people who are 26 are depressed. I consider myself a minority. I feel that people who are above 20 are more rational and less influenced by others.

Do drugs make you happy?

Of course no. Do you think it's a pleasure to come here every day to take another dose of "medicine"?

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

Nothing. I do completely nothing to avoid it. If I'll become HIV positive, then it is my destiny.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase AIDS in Estonia?

No.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

If statistics show, that mostly Russian-speaking people are heroin addicts, probably this is true, but I know, quite many Estonians, who are heroin addicts too.

Do you have any dreams for the future?

All of us are sometimes thinking about the future, not excluding me. Firstly I want to get rid of the drugs and then try to start a new life.

What do you think you will be doing in the future?

I'm not sure right now, probably find some workplace and live the life of a normal person.

Would you like to have a family of your own one day?

Of course I would like to have one, but right now I'm not thinking about it, I still have to solve my own problems, because right now I will not give anything good to my family.

What do you imagine your children to be like? What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

My children will be the best in the world, they will be very good boys and girls and they will not use drugs, because their father will explain to them in a proper way what drugs mean and how to avoid them.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

I can't think of my nicest qualities. I'm too kind; this is my best and worst quality at the same time.

If you were the leader of the Estonian government, what change would you make in Estonia, to make everyone happier?

Firstly, I would make changes in the policies concerning education, both high school and college, so it will be more interesting for children. Also I would pay more attention to the drug addicts, so they would get the right treatment at the right time and of course for free.

Does money play any role in your life?

No, I just need it for living not for luxuries.

Would you ever think of going back to school to get more education?

I finished 9 grades of high school and a technical school, and I don't think that I will continue my education right now or even in the near future.

What colours do you prefer? Why?

Black. I cannot explain why I like it; I just simply like it, that's all.

What are the things that irritate you?

...Hmm... my addiction... hate... I don't know.

Does the routine nature of everyday life upset you?

Yes, it upsets me especially when it comes to the point when I feel bored and every day seems to be more and more useless.

Do you have an ideal person to be like?

At the present time NO, but when I was young I had many ideals.

What makes you happy?

I can't understand happiness at all.

Do you think most people are happy?

As my doctor says - "Only fools are happy."

What makes you feel most sad?

That I am sitting here right now rather than sitting in your place.

Do you ever cry?

Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

INTERVIEW # 3: With Juri (Russian-speaker Age 17, Not in treatment)

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

Not really, although I have never been there, I never felt that I really need it or want to go there. You know, as long as you don't want to get off really bad - these places ain't no good for you. But I heard that some doctors are good there, at least their attitude toward the people who go there is normal. Doctors just don't try to put a lot of pressure on you and don't lecture too much on how you should behave.

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

I started with soft ones. I was smoking with a friend, then amphetamines. Then heroin. You know, when you start - you just enjoy it, you don't think of the result. You do it to forget the problems that you may have, at least some people are on heroin because of that. But when you start, you are getting addicted to it, and it is invisible - that is the worst part; you can't notice the moment when you are crossing the line.

Do you parents know that you are addicted?

Yeah, they know. They tried to do something about it. I even tried one course of medicine that you can get at the store, but I quit it. My mother checks my arms every day, but I lie to her that it is all the old ones. I guess they are too busy to notice anything new.

Why do you think people use drugs in general? Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

Why ?? I guess, some just like it; others, maybe, want to try it. You know at the beginning, it is a great experience. Teenage years ain't no crisis, the entire life is a crisis.

Why is the entire life a crisis, and what are the needs of teens?

The life is a crisis because there is no exit from where I am now, or if there is one, I don't think I can go there.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

Ha. ha. The atom bomb, I guess. Actually, nothing can stop it.

How did the others you know stop taking drugs?

I don't know anyone who could quit.

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

The difference... Even one philosopher said, I don't remember his name, from Ancient Greece, that first it is alcohol, then soft drugs, then hard drugs. You go from one to another. The end is addiction.

You were in high school one day, right? How did you find it? Would you change anything there if it would be in your power?

School is fine, although now I have less time to go there. And also, I am thinking to quit and find a job. I guess I would change one thing; they already started to give some kind of knowledge about sex, how to protect yourself from getting HIV and all that stuff, but I think, they also should start telling people about the harm that drugs bring into our life, at least about the hard drugs.

When you do get in troubles (we all get in from time to time), do you have a person with whom you can talk about it?

What kind of troubles? When you are in a desperate need for some money? Or when police caught you when you were stealing something from the store? Or when you wake up one day and don't know what to do with your life? The first two, and other questions like that, are my damn problem. The third... I don't know. My mother did try to talk about my life before, but I was always so tired, that I would just say everything is fine, or something like that. Eventually, she stopped talking. I can't recall any serious questions that I had lately, actually, I don't think I had any.

Do you have any strange experiences which you would be afraid to admit to anyone either on or off drugs (like energies from another world, etc.)?

No. I never have any. At the beginning maybe I had, but I don't remember them now.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time? Do your friends understand you?

No, surroundings will change. I am planning to quit pretty soon, it just starts to take over me more and more often. Right now my friends are the people with whom I take drugs, with

whom I started. They are the same way, we do have understanding on a certain level, but I can't recall going anywhere further.

How do you think, are people your age happier or less happy than adults?

Majority is happier I guess, I don't know actually, never thought of others that much.

Do drugs make you happy?

No, it doesn't. The main thing I understood is ADDICTION. Addiction to anything is dependence, it can't make you happy.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

We are hoping (long laugh). We are trying to use needles only one time.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase of AIDS in Estonia?

Yes, probably, yes. From people that I know... They gonna leave the track after themselves. And new generation, that is younger than we are... They are even more stupid: they are the ones that don't have any limitation, like it was in the States during the '60's.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

Sure it does. To be in love means feeling really outstanding and I don't know. Totally fucked up with that idea!

INTERVIEW #4: With Oleg (Russian-speaker Age 19, Not in treatment)

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

Doctors are no good there at all, well, maybe they do give some medicine to take away the pain but that's it. They don't give the psychological help that people need there. I've been there once, don't know why I went there, but they don't show enough concern for us - which is what the most drug addicted need.

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

I started with friends, the same way, at the beginning the easy ones then ended up with heroin. The company - that was my reason and it is still the same.

Do your parents know that you are addicted?

Yes, they know it, but they didn't have money to put me on the course, they just tried to pay attention more. Usually it all ends up by checking the arms.

Why do you think people use drugs in general? Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

People think that it will help them to forget themselves, in reality, it comes down to just try it - the will that drives many people. Teens ain't no different from the others, the only difference is that we don't have the money, yet, to satisfy our needs.

What are the needs of teens?

The needs... different people have different needs. My needs right now are to find money to buy that stuff. I don't think I want to quit yet. I think I am not crossing the line yet.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

I don't know, maybe the love of another person, or your love to another person; maybe self preservation.

How did the others you know stop taking drugs?

I know one person who quit. He died several months ago, overdose. I guess he got lucky.

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

There is a difference. From heroin, you can't be distracted. It is almost impossible.

You were in high school one day, right? How did you find it? Would you change anything there if it would be in your power?

School became more and more boring from year to year, and right now there aren't many possibilities that we can do after school, so I quit a year before graduation. I thought I will be smarter than others and I will find a job before my classmates would even graduate, but while looking for one, I found heroin. But even if I would have graduated, I would have found heroin for myself.

When you do get in trouble (we all get in from time to time), do you have a person with whom you can talk about it?

Problems concerning drugs, money, needles and all other things that are connected to it - are my own business. The other problems... There ain't no other problems when you only concentrate on where to get something. You don't have time to think about them. At least I don't.

Do you have any strange experience which you would be afraid to admit to anyone (either on or off drugs)? Like energies from another world, etc.?

Strange experience...No, I can't think of any. Although I have heard that people really were going nuts under the heroin, but that's all from the overdose. Well, 'LOMKA' when your body is breaking into parts, when you haven't had any heroin for a long time, if you can call it strange experience. It is more scary and painful, than strange, but for you girls, this would be strange.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time? Do your friends understand you?

No, definitely no. If they will be the same, then maybe the relationship will be in a different shape. I will try to change my mind - no drugs. We don't talk about it a lot. Some of my friends, who are not on heroin, know that I am, but it is my life - I can do with it what I want - they don't interrupt.

How do you think, are people your age happier or less happy than adults?

No, not happier. Old generation was happier. They were taken care of by government and society in the Soviet Union. I think for them it was more fun time than for us.

Do drugs make you happy?

Time ago, yes, when I was only starting. Right now only dependence exists, willing to get away from the real life and real world; no interest to do anything. Can that be happy?

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I try not to make any injections in real public toilets, don't use a needle for the second time, especially after somebody also. About sex... There are couple girls around this place, that everyone knows, they already have the virus. They are going to end up bad, now they are on heroin - they have nothing to lose. But I never go so desperate to fuck anyone.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase of AIDS in Estonia?

100% yes. Everyday increases, I would say. You know I am a guard over here, I know guards from other bars and different places. Every day we have enough stories with new people getting that virus. The stuff that is on TV is bullshit. - you can't imagine how real it is, and all those people end up with heroin - they have nothing to lose. So increase in one brings increase in another. Most of the stories that I heard are about girls, and that scares - future mothers.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

It does exist, it helps everyone. I was once really in love [he laughed as he saw his memories] It was great, you are like flying over everything that is like an obstacle on your way. You just get it and hold it.

INTERVIEW #5: With Sergei (Russian-speaker 23 years old, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

Actually everybody tries. Everybody starts with weeds, then they have to try something more serious. Just curiosity. We guys always want to try everything in life. That is nirvana. But nobody thinks about 'breaking'³ then

Do you talk openly with your parents?

Of course I do. For example I told my mom about addiction, as I needed money for methadone. Mother gave money. We can freely speak about THAT.

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

Because they have nothing to do. When it is boring and they have no occupation.

Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

No, that is not true. I know for a guy, who started taking drugs when he was 30.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

Nothing. Maybe only if there were no drugs at all. Yes, only then people wouldn't have used them. It is not so easy. I mean it is not easy to explain to psyche that it will never get a dosage once again. If druggy can't fight it himself, he needs outside help. He can't fight against himself because of broken psyche.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

I know just a couple of such people. Their girlfriends and work helped to get rid of drug addiction. But there are so few people like that... 2 out of 100.

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

Yes, I do. I don't need soft drugs.

What do you mean soft?

For me ecstasy, amphetamines, speed is very soft. Weed is not a drug at all. The only drug is what you inject.

How did you find school?

I had to study till 9th grade. Finished these nine years without any 3s. After was complicated, I chose the wrong direction- mathematical. I left it later on my own. If I continued humanitarian studies, I would stay. But in mathematics, you know, if you don't understand something in the beginning, you will never understand it later.

What would you change first in your school if you had the power?

Actually, I don't care. Everything is more or less OK. Don't want to speak about that. Stupid question.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

People understand me. Always. Just some of them don't want to. You know the attitude toward druggies, they are like scapegoats. But to tell the truth they are the same, they are people.

Do you know anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to?

Druggies don't have friends. Druggies don't trust each other. Druggies don't trust others, as they don't respect them.

³ i.e. withdrawal symptoms

Do you think many people trust each other?

No, never.

Do you understand yourself?

No, I am shocked with myself. Always. Want to do one thing, but do another, the opposite. I have a kind of split personality. One part of me wants one thing, another part wants different. Can't fight it. I am shocked.

Do you ever have strange experiences with which you would be afraid to admit to anyone, like energies from another world?

Yes, three times I had such experience. I go to sleep. Keep my cat close to my arm. Haven't noticed when I fell asleep. Suddenly I wake up because I realize that I take off. Slowly, slowly... and shake a little over the bed. Couldn't move a limb. The first time I didn't catch that it was just a hallucination. Even when I woke up, I still thought that it was real. The other time I noticed that I am not sleeping, not dreaming, that was realistic. Only then I got that it all is a work of drugs.

Do you think many people around your age are depressed?

No, everything is OK.

Are people of your age happier or less happy than adults?

No, the difference is not in the age, but in the situation. Non-druggies are happier. Druggies are on one level of existence. They all are equally unhappy. No, not unhappy. They are satisfied from time to time when they get the dosage. But happy? No, never. Maybe only when they are cured. I don't know. I haven't been cured. Three times I decided to stop taking drugs, but all the same returned to the point of no return. So I don't know.

Do drugs make you happy?

Of course no, don't make. At the beginning they were giving the state of nirvana. But it was only a couple of times. They don't make happy - they make dependent. And I am dependent now.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

Use my own syringe. I'm afraid of HIV. But never used condoms, and not planning to. I never have sex with drug addict girls - they may have HIV. I date with a girl 2 days, if I see that she is not druggy, I have sex with her. Probably because I have sex with them too soon, I lose interest and don't want them anymore. Next time if I date with a girl will not have sex with her as long as possible. Don't want to lose interest.

Do you think true love exists?

I don't know. I had a girlfriend. Maybe I loved her. But she wanted a bandit with lots of money. I understood it too late. Nobody existed for her, except money. Even her girlfriends were shocked.

Are there many differences in the way girls and guys think, feel, or act?

I think yes. We think in a different way. A guy is more important - he is the host. He is higher.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

Boy hangs around more in that sphere. If a guy is a druggy, he is more acceptable in some gang. Girls, in their turn, don't hang around with girls who are druggies. That is less prestigious. Women are weaker.

Do you believe in a God?

It is like UFO. Until I see, I won't believe. But I feel that something exists. I am baptized by the way.

Do you ever cry?

Yes. When I am drunk. Tears go themselves. And they used to when I was quarrelling with parents.

Cry often?

I don't drink alcohol very often. I mostly smoke weed.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

No. I love myself. I am an idol for myself.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Would you like to change the world? People?

Yes, I would try to get rid of all drugs existing in the world. Maybe I would leave weed -just for fun. It is more interesting with weeds. Would give job to everybody. There wouldn't be unemployment. But would prefer that alcohol existed. Everything is OK with people if there is no drug. So, I am actually satisfied with them.

Is the world basically a nice place?

Of course it is a wonderful place for living. What a stupid question.

Why do you think that it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Estonians sell drugs. I know. The other reason is that they have better conditions for living. They have money and work. People never start taking drugs when life is OK. They start doing it when life sucks - no permanent work, no language skills, discrimination of Russians. If the person has blue passport⁴ he is more likely to get a good salary and prestigious job. If employers see that you have grey⁵ or whatever, they will think twice before deciding whether to take you or not.

Do you have any dreams for the future?

Definitely. Good job, no matter what. Whatever. I need just the fact that I am working, how much I get for what I do is not so important. I just want to work. And a girlfriend, of course. Good girlfriend.

What do you think you would be doing in the future?

I don't know. Haven't thought about that.

What colours you prefer? Why?

Blue or navy blue. Just like my jacket. I hate bright colours- they are too outstanding and irritating.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day?

Of course. But first, good job is needed. And only then a girlfriend, for future. I will definitely find a girlfriend - who will love me. She will be the only and forever.

What do you imagine your children to be like?

I want to have a son. He will for sure finish school. He will study as much as needed, even 20 years. I will have nothing against it. Believe me, I will educate my son. He will never be like me - a jerk.

What would you do if you find that your children took drugs?

I would do everything to help to get rid of this addiction. I would pay as much money as needed, if it helps. I would pay even \$4,000 if it helps.

⁴ i.e. Citizen's passport

⁵ i.e. Alien's passport

Do you feel that life is useless? For you? For others?

No, it has sense, but I still haven't discovered it yet. Maybe later I will know. But it has some sense.

Do you think that routine nature of everyday life upsets or bores you more than other people? Why?

Yes, that is exactly what drives crazy and what forces you to take drugs. Every day you get up the same time - steal something in order to get money for heroin - sell what you have stolen - inject heroin and again the same thing. Again come to the point of no return. The next day is the same. That kills the most. I think that it depresses me the worst, much more than other people. Other people have work, girlfriends, they have an aim in life, I don't. I am not so lucky as others. I don't know why.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

The worst side is drugs. The best is that I am very nice and handsome, smart and young.

What are the things that irritate you?

There are. But I can't remember them now. But I get irritated very often. You know, when, you have broken psyche, you get irritated very often without any reason.

What do you think needs to be changed in Estonia to make young people happier?

Everybody should be equal. Let all Russians get jobs - Estonians are socially higher than us.

What extra facilities in the environment would you like to see for teenagers?

Nothing.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

Of course, I would be prepared for that.

What does money mean in your life?

It is - it is not- that doesn't matter. Who cares? I personally don't need money. But girls want it, for them I need money. To satisfy them.

If you had the possibility not to go to school, would you? Why?

I would go. How is it possible? I wouldn't be able to read, write, calculate, and count. I wouldn't be able to pronounce 'r' and 'l'.

If you have left the school would you ever think of going back to get more education?

Yes. Definitely. I would continue education, but now it is too late.

What makes you different from others?

I don't think that I am very different. I am a druggie; I know that normal people view us as different. But actually we are not.

Do you want to do something extraordinary sometimes?

Yes. Something that is unavailable right now, something which I can't afford. Give money and I would do something extraordinary.

If you could wish three things what would they be?

1. Good health- normal kidneys, liver. Would wish that my organism forgot that I used to take drugs. 2. Good health to parents. Well-being for them and myself. 3. Family, work, girlfriend.

INTERVIEW #6: With Konstantin (Russian-speaker age 25, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

As a matter of fact, I am. I do not know what I would be doing if there was no such centre. Nevertheless, other centres are not as good quality as this one. Last year I was attending a drug clinic in Lasnamäe. There they gave me a kind of pill after which I felt even worse. Once I got them I decided to go to my summer house to try get off drugs with the help of those pills. What happened next was awful. Those pills were very weak, so I nearly died. After this, I decided that I do not have another choice than trying methadone. First I came to this centre at the 6th of December⁶, I even marked this day on my calendar, and happily, since that I feel better.

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

At first, I just wanted to try, because my friends always advised me to do it. First time I took heroin I did not like it at all. I felt bad, my head was aching and I could not eat. Some days later I decided that I should try again, because first time I was not able to realize what, actually, this drug does and why everybody uses it. After that, came the third, fourth, fifth time, and so on. Thus I was using drugs for five years. And marijuana - I do not take it as a serious drug. It is nothing compared with heroin. Once heroin takes you, it will never leave you alone.

Do you talk openly with your parents or maybe brothers/sisters?

With parents?! Never!! Till now my mother does not know how serious my disease is. Happily, I have some people who I can always talk to and be honest with. They are my sister and my girlfriend.

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

Usually young people have nothing to do, they just meet in the yard trying to find some new adventures and feelings so they are using drugs. And it is obvious.

What do you think will stop people taking drugs?

If all dealers die out.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

I do not know people who stopped taking drugs. There are some who just quit for a short period of time, and then started taking them again. Nevertheless, I still believe that I will manage to do this.

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

Soft drugs are not as serious as the hard ones. You can always stop taking them. For example, I can smoke hash for one year and then stop in one day and it would not influence on my psyche at all. Heroin is different. It eats you up from the inside and leaves only when there is nothing left of you.

How did you find school?

It was a long time ago. I can hardly remember what happened to me at that time...The only thing I remember is that I was the one who always had the worst grades in the class. I hated school and I skipped lessons all the time. Everything finished when I was expelled from the 11th grade for 2's in math and chemistry.

⁶ Date changed for purposes of confidentiality

What would you change first in your school if you had the power?

I cannot imagine that I have the power. I would never have enough power to change anything.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

I think that my girlfriend does. If not, why would she take care of me all the time?! Sometimes I think that my sister does, but she is so different from me. She is too positive and I am too negative.

Do you think most people trust each other?

I do not think that people can trust each other. In the past it could be but not now. Maybe because I am taking drugs. World of drug addicts teaches you not to trust anyone. Everybody just wants to tell you lies and make you feel bad. I had an experience when I told a very secret thing to a person who seemed to be very friendly, and on the next day everybody knew my secret

Do you understand yourself?

No. I do not think I am doing the right thing. I just cannot stop myself. It is stronger than I am. It always directs me to the wrong way. I am just a sick person and my disease is very grave. There were moments I lived only because and for heroin. I was not interested in what was going in the world. It was awful, how can I understand myself after that?

Do you ever have strange experiences, which you would be afraid to admit to anyone?

No. A lot of times I had just hallucinations after taking heroin. They are not extraordinary. I was flying it was beautiful. Lying on the bed with closed eyes and watching colourful movies. At first I was happy to see them, but after six months they disappeared. They were gone. Nowadays I do not have dreams, I fall asleep and never see anything. It always happens, at first you take drugs to feel something special and in the end just to remove strong pain.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time?

I do not have friends anymore. Friends are people who you can trust, unfortunately I do not have those. In the world of drug addicts there could not be friendship. Once I thought that one boy is my friend, but he took my money and disappeared.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed? Are people your own age happier or less happier than adults?

I think our parents are happier than we are. They do not know what drugs mean and what they can do to your life. But from the other side they have such kind of children as I am. Also I think that nowadays everybody's life is very depressed and unhappy, because of poor country and unemployment.

Do drugs make you happy?

At first they made me happy, now they do not. I hate them; they killed my life. But actually, they can make one happy when your organism needs drugs. In the life of a drug addict there is no more happiness than to get a dose. I am not taking drugs now, so I do not think they will make me happy at the present time. The only happiness for me would be to quit it and never come back to those hard times.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I always use only my own syringe.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase of AIDS in Estonia?

I think yes! I heard that already school children are taking serious drugs and lots of them are suffering from hepatitis.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

Love is something you can never get enough of. But to my mind, love can live only for 3-4 first months. Later it becomes a habit. I have seen true love only in Hollywood movies, not in life. In our cruel environment there is no place for love.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

I think that girls are more sensitive creatures than guys, that is why they take relationships with sex more seriously than guys. For them it is a first love, but for boys it is just a first experience.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls, think, feel, act?

I do not know, but I think it depends on personality. There are different kinds of girls as there are different kinds of boys.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

I completely disagree with this statement. I know as much girls as boys taking heroin.

What makes you happy?

I think, money. If you don't have money you are not able to do anything. You could not go out, have a nice girlfriend and a car. Money rules in this world. Money is everything for me and for every person in the world. If I had a lot of money I would probably never stop taking drugs. I am trying to quit just because I don't have enough money to continue.

Do you believe in a God?

No! I never believed in fairytales.

What makes you feel sad?

Sometimes I am sad. I think about the past, future and present. Future always scares me, because I can not predict what will happen within some years. I think about my parents, my girlfriend and how difficult it is for them living with me.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

No, I never wanted to be as someone else. I am what I am and I could not be someone else.

Would you like to change the world?

I can't change anything. But if I could I would probably change people to be more kind and helpful.

Is the world basically a nice place?

No. But I can't explain why.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Because Russians are repressed in Estonia. They will always be in the background.

Do you have any dreams for the future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

I would like to have a family. I would like to get rid of all my problems, earn a lot of money and live without drugs.

What colours do you prefer? Why?

I like green and blue. Blue because of sea, and green because of trees.

What do you imagine your children to be like?

I was never thinking about that. We'll see. But I do not want them to be like me.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

It is hard to imagine. I would be shocked. But I think I would tell them my story. This would be the only thing I could help them. Almost everyone usually takes only his or her own decisions.

Do you feel that life is useless?

Life is beautiful when everything is all right.

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bores you more than other people?

My life is the same day after day. Every day I do and want the same thing and I can hardly see the way out of this routine.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

I don't know. I think I do not have nice qualities. I am a liar and a drug addict. My mother already does not believe me. I ruined my and my relatives' lives. That is why I could not be a nice person.

What are things that irritate you?

There are a lot of things. I hate when my mother is shouting at me. She became very strange in the past years.

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

I have no idea.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

There would not be any use in that? If one decides to take drugs, nobody is able to change his decision.

Do you like Estonia?

No, never! It is very boring to live in Estonia. I would rather live in Australia, but I don't have money to go there.

What does money mean in your life?

Everything.

If you have left school would you ever think of going back to get more education?

Of course, not. My sister has a high education. She spent a lot of money to get it and till now she is working...and only has a minimum wage.

What makes you different from others?

I am a drug addict.

Do you want to do something extraordinary?

I want to jump with a parachute.

If you could wish three things what would they be?

If I tell you they will never come true.

INTERVIEW #7: With Mikhail (Russian-speaker 22 years old, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

Do you talk openly with your parents?

My father knows. But I do not want to upset my mother.

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

Why? Fools, they want and they do it.

Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

Teenage time might be a crisis time. Teenagers look at my age people and learn for bad.

What you think would stop people taking drugs?

What can stop them? If you yourself do not want then nobody would force you to stop.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

There are some. Pissed off - then stop, then again from the beginning, sometimes more sometimes less.

How did you find school? Like/Dislike?

I liked studying.

What would you change first in school if you had the power?

Nothing.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

I have friends they understand me. Many friends in different cities.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stress?

There is my girlfriend. She can calm down stress.

Do you think most people trust each other?

It is possible to believe people.

Do drugs make you happy?

Drugs support me in order to survive. Actually, at first it is good and after - there is not anything good.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I do not inject in a company with others. I have my own syringe. I know someone who picked up a syringe from the floor. It did not matter for him.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

It is logically, it is increasing and it will continue.

What does love mean?

Love? I loved in school and after I did not love anymore.

What makes you happy?

When I am not injecting that makes me happy, because I am trying to stop for the third time. I want to stop, when I stop, that will make me happy.

Do you think most people are happy?

No. How can they be. Everyone wants something.

Do you think many people are pretending to be happy even though really they are not?

Why do they pretend? There are happy people, but there are only few of them.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Would you like to change the world? People? What? (if yes)

If I were the one who decides everything then I would change many things. People are missing many things...I could make that for each of us everything will be equal.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day?

Of course, everyone wants to achieve this. The way is - you are born, married and continue life.

What do you imagine your children to be like?

Children will have a good life. They will live well as it should be...I will look after them. There is no chance to deceive me. I will not let them come up with drugs.

Do you think that life is useless?

There is use and meaning in life. At least for family.

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bores you more than other people?

I am not bored.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

Nicest are - I am sociable, I love children but only when they do not cry, I think I will

be a good father. And I am honest but only with people close to me. Worst are - I am not honest with strangers. Actually, I have many such qualities. When I drink a lot I become very aggressive.

What are the things that irritate you?

“PODLJANYE” things⁷ - when people tell lies and make a fool of me.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

Why not? If there could be a need I would help. But I am lazy. I do not have great wish to do that.

Do you like Estonia? Why?

In summer - yes, I do. Normal small place.

What makes you different from others?

I do not know. I am living by my own way. Every one lives by his/her own way. I am a funny person. I can pity someone, or myself

If you could wish three things what would they be?

Maybe normal life, money. I do not know what I need. I have almost everything. I would like to fall in love with a normal person. - And third wish I will keep just in case.

Interviewer's (female Russian-speaker from Latvia) comments:

“I emphasize the way Mikhail was speaking - no clear sentences and words. Most of the time he was in some way repeating questions I was asking. That means he has to pronounce basic words in simple sentences or questions himself in order to hear his own voice which is more clear and understandable for him.”

INTERVIEW #8 With Artur (Russian-speaker 25 years old, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

No, I'm not happy. Here are no facilities at all. Nowhere are such facilities. This treatment by methadone gives nothing. One drug replaces another one and that is all. The only thing is that methadone is cheaper, so I save my money .

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

I started in 1994. At this time I had free money. It was interesting to try. And who is not interested, show me! A lot of drugs remained after Soviet Army, when it departed from Estonia and it was very cheap. Later I took “soloma” (opium poppy straw) and now – heroin.

Do you talk openly with your parents or maybe brothers, sisters?

My family knows that I am a drug addict. They help me. My father is a doctor and tries to help me. Once I quit, but then, after one year I started again. I had many private problems by this time: no job, my girlfriend ... (pause, tapping his foot) I wanted to forget everything.

Why do you think people use drugs in general ?

Each person has own reasons for that. For me this is a pleasant state. An interest leads people to that they try drugs, but not all of them necessarily become drug addicts.

⁷ Subsequently explains that this word stands for Russian slang which might be translated as 'meanness'

Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

I think that age of 25 is also crisis. Crisis could be at any age.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

Some other things providing the same strong and powerful pleasures. I don't know, for instance, to jump with a parachute or to have sex. Fear for the future can not stop that, no

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

I don't know people that seriously took drugs and then stopped. Only those who were playing games with drugs, they can stop.

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

I don't make any difference between soft and hard drugs. There is no difference in their influence. "Soft" and "hard" are specially made up words for the reason to legalize drugs gradually. Alcohol causes more harm for people than drugs.

How did you find school?

I did not like my school but I studied well. I studied at Technical Institute. I was a good student.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

Understand me? I hope, yes. I do not know who concretely understands me. One person can't understand another 100%. I have no special need to be understood. I am not a writer or a poet.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to?

I have one person.

Do you think most people trust each other?

Partly, yes. But not in general – no.

Do you understand yourself?

No... no.

Do you ever have strange experiences, which you would be afraid to admit to anyone (either on or off drugs)? Like energies from other world?

Sometimes I have, but no energies from another world. What do you mean by strange experiences? If I feel that my feet sweat it is sometimes strange experience that I can not share with others. But what else?

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in five years time?

I think I have the same friends five years later. But I don't know what will be with me after five years.

Do you trust your friends? Do your friends understand you?

I trust my friends partly. Friends are different and all understand and see me differently. Everyone knows you in different ways. For example, some know that I am a drug addict, some – do not.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed?

Many people of my age are depressed. For instance, it is not possible to get a job.

Are people of your own age happier or less happier than adults.

There is no relation between happiness and the age. You may have terrible childhood, for example.

Do drugs make you happy?

Make me happy? ...no.

What do you use to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I use condom, I don't use strange needles.

What do you think there is a risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

There is a risk; AIDS is a world problem, but it is not connected to drugs.

What does love mean?

I do not know.

Do you think true love exists?

I do not know.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

The attitude is different. Oh, this is a long issue. It comes from human history. From polygamy: there was one man - male and many females. Men need more sex than women.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls think, feel, and act?

Women have different aims in life, than a man has. Of course, they act and think differently. But in our time there is a shift in the roles. Everything moves toward one middle point.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

Women have less money, so they can't buy heroin on their own money. If they use heroin, that means that their boyfriends or sponsors buy it. A woman depends on a man.

What makes you happy?

Money and drugs.

Do you think most people are happy?

No, I do not think so.

Do you think many people are pretending to be happy even though really they are not?

Of course, they mostly play that they are happy.

Do you believe in a God? Do you feel a God protects you?

I think I tend to believe in God. And God protects me.

Do you ever cry? Cry often?

Yes... What do you mean by "cry"? Cry physically? Physically, no. But sometimes inside we all feel like crying. And what do you mean by "often"?

What makes you feel most sad?

Lack of money.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

No ideals.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Would you like to change the world?

Of course, I would like to change the world. I'd like that all live by God's law. I want that we have nothing but God's laws.

Is the world basically a nice place?

Yes, it is nice; I like it.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Russians have different temperament. We have a joke, that Estonians are frozen, anyway, without any drugs. But in fact it is more difficult for Estonians to get heroin. They have no channels.

Do you have any dreams for the future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

Yes, I have (silence).

What colours do you prefer?

Dark-blue, green. I just like them.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one-day? If so, what do you imagine your children to be like?

I do not think now I can give to my son anything. In future, yes, I dream to have my family, (pause, he is looking aside and smiling). I have no imagination what kind of children I'll have. They will be as they will be.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I would not like it. I would try to find out the reason, because the important point is not why they are taking drugs, but why they started. Of course, I would stop it.

Do you feel life is useless? For you? For others?

I feel often that life is useless. I do not know how about others, but for me it is like this.

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bothers you more than other people?

Routine bores me, yes. Everyone feels the same. People lie if they say that they are not upset.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

Kindness and responsiveness. Negative - thirst for profit.

What are the things that irritate you?

I did not understand. (Aggressively) Nothing can irritate me.

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

We need the second language in Estonia - Russian. The second official language.

What extra facilities in the environment would you like to see for teenagers?

I wish to see more warmth and attention from parents. There is a lack of them in relationships. Also a normal, good attitude towards children should exist. There is a lack of money, parents have not enough money for their children. Nor belief in God or in goodness.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

No, I'm not ready. I would not deal with this kind of thing. It seems to me that if a person deals with anti-drugs education, then he has nothing else to do, he has no other work to perform. Or if he all his life injected drugs ("kololsja"), but suddenly started to work with drug addicts now he is good one, right person, yes? He just replaces one way of dealing with drugs with another. And now he is a world's saviour, who wants to improve those bad angry drug addicts.

If you were the leader of the Estonian government, what changes would you make to Estonia to make everyone happier?

To make everyone happier? I would create more contacts with Russia and spend less money on the military.

Do you like Estonia?

No, the climate is unsuitable, but other things in general satisfy me.

What does money mean in your life?

Everything.

What makes you different from others?

I do not want to tell about myself, others should tell that.

Do you do something extraordinary sometimes?

I do it always.

If you could wish three things, what would they be?

One kilo of heroin, tour to Cyprus for one month, I have never been there, and a ... Gold credit Card.

INTERVIEW #9: With Vladimir (Russian-speaker, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

At the beginning they want to experience new sensations and to feel just cool, but later use them because they just become addicted to it.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

If life would not be such a fucked thing.

How did you find school? Did you like it or not?

I had fun at school, I only did not like teachers and their methods of teaching, and it was just boring.

Do you think most people trust each other?

I just do not care about it.

Have you ever experienced to be in hell?

Narcomania is a real hell.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time?

I believe they would not be my friends after 5 years. I want to cut with them and to make new friends.

Is it easy to find new friends?

No, difficult. However, I have a hope.

Do your friends understand you?

Yes, we have the same problems.

But before you told me that there are no big friends among drug addicts ?

And we are not 'big friends' just we know each other.

What about your friends that you had before becoming addicted to drugs?

When people have different problems they start to speak in different languages, without having something in common we have just split apart.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed?

I believe so, especially for the Russian-speakers.

Are people your own age happier or less happy than adults?

Maybe even less happy.

Do drugs make you happy?

They make me unhappy but not immediately. At the beginning there was euphoria soon afterwards it passed and began a real horrible life. It is just a disaster.

Is it not a too high price for so short time of pleasure to pay?

Yes, it is. However everybody simply believes that he is not as others and will be able to stop when he/she likes.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I use only my own syringe and I do not give it to anybody, from my side I do not take from others as well.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

Yes. I think if some addicts were infected by AIDS, their number would increase rapidly.

Among your friends, drug addicts that you know are they also using only their own syringes?

Not always. Particularly if to look at the young narcomans, they can pick up the syringe from the street and use it.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls, think, feel, and act?

Yes, there are even big differences. I think that a real friendship can be only among men. Friendship among women somehow can be, but a friendship between man and woman is really impossible, because always will be one side who would want more than friendship. Women love deeper and more sensitively than men.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

I do not know, it always was so, however among them are many addicts too. Usually it is looked at the statistical data but not all women want to be known that they are drug addicts. Principally women are innate mothers and they decide more rationally to become a user or not. To drive them to use narcotics is more difficult.

What makes you happy?

A hope that I can give up narcotics.

Do you believe in a God?

It is difficult to answer, because I think I have been in hell. I want to believe in existence of something different, something good.

Do you feel that a God protects you?

Not always.

And how it is when you feel God's protection?

Like police did not catch me or I could be beaten by somebody but somehow escape. When something bad accidentally passed away.

Do you ask God to give you power to cut narcotics?

Yes, in the depth of my soul, I ask.

Do you ever cry?

Yes, when I feel that I cannot achieve what I want.

Is the world basically a nice place?

No, it is a hard place to live.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Because for somebody it is beneficial.

What are your dreams?

To find a job, to study or even to marry.

But there are such dreams?

Sure, like for all normal people. Everything that is common for humanity is common for me.

What colours do you prefer?

I like white, it is a very clean and easily changeable colour. You can add another colour and white becomes different. I like black as well. It makes me feel calm and lets me to feel harmony inside and outside. I think it is a colour of triumph.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one-day?

As all normal people.

What do you imagine your children to be like?

Whatever they will be the most important is that they will not be drug addicts and preferably not be lesbians or homosexuals, just normal people.

Do you have anything against lesbians or homosexuals?

It is their matter until they force others to become one of them.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I would try seriously to speak with them and to advise them immediately to go for the treatment

If they were not to obey?

I do not know, I would exclude them from the house.

Do you feel that life is useless?

When you are using drugs, it is useless enough. The meaning of life becomes how to get narcotics in order to feel normally and not to feel pain. That is all life.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

The worst my feature is the lack of strong will, the best - I don't know, maybe that sometimes I feel shame for my actions.

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

Studying programs should be reviewed, they should be interesting, and of course, to protect a young person from using drugs.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

It is possible but I would not take part in it.

If you were the leader of the Estonian government what changes would you, make to Estonia to make everyone happier?

First, I would change the law about Estonian Language and the law about citizenship.

What would you like to change in the law of language?

I would do two-state languages-Estonian and Russian.

Do you like Estonia?

I was born here. Of course, I like it with all its bad sides.

What does money mean in your life?

It means to get narcotics, my survival depends on it.

What makes you different from others?

Do you mean me from the addicts or from normal people?

I mean you as a person, individually, compared with other addicts and normal people.

I do not know how to formulate it. It is a difficult question. We are addicted people, we are sick and they are healthy although among them are sick people too.

If you could wish three things what would they be?

To give up narcotics, to restore health and maybe to have a chance to turn the time back and to change everything.

Is it the strongest wish to turn time back?

Probably yes, then I never would try narcotics if I knew what would be later, that is for sure.

Interviewer's (Lithuanian female) comments:

"I remember when the first time I came back from the AIDS Centre I was in a condition close to shock. 'Does really this parallel world exist together with mine ?' I asked myself. This world full of disparity, darkness and pain, where different rules are valid...I knew about this world's existence only very vaguely but for the first time I faced with it face to face and I asked myself, is it better to know all that, or not? Maybe it is much more comfortable and easier to live blindly, seeing just what you want to see. Do we need to help them? Some would probably argue that drug addicts are not worth such efforts, they are just the rubbish of the society. Of course for us it would be much easier to live if we got rid of addicts, alcoholics, mentally ill persons, invalids, homosexuals and lesbians. We would become clean humankind without this 'rubbish', but would we be still human beings? I believe not. Nowadays when the competition is continually growing and the question of survival

becomes even sharper and everybody cares only about himself, when our society becomes more and more egoistic oriented, these questions are going to the second if not to the third, fourth or even fifth place of importance. It is not the way to solve these problems just closing eyes in front of them, since later they become even bigger...Several times to some questions Vladimir answered that he, 'as all normal people'. It made me think that he still assumes belonging to our society. Do many 'normal people' would agree with it? To my mind the main reason why our society is turning back from them is that it doesn't believe them still to be human beings with their own identity and personality.

Why Russian-speakers? Due to the requirement of knowing Estonian language and some of them being without citizenship they can not find a well paid job, to have stable source of income and to some extent to feel safe. You may again ask me what are the reasons for this situation? Maybe Estonians still do not want to recognize Russians also having a right to live there. The perception of Russians as occupiers I believe is still alive. I have experienced the hostility from the Estonian workers in the shops, banks when I was speaking in the Russian language. It could be said as 'Estonia only for Estonians'. Perhaps is still alive anger and felt pain inside by the Estonian people because in many families as in Lithuania some family members have been killed or sent to Siberia at the time of Soviet Union occupation.

So, it can be asked how much is society guilty for this problem arising? Some may argue that anyway every person is responsible for his actions and decisions. Then I would like to argue that a person is as responsible as much as he understands the consequences and the results of his actions. How many teenagers know about narcomania? Only that it is a bad habit as drinking or smoking and which is the source of highest pleasure experience. In teenager's years when the individuality formation is still incomplete, the crowd easily moves him. Everybody did it and says that it is cool, so why should I not try it? For the society it is much cheaper to prevent the origin of the problem than later to deal with its consequences. That is why people should be provided with more information about narcomania, especially the young generation."

INTERVIEW #10: With Igor (Russian-speaker, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

I don't know, first I tried glue-sniffing. Then it was marijuana, and after all that I injected heroin. The person who offered to try heroin was my best friend. Now he does not do any drugs except weed. I have come here now to try to escape from this shit.

But what were your personal reasons for taking drugs?

First of all, I am a musician. All members of my rap band are drug addicts. But not all of them are heroin addicts. For 4 years we only smoked Mary Jane⁸. Second, I had nothing to do and thought 'Why not?'. Then I tried this shit. I had big troubles with my mother and had no job.

⁸ i.e. Marijuana

With whom do you often talk openly?

With a friend of mine. He is the only person whom I can tell all my problems and secrets. He actually was the one who put me on the needle. Sometimes with my mother.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

Maybe if all drug dealers would be in prison. I don't know, don't know.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

Two of them by death. My best friend just wanted to quit. He tried and tried, and those attempts were successful. But most whom I know tried but could not stop taking drugs.

How did you like school? What would you change first in your school if you had the power?

I liked to study. But I hated all of my teachers. They were too strict and do not allow freedom of choice. I would like to see teachers like they are in the USA.

Do you think most people trust each other?

Sure.

Who? For example, my friend. Most of people only show their interest to you. But they never really say the truth to each other. Everybody knows that and does not trust one another.

Do your friends understand you?

All my friends mostly understand me because they are the same as I am. During 5 and more years I have the same friends. Apart from those two who died and 4 new people that joined our group.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I don't use dirty needles at all. I always control myself in this way.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase of AIDS in Estonia?

I can undoubtedly say YES. Remember we didn't have such a problem, for example, 7 or 8 years ago.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

It was always more guys than girls. I don't know why. Maybe because they like risk more.

What makes you happy?

Kind company, people's good attitude, success.

Do you believe in a God?

Yes.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Somebody has a benefit from that. And Russian guys are more risky, and most of them have no job. There is only one and strict law: You don't have anything to do, therefore drugs.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I would kill that son of a bitch.

Do you feel that life is useless? For you? For others?

No. But for drug addicts who took drugs for a long time, tried to stop doing drugs and couldn't - for those it is useless.

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bores you more than other people?

I don't think about it. I have an emotional life. I have to steal in order to get money.

What do you think needs to be changed in Estonia to make young people happier?

The law about language and citizenship should be given to everybody who was born here.

Do you like Estonia? Why (if not)?

Yes, because I was born here.

If could wish three things what would they be ?

1. treatment free of charge,
2. kindhearted police,
3. parents would be more understanding and wouldn't bother me.

Interviewer's (female Russian-speaker from Estonia) comments:

"People who believe they have little chances to achieve their goals may become drug abusers. They feel cut off from the rest of the society. Some of them are poor and see no way to escape from their poverty."

INTERVIEW #11: With Vadim (Russian-speaker aged 19, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

Are you quite satisfied with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

I do not like the facilities themselves, but I like that such a place exists, where you can get better.

What made you first to take soft and hard drugs?

How I started? Frankly, I did not even notice becoming involved with this. In the beginning, I just tried. Afterwards I already wanted to try again. At first it was amphetamines, ecstasy and then I got bored with them, they no longer had the effect I wanted. I tried hard drugs. I liked the sense of relaxation they gave me.

So, you liked the feeling?

Yes, I felt relaxed, felt good. I had nothing to do.

Do your parents know that you are addicted?

Yes, they know everything.

Why do you think people take drugs in general?

I do not know. I think they lack something in life. They want to forget everything, feel somehow lost.

So, this means that life is very difficult.

For some, it is difficult and others have nothing to do. It is different for different cases. I do not know if it's a crisis. I did not experience it. I do not know.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

It is very difficult. I could not stop on my own, and I have tried.

If it is not a secret, how many times?

I have been an addict for two years and tried various methods, but methadone has proved to be the most effective one.

Was it your choice to come here?

Yes, I came with my mother. I got sick of waking up every morning and thinking where to get some.

Do you have anyone who you can trust?

Yes, I told that I was quitting. No one called me a fool- on the contrary they said that that was the right thing to do. And did not pressure me.

You have really understanding friends, right?

Yes, they were proud of me that I came here.

How did you find school?

I did not like school very much. Later I was expelled from it.

Did it happen before or after?

It was already after I started using drugs, and was not the reason for using them. I started "having fun" simply because I had nothing to do. I do not know about the changes. One thing is sure I would have finished school, being a better student. I would change my behavior if I could. I would have a totally different attitude, but I guess it's already too late.

Do you think anybody understands you either now or in the future?

There were different people and they behaved differently. Some were disapproving of me. The ones that also used drugs were, of course, very nice with me, and non-users were very bitter. They did not trust me- as an answer- I did not, too. People, who did not use drugs, could not understand me.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses?

I can always talk to my mother. I do not think that most people trust others. It is because life is very complicated. I do not think it is a good idea to trust others. I have had many situations where I afterwards regretted trusting people. Now I believe it is better not to trust people...Of course, I trust a couple of people, but only them. And among drug addicts it is better not to trust anyone at all. They are just like this.

Can they use information against you?

Yes, and they do this very frequently and easily.

Do you understand yourself?

In some sense I do understand myself, I more or less know my limits - both top and bottom.

Do you ever have strange experiences, which you would be afraid to admit to anyone?

Drugs have this effect- you forget about problems and somehow feel lost in a pleasant way. I do not believe in any energy. It is nonsense, I guess.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time?

I do not know what will happen after five years. I do not change friends very often; I have steady relations. I trust some of them fully, but do not trust others. I have both kinds. These whom I trust, understand and never judge me.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed?

Of course, nowadays many people are depressed. The number of drug users is increasing. They try to solve problems by using drugs.

Are people of your age happier or less happy than adults?

I think yes. So many things came crushing down on them.

Do drugs make you happy?

Yes. They make things easier, life - less complicated. It gave the sense of control, that everything was right, good.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I do not know. I mean, I have friends that are diagnosed positive, but I really do not know

what could be done. It is absurd. For example in some drug stores, they tell us that there are no syringes. They do not sell them - just like this. They tell that syringes are only for medicine. Do you see? This summer here in Kopli they told me that they do not have syringes - they are meant only for medicine.

It is strange, especially when you are willing to pay. It is nearly discrimination.

Right. See? How are the addicts are supposed to live? I mean, sharing one needle. Perfect conditions for HIV. In addition, if you tell in the drug store that people might be infected, they say: "It is your problem." Just like this.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

Of course. The same story with needles. They just go round in circles. Especially in discos, where you just come and take it without consideration. Sure it will grow.

Do you think true love exists? What does love mean to you?

Love? I do not know. I have a girlfriend and everything, but... She also was concerned for me to stop using drugs, but... I think true love exists.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

I know some girls that have the same attitude to sex as we do, but the girls are different. Generally, I agree that there is difference.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

I actually know girls who have been using heroin longer than some guys. But generally - I do not know. Maybe it just came out this way. I do not argue that there are more guys, but really do not know why. Probably the girls are wiser on this matter.

What makes you happy?

Now, nothing. I am telling you - really nothing. Even holidays are somehow uninteresting.

And earlier ?

Oh yes, then I was happier, everything was better. I do not even drink now. That is why for me, a holiday is not even a holiday.

Do you believe in a God?

No. No. Earlier, when I was a child, yes. The saddest thing is that I got involved with these drugs and that I will not be able to get over them.

Why?

The entire time it is so tempting, that I felt very close to giving up. There are such days when I just need them, very tempting. It is as they say, "in my blood" already. There are people who smoke, right? I only want an injection. I try to control myself.

It is hard, right?

Extremely hard. Especially when most of my friends are doing this. It makes it even harder. I have to just leave, leave my company.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Would you like to change the world?

Of course I would like to. I do not know what. Maybe to give people a better life.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Don't know. Why only Russians? There are also Estonians who are drug addicts. Maybe there are more Russians. I do not know how to explain. Maybe Russians are more adventurous. I do not know. It is just from my observations in town, conversations. I find here much more Russians. Estonians maybe are more engaged-learning, stuff, and Russians...

What about Russian- Estonian conflict?

I do not think it is prevailing at least in the groups, where I spend my time. No one cares – Russian, you are, or Estonian. It is not important. The important thing is that the person is good.

Do you have any dreams for the future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

No dreams about future. None whatsoever. I do not even know what I will be doing tomorrow. Yes, I live this day.

What colours do you prefer? Why?

Black. I do not know why, just like it. It is the best colour.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day? If so, what do you imagine your children to be like?

I think yes. I do not know. I want to see my child turn into a decent man. I will look after him, to protect him from getting into the same stuff I got.

Would you tell him/her about your experience?

If he faces the problem probably even when he grows up, to know that it is dangerous.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I would do something to cure him. I would do something the very minute I noticed it. It is very hard. You tell them not to take - they do it secretly. The worst thing is when they run away, because they have only one wish - to get high right now. And he will do it, no matter what. It depends on the person.

What do you think needs to be changed in Estonia to make young people happier?

I do not know. Maybe to devote more time to young people, so that they would not just hang around, have nothing to do.

What extra facilities would you like to see for teenagers?

Some entertainment, like discos and other events, clubs. To keep people busy. Because drugs come from having nothing to do.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate young people against taking drugs?

No. Every man makes up his own mind. You can talk what you want. I have been in the situation, where I tell a person: “Don’t try, because if you like it there’s no way back” - but if he really wants it - he will do it. You cannot do anything about that. It depends on the person. If he wants it, no one will talk him out of this, not even his own mother.

Do you like Estonia? Why?

Yes. I don’t know why. I came here from Russia, where life is much more complicated. And people are living rather poor there. It is better here.

If you had possibility not to go to school would you? If you have left school would you ever think of going back?

I would not have gone to school. I did not like studying. Now, I would go back to school. If I could start all over I would go now.

What makes you different from others?

No idea I am not different, I guess. I do not know. I like working with cars: fixing them and stuff. I guess you could say that is my hobby.

Interviewer’s comments (female Lithuanian):

“I was very astonished with the story about the situation in drug stores; I want to believe that there are only a few of such ones”.

INTERVIEW #12: With Maxim (Russian-speaker aged 21, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

Curiosity. We were a gang of 12 guys since school time, but we did not use any drugs, but afterwards we started to smoke weed just because of curiosity. I spent 3 years just using soft drugs and nothing more. But then got bored, there were no emotions in it, so I wanted something more. Then one of us got the chance to try heroin and later he persuaded us to try, he was appealing to the strong emotions we would have. So in a week we all got a chance to try. And none of us has stopped since that day.

Do you talk openly with your parents or brothers/sisters?

Yes, my parents know everything, actually mom was the one who brought me here. I believe my brother will never go my way, for he has seen enough of this horror. He's 15 years old and I'm the bad example for him. Sometimes I feel my parents are fed up with me. From what they say I learn they don't love me anymore.

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

Mainly curiosity, influence of friends. I don't know.

Looking at your brother, do you think that teenage years are the time of crisis?

My brother has a "good" example, but generally, it is. Age of 16,17 is the time period when young people are risky, wishing to try everything new, no matter what. You haven't made your mind up yet. You just don't know, don't care. Right now there are many 13,14 teenagers already addicted to heroin.

Do you make big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

Soft drugs it is the first step, when you are using soft drugs, you think you can quit any time, but actually you are searching for something more and then... hard drugs. Not always, of course.

Do you think anyone understands you?

No.

Why not?

Don't know, no contact with old friends, no new ones. In the normal sense of "friends" I have none, just mates, people I know.

Do you trust anyone? Is there any person you can confide?

No, I'm on my own. Actually I'm very lonely. I wish I had someone beside me. Sometimes you just need to know, someone's there for you...

So, what happened to your friends?

After we first tried heroin, we just split, like in groups of three or four. It is impossible to inject in that big group, everyone is thinking about themselves. People are becoming very selfish. Some of them are in prison, some are dead.

Are other people around you happier than you? For example people of your age that do not use drugs?

Sure, for them every small thing can be something special. They see sun is shining and it makes them happy. They see such little things and details I even do not notice. For me the world seems grey, without anything to be happy about.

Do drugs make you happy?

No, they are relief but not happiness. With time they even do not make any surprise for me. I would be happy to get rid of them, but I can't. What's so happy there?

Do you care to avoid becoming HIV positive?

Sure, today you can't ignore that. I change syringes all the time. I'm careful with that.

Can we ask a personal question? Do you have a girlfriend?

Not now.

But during these 5 years as drug addict, have you had one?

Yes I did, but I left her.

Why?

What's the point to give her a bad time, if she can't change anything. It was not a normal life for her; it is better for her to find somebody else.

Did she do anything to stop you using drugs?

Yes, all the time. She begged me, tried to persuade, but what could she do against my own will.

So, did you want to quit?

No. I just could not... That's strange but you can not find a border between can't and don't want. I couldn't that is why I did not want to. I don't know.

Do you think there is love in the world?

Probably yes. People love, don't they ? I don't know, but probably yes, not for me now.

Why do guys use hard drugs much more than girls do?

Girls are just differently orientated; they do not care much of such things. But it is awful when a girl is on heroin, it's even worse than guys. Girls change in a very short time. It's really awful. I have seen some. They change physically a lot, they are not normal girls anymore. They are weak, ugly. It never happens that quickly and dramatically to guys.

Do you believe you will quit using drugs?

I don't know.

But there should be at least one small thing that makes you happy!

See... when you have gone through this program of methadone... afterwards your life is as blank sheet of paper. And you can't feel it. You search for something that interests you... that can take your attention... I don't know how to explain... like what's the point. You search for that point.

Any meaning in life?

Yes, meaning... you just can't find it. Nothing is good enough, you just can't find that meaning. And then you come back to heroin.

Do you have an ideal or some ideal person?

No, there are no idols anymore.

But did you have any before?

At school, sure, I had some film stars, you know, heroes I was looking up to. But not now. Now it's all gone.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicted?

I haven't figured out that. I have thought about it, but no... I don't know. Estonians are using more Ecstasy and stuff like that.

Do you have any dreams for future? How do you see your future?

I don't have any in my mind. I mean, I do not see or think about anything after today. I live for today.

What is your favourite colour?

Blue. Not light blue but, you know, dark blue. Even with a green shadow.

Like a sea?

Yes, exactly.

Do you like sea?

Yes a lot. Not ours, but the one in South, in Crimea.

What would you do if you found your children were using drugs?

I don't know... Really, what could be done...? My parents, they did that much, but still... I don't know what parents can do.

To inform, to tell. Does education about drug addiction help?

I think that because of too much information many people started to use drugs. When there was no information, there were just a number of people who used drugs, but then they started to educate, to inform and it was like an advertising. Teenagers just wanted to try what's so different and dangerous in that. When I started to use drugs I knew every drug addict by face, there were not so many of them. But now... there are a lot of them and they are becoming younger and younger. When we started we were 16 and we were exceptions, the youngest ones. Now there are even 13 year old heroin addicts.

Would you agree to educate people in future?

No, I don't think it works.

Are there many things that irritate you?

Yes. Sometimes everything. I just go along the street and everything irritates me. Cars, people. Seems like they are looking at you like from above. Probably they are not, but that's how I see them.

Does routine bore you more than others?

Everything is routine for me, so it bores.

Can you describe your day before you start using drugs?

I woke up at 7, went to school, that went in for sports, then home, homework, dinner. Then I went out with girls, friends or just for a walk. Then home and sleep.

And now?

Now... like yesterday. I came here, got my methadone, then went home and watched TV for the whole day. Nothing special...

Do you feel life is useless?

For me yes.

Do you think people's attitude to drug addicts is normal here, in Estonia?

It is not. And I think it must not be normal. There is nothing normal in it. Those people are sick. None of them have chosen to be drug addicted by himself, they were very forced by different circumstances. We are sick, our mind is sick.

What is the most important and valuable in your life?

Important or valuable?

Valuable.

My mom. I treasure and love her. Definitely my parents. They are everything I have.

Interviewer's (female Latvian) comments:

"Maxim didn't take his jacket and hat off; he sat and at once started to smoke a cigarette. His nervousness and tension was seen in his physical appearance, he played with the ciga-

rette and rather nervously shook the ashes off it. At the very beginning we told a little bit about ourselves, where we are from, what our names are and why we are here. Maxim was rather responsive and that helped us a lot and in a way tore down the possible barrier and distance between us.”

“First thing that surprised me was the fact that he is a normal person, in many ways just like me and all the other young people around. He used to study, he had some future plans, ideas, interests and he even had a girlfriend, so at this point a majority would identify with him. It seemed that almost everything changed on the day he first tried hard drugs, as if an old life stopped and was changed to a different one. I was expecting to meet a total society’s outcast, an angry, negative and full of suspicion person, more like the one that is usually presented to us in mass media. However, in front of me was a very sensitive person who was just truly lost and needed professional help. Beneath the surface that is seen to an eye there is a young man who longs to love and be loved just like each one of us. It’s true when people say that eyes is a mirror to one’s soul. Maxim was a good example of that. He was being very frank and open and didn’t view us as a potential threat or someone who has come to look at him from above. I was afraid of that, so during the interview I was trying to sound as natural as possible and be as sincere as I can, so that he would see me as a young person just like him. Just a short sentence was needed to break the ice or a possible wall that was built by my suspicion and prejudice towards him. When asked what is the most important and valuable thing in his life, he answered “Mother”. That’s when I identified with him and felt like saying, “I know what you mean. I know just how it feels.” This was one thing that made me realise he was a normal person, it’s just that at some point something went terribly wrong and now this young man is lost.”

INTERVIEW #13: With Ivan (Russian-speaker, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

Yes. Well, I don’t know.... Yes.

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

Well... It was interesting to test it, find out what is it. It was long ago. First, it was ‘weed’. The first time I injected myself was when I was 18 years old, at my birthday - amphetamines. After amphetamines there were drugs made from poppy. Then heroin. This is the second time I am taking the methadone treatment.

Do you talk openly with your parents?

Of course. When I was on the needle, I wasn’t communicating with my parents at all. Then... how could I explain, you don’t need parents at all. Well, I almost wasn’t at home all the time. I was just sleeping at their place. Then there were only conflicts. They knew, of course, but what could they do? I wasn’t 15 or something...

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

They are lost people. It’s all over with them. I don’t know what makes you start using drugs. I don’t know. Different causes. Hey, I can tell you the impressions, if you like. Well,

it's a flight. A flight. You get virtual experiences from ecstasy, amphetamine. Opiates - in blood. Feeling sweet, want to sleep. Heroin - sleepy moods.

Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

No. No, no, it's not because of that. I know some drug addicts now, who are 12 years old and less. You know, from the district where I live, I started injecting the last from everybody, on the whole, from everybody. I know 2 brothers who are just beginners now. The younger one was sniffing glue from 8 years old. For 5 years. He's got asthma now and is passing to something harder. Their parents are alcoholic.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

What would stop them? Well, I don't know. Maybe unless all the drug dealers would be put in jails. I don't know, what else could you do? Put the drug user in prison. Because sooner or later, the drug user goes to prison. They have to get money somehow, so they all are criminal. If you are in some gang, and they are putting pressure on you, saying 'look, how bad you feel, all body's wringing and breaking, and you can easily fix that, just get money.'

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

All these LSD, amphetamines, ecstasy, etc, they are not really drugs, just something to test in the disco. And heroin... Heroin is different, you inject yourself a month or so, and you're lost. What month, actually 2 weeks are enough. After you try heroin, you wouldn't want any ecstasy, amphetamines etc. Of course I make a distinction. For example, amphetamines are a soft drug, heroin is harder. But you also get more pleasure from heroin.

How did you find school? What would you change first in school if you had the power?

I liked school. It was fun in it. Studying didn't go so well, but school was a good time. I studied until 14 years old, then tried to study in some other educational institution, but it didn't last. Now for 5 years I haven't had a job. I would like lessons not to go like usually. Like abroad, you know, in the style of a game, then it's more interesting.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to?

Yes, I do.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time? Do you trust your friends? Do your friends understand you?

Basically, friends stay the same, but I wish not to communicate with those who are on the needle so much. Before all my friends were drug addicts. Now also, many of them. But I have normal ones, too. I have a friend whom I can tell all my worries. I don't know about other people. I trust only the closest friends.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

Health, basically. I don't know. Money. If you are not addicted to hard drugs, they cost a lot.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

This friend I told you about, he stopped. He doesn't do it even if you would suggest. Once we suggested him for free, but he refused.

Do you understand yourself?

Yes, of course. If I wouldn't, I wouldn't come here at all.

Do you ever have strange experiences which you would be afraid to admit to anyone?

It depends on the drugs you take. If you take some hallucinogens, then of course, you'll have these experiences. For me it was long long ago when I was sniffing glue, then I had some strange funny vision. I thought that I was dead and saw the world from aside. I was a little wheel, pink one, every person in this world was a little pink wheel, the entire universe, me too. I was twisting there with everybody. And then I felt that somebody kicks me out of there, like pressure or something. I felt like all the actions, moves I do are controlled by some-

body, it's like, you know, somebody is telling me to what to do. I felt I was standing on the road when I had this vision, and fell, all my face was in blood. Well it was long ago, so.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I'm using my own needle. I have neither AIDS, nor hepatitis. The hepatitis has almost everybody I know, but I don't.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

Do I think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia? Do I?! I'm certain of that, I'm sure it will increase rapidly, sure in 150, no, 200 percent.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

Yes, I believe true love exists. In the past I was very hurt by one girl. She acted with me not very nice, cruelly. But I'm sure that it's all in the future.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls think, feel and act?

Of course there is. Well, I don't know. It's kind of difficult to talk with women about women, you know. Well, what... I don't think that a woman and a man can ever be friends. They can be lovers, couple, whatever, but never friends.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

It's always been like that. But the number of girls on the needle is also increasing nowadays. I've no idea.

Could we do it faster, there's somebody waiting for me in the station?

Do you believe in a God?

Not so much. He is for those who are somehow different than me to believe.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

I had some idol from time to time. Now... I don't I guess.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Interviewer's comments:

"After waiting for 45 min., we were about to decide that Ivan will not come that day, when he showed up. Ivan looked different than in the first interview. He seemed drowsy, sometimes worried about something. He greeted us and went to take the methadone dose. After that he just went through the door. After 15 minutes Ivan came back. He seemed to be a bit happier and explained himself as not being in a mood. We agreed to talk."

Would you like to change the world? People? What?

To change something... What could you change? Yes, I would like to change people; I would like them to be kinder, simpler.

Is the world basically a nice place?

Well, yes.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

It is useful for somebody.

Do you have any dreams for the future?

To get free from drugs. Then, I don't know, maybe to get a job. Help parents.

What colours do you prefer?

Black and grey.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day? What do you imagine your children to be like?

Yes, of course. My children would be normal, just like everybody else's. It's hard to tell what my children will be like.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I would try to help them stop, of course, but what could parents do? I would try to look after them before if they are taking drugs. It's hard to do anything when it's too late.

What are the things that irritate you?

When I was on the needle, I was conflicting with my parents all the time. Now it seems ok. They want to help, still, I'm their son, their blood

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

Well, more entertainment, more fun, better living conditions. More money. Also, there's that law, you know, that you don't get citizenship if you don't pass the language exam.

It's stupid, I mean, I was born here and live here, but I'm not, well, kind of admitted.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate young people against taking drugs?

No, I don't want to do that. If someone decides to use drugs, you can't stop him by preaching lectures.

Are there many questions left? I have a meeting in half an hour

If you were the leader of the Estonian government what changes would you make to Estonia to make everyone happier?

I would change this law about citizenship.

Do you like Estonia?

Yes. My motherland.

What does money mean in your life?

Everything. When I was on the needle, if you don't have the money, you're dying.

Money was actually not so important, sometimes you don't realize how much of it you have, counting it in doses. When I think now, how much money I had then...

Would you ever think of going back to get more education?

No, it's too late. I'm 21 now.

What makes you different from others?

Nothing. Only that I was on the needle or what? It depends with whom you compare.

Do you want to do something extraordinary sometimes?

Yes, well, everybody has these bad moods.

If you could wish 3 things what would they be?

Three things. First to get free from drugs. Then a million dollars. Then a miraculous stick, that can make all the wishes come true.

Interviewer's (female Lithuanian) comments:

"Often when people think about the drug addict, they think about him/her as somebody out of this world, different, dangerous, somebody, who they would never imagine in the person of their neighbours, relatives, children, or themselves. The one sentence that was probably used by all the interviewing students of Concordia in the drug centre was I would never say that he's a drug addict. It was said about every person who came through the door of the centre to take the usual dose of methadone

One of the reason why people are taking drugs and then find it so difficult to quit, in my opinion is a lack of social support. In Estonia drug addicts are usually, actually, almost the whole of them are Russian-speakers. The position of this minority class in Estonia is unenviable. The fact that it is so hard to break out of the wheel and consolidate in the society where you are not welcomed, is one of the major causes why people try to run away from reality by taking drugs. The lack of social support is needed much more when a person is already addicted to drugs and wants to get free from them.

Another reason why people start using drugs could be the desire to belong to some kind of community. If the community of a majority of this society rejects them, they are trying to find other ways to fulfil this desire. The gangs that Ivan mentioned above are in a way protesting, opposing the rules and laws of the society they live in (and where they feel unwanted).

The only way they can get the privileges of others is by assimilating. This process needs disunity, you can only get to the 'higher' level one by one. Gangs are in their way protesting against the idea that people different from them are better. They do it in the active way - by breaking the law and regulations, and in the passive way - by trying to get away from reality. The way to do that is drugs.

However, people who are starting to use drugs often are not aware of the consequences drugs can cause to their lives. The lack of information, in my opinion, could be another cause for drug abuse. The information that is known to people, especially teenagers, is basically tempting descriptions of experiences while using drugs. People are often not aware of the consequences of drug abuse because they don't really know them. From my own experience at school I remember that even our teacher of biology admitted that she would like to try some drugs to find out how does it feel. There should be more information about drug abuse's consequences because often drugs are compared with the damage that other unhealthy products cause. As so many things are banned in this world, it's hard to make a distinction, which of them are more dangerous.

Basic causes why mainly Russian-speakers in Estonia are injecting themselves are the depression, alienation, and lack of information. Considering the seriousness of problem and being aware of it's growth in the future, it is necessary to fight with the sub-reasons of drug abuse, not the consequences or results."

INTERVIEW #14: With Deniss (Russian-speaker 23 years old, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

Are you satisfied with what is happening here, about treatment and other opportunities? How are they in reality?

Satisfied with methadone? Right? It's for happiness. Because, without methadone, on dry, you just to sit at home and swallow pills. It's such a torture, those pills they don't take away the withdrawal symptoms. Do you get it? It's pure torment to close yourself, yes and to fret for a week. But methadone you take and you don't feel yourself bad. Do you understand? It's for happiness. Methadone is for happiness. There is such kind of people who went over to methadone...lowered the dose, ended with methadone, and then continued...But, when a human being wants to stop it, well, to get down, methadone is for happiness. It's the nice thing.

And the first time you used drugs, why was it? You saw that others feel themselves great?

No, the first time, when came that poppy...everyone started to try it, and I also wanted it. Everybody felt great. Just curiosity aroused. Tried, felt well, and so...then got addicted. If a human, I say to you now for 100% it is so, if a human being gets addicted, it takes him, breaks him. When he first time tries to 'jump out'('SOSKOCHIT')...he will later get back

to drugs more than once. He will take it many times. Stimulus is needed. Suppose, after you stopped liking it, yes, you should immediately find an activity for yourself. First, like job. Second, the girl should be in the evening, and then it's realistic that the girl will hold you in her arms, and the job. But, there is nothing of that, so you have the whole day free, there is nothing to do, there is absolutely nothing to do, and that's because nothing is to do. Because of that starts that guilt.

How is it with your parents? Are there brothers, sisters?

I'm the only child in the family. At the beginning, of course, no one knew about that. Later, when I already started...the financial problems, of course we turned to parents, so that they would help, because no one else will help. So, we say it to parents, and together start to climb out from that.

Have your parents ever seen you under the influence of drugs, or you haven't taken drugs in presence of your parents?

If to say truthfully, I have such an organism...that I have...to take it with buckets. You can't see it by looking at me, you understand, you can't ever see it by me.

How could you describe in one word those people who use drugs? Do you have the definition?

There is, there is... let's take 100% of dope-fiends. From that 100 %, 10% will stay human beings. Others will stay...dope-fiends: those who you already can't trust, already will let you down, already will deceive the guys ... with whom they spent time together...10 % only will become, stay normal. Will hold themselves back. You know ... there are such guy concepts. We all live, basically, according to guy's concepts. So, for a dope-fiend later these guy's concepts are not existing. They will do everything for drugs...90 % are those who will become Devils, you understand, they don't care. For drugs they will sell [spitting three times over shoulder] their mothers. Dope-fiends will fall down ... you can't trust them.

You said that you used first time because of curiosity? But others?

I said to you that its psychological sickness

How are others? Do you know any people who stopped using drugs?

...Let's take only Lasnamäe. I know almost everybody, during the 4-5 years, in the city, for example, when I started in the city to use that ... people... old dope-fiends they all the time, they stop taking it, after some time they will come again...But now started to add only new ones. That is young ones...Who are 13-14. For example, at 15 years I even didn't know what is weed...Those who were born in 1970 they grew up before, so later they didn't need it. But, now it is so widespread that even 13 year old boys already start to use it...13 year old boys. And at fourteen years they already say, "we can't live without drugs". They say already such things. But, younger ones see that we, older ones, how good it is for us, and they know, 100% know how it will end. Later will be pain.

Do you know someone who has stopped using drugs?

From Lasnamäe I know only three people. Only three people who tied it up. Girl friends helped two of them...it's very difficult to jump out. Very difficult...

What can you say about the school? School, studying, education?

Oh, I finished the school already a hundred years ago...I finished the 12th grade, then in our school there was no such thing...But now young people in schools, without mentioning older classes, already before 9th grade they start doing it. Most hurts that young people start dealing with it.

⁹ i.e. stop using drugs

Are there ways to stop it? Like if you would be a God, and decided to stop it? What would you do? Or you haven't had such ideas?

Young people in schools should stop. There should be, at least once in a week, a class where it is said what the drugs are, and maybe even to show movies where old dope-fiends would say to them that if you try it, it will not work...young people think that they will inject, inject, enjoyment, enjoyment. They don't think that later pain comes, and that later it will be very difficult to 'jump out'. I think that in schools there should be this class where they would teach it. So that young people would already know from schools that they should not play with that...it should already start from sixth-seventh grade.

Now, suppose that you have the pain, do you have someone to talk with, or you don't need it at all?

When I feel the pain?

Yes, when you are really sick.

It will not help, it will not help. I will talk, of course psychologically it will help, but if I'm sick then what's the point to talk. I know he will tell me tie it up, buddy, that it is bad. If I am really sick, then talk will not help, because I think about something else. But when I have got over it then this talking helps a lot. Helps very much.

Do you understand yourself?

You know, I understand myself, not even only I, we all, we all want get rid of it... You have to find a job, so that you will work.... If you have something to do ... if you work till four o'clock, then come home, till I eat it will be five o'clock. Then I may go out, drink a beer, smoke weed, then it's another thing. But, if you don't have anything to do, starting from the morning, nothing to do at all, then...of course, you'll go, will make there some money, and you already have made injections, because there is nothing to do.

Have you had strange experiences, which you think have happened only with you? No one else has experienced it?

...Such terrifying thing happened. On the second time I understood that it is the drugs. Look, I am watching TV in the evening. I turned TV off, and there was a second when I fell asleep ... but I didn't know that I fell asleep. So, I am sleeping, and then happens this, there was such a feeling that someone had been in the room. Such a feeling then they like started to lift me from the bed. Lift me, then I came down. The most interesting thing was that I couldn't move. Couldn't move, couldn't yell. My hand was like paralyzed... Can't yell, yes, can't reach the door-handle, to start yelling, can't open my mouth, can't do anything. You understand? And, I say, I am thinking that I am not sleeping. Then suddenly I think that this is over, thank God. It was the first time. Thanks that that was over. When it happened for the second time, so, then when I woke up, then I understood that I was asleep. Then I understood that... on the first time I was also sleeping. Then I understood that it's because of drugs. So, this thing happened. Terrifying things happened... I really thought that he is really taking me away, the Devil or someone else. Can you imagine? Yes, this is because of drugs.

Are there many people, not only dope-fiends, around you who are depressed?

Problems, stress, they don't know what to do?

No.

There are no?! So, everyone is happy.

No. No.

I mean that they don't know anything, are not sure in the future.

A-a-a this kind. Of course, there are this kind, because you see what is happening now.

Now, no one knows his or her future. You understand? Now, everyone has this problem that they don't know what will happen with them, suppose, in a year. You understand? I say, that now people can't find a job...Before...if you were studying, suppose that you finished 12th grade, went to study somewhere else. To study, to study, to study. Then you have stimulus. If you study till the end, even you will study for ten years, later you will be a 'shit on wheels' and get the money. If you don't study, then, of course, the tube. Then of course, everyone has this kind of problem now. No one knows what will happen with them, let's suppose, in a year. It's difficult to live now.

You said that everyone wants to go down from drugs? Does this mean that drugs made you less happy? Can drugs make a human happier?

Drugs make everyone, everyone unhappy. Everyone. And I'll say, that everyone wants to jump away from them. Everyone. But this is not coming out.

What are you doing to avoid AIDS?

AIDS spreads through needles.

Are you doing anything?

I don't do now, but did before. I use only my own syringe, only my syringe. I don't use condoms! Do not use, but if I...sleep with someone, then I know that this girl, everything is OK. But with kind of cellar ones, with her I will not do it with condom, I will not sleep with her at all.

Do you think that AIDS will increase in Estonia?

It's not likely.

What do your friends think about that?

...Some of them are using condoms. Of course, when they are drunk, you understand, they do not control themselves. But, the dope-fiends that fall down, they, I think, don't care anymore. They may take a syringe from someone. It's nothing if they take, it's only half of the problem. But, now I'll say to you such mischief that you will be in shock. They find on the street dirty syringe, no one knows whose it is, dirty syringe. Dirty, no one knows whose. Can you imagine, they take and use it. Such fallen dope-fiends, they may do this kind of thing.

I understand that it's you, but your friends?

The ones who are normal think like me. But dope-fiends they don't care...They are not thinking about that. They don't think that there is such thing as AIDS. They don't care. It will not touch me, or they even don't think about that. They find a girl there's no condom in pocket, so let it be. Oh, there's more. We have not had contact with AIDS. We don't know... that it's dangerous, of course, as we haven't had contact with it. We don't have in our heads that AIDS is so terrifying, we haven't had contact with it. Those who haven't had contact with it, those don't think much about that. No one from us thinks now much about AIDS.

Does true love exist? What is it?

If to take in a big plan, we, young people, don't know yet what is love. I'm sure of that. But, if you met a girl...you think that you love her, but this is not love. When you are already married, you are older, you have a child, and then this is love. But when you just hangout with a girl for half of year, you sleep with her, walk everywhere with her. You think that you love her, that she loves you, but this is not love...love is later, when you are already married, if in your family everything is "OK, all right"...But we haven't had contact with love. Because, like if we met a girl, she loves you, you love her, you think that you love her. But then there happens something, and you go apart, saying, "Oh, went

apart, so went apart". But there was love. Or just a big habit. Habit. It's a habit. You just were with her a year, you think you love her. But, I say, it's a big habit, that you see her all the time...

Continuing this thing about sex. Are girls different from guys? How they think, feel?

Yes there is a difference. Girls are... yes love exists in them. They love as for real. Let's suppose, when they go apart, guy is thinking, "If we went apart, then there's nothing to do. I'll find another one." But the girl is suffering.

But why according to statistics it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

...if a girl is injecting, so for me, she is not a girl, she is for me disgraced meat, the dirty girl...For me, girls should not even take drugs. If she smokes with her boy friend, she is welcome. Have a smoke, and enjoy it together, that's all right. But, if a girl gets addicted, then she is not a girl anymore. It's a dirty being,

Is there happiness?

If without drugs, then there is happiness.

What would make you happy?

When I jump out completely, find a job, find a girlfriend. It will be for me such happiness, that I have tied it up, that I have a girlfriend, this will be the happiness for me.

Do you believe in a God's existence?

... let's suppose that in this moment I am not a dope-fiend...There is not [a God]. Even if I am a dope-fiend also - is not. Although, I am christened...God exists in books, but so, like there is a war, if God would exist then there would be no war. And, so I think that God is not existing. The same about UFO. UFO, I haven't seen it, and it seems to me that there is not it. But, I do not miss such interesting TV broadcasts. I'm a fanatic of such horror, you know, and other topics. The flying saucer fell down in U.S. There was shown how ... our UFO died there. They showed that freaky UFO-guy. The alien. So, I think that UFO exists.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Would you like to change the world? People? If yes, then what and why?

If it would be in my power...to be a God, then, of course, I would like to change almost everything! But, mostly...it would make no sense to change the world . Because, as the world is, so it will be. The most important is to change people, because people create the world. How people will act... from that will depend our lives. The first thing would be to change ours ... who are standing on the top: all deputies, from them depends all our life. So it is. And finally, most relevant, of course, I would take away all this tripe: drugs. Cigarettes, of course, I would keep vodka also, so that there would be at least some things for people to relax. But, if it would be in my power, drugs, I would lock them away so that there would not be them at all. But, it would be preferable to change our cones: these deputies... everything, I think, depends on them, not on us small people.

Is the world a nice place?

World? I think ... yes...I'll say to you so, that to live, it's such a good thing. It's given to us only once, and we ruin it. But the world and life is a very nice, good thing.

Do you have any dreams for the future? And what you think about the future?

I almost don't think about the future, because to guess about the future, I don't know what will be ahead. But there is a dream about my future. I already said it before, but I'll repeat. My dream is not a big one. I would say that it's a small, obtainable dream. First, to find a good job, so that there would be continual job. Second, to get rid of those drugs. Third, to find a girlfriend, that would understand me, would love me, and to live, organise a small family: I, wife - my loved girl -and of course a child. The most important is that there would be a job, that would be continual salary, so that it would be possible to live your life normally with your family, so that everything would be obtainable.

What's your favourite colour? Why?

Oh, you know, I haven't thought deeply about that, truthfully said. But... I like a couple, not a single colour. Very bright colours... very bright yellow, very bright like orange, very bright red. Of course, those colours are beautiful, but they are not natural. I like the natural colours, like blue, sky blue, green. Of course, I would like to see the world in such colours, in more bright colours.

Do you want to have your own family, and what do you imagine your children to be like?

I may say that a family is my small dream. Of course, we all want to have our own family. I want to have one child - a boy. I would like to educate him by myself. My wife would help but I would bring him up... before it wasn't like it is now. Now, the most important is education, I would do that my son would get the education, finish college, and then would go to an institute or university. Of course, if there is possibility then go further. The more he will study, there will not be anything bad from that, but the future will be secured for him.

What would you do if you found out that your child is taking drugs?

The first thing, I would read a lecture to him, that how awful a thing it is. It's the first thing. Second, I would help him to come out from that life, would help him to come out from drugs forever. I would do anything, that my son would get rid of that. Third, of course, I would ... not let him take drugs, I would educate him so, look after him so that, I think it would ... will not get to that my son would try drugs.

Do you feel that life is useless? For you? For others?

Oh, you know, for others, some people already think that they are dope-fiends, the lost human beings who don't have a future. I don't want to believe that, but I'm afraid of that. So, I want to believe that I will have a future. Our future, my future, future of other people depends only on yourself... there is such a theory that you make the problems for you, yourself.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

The worst are, I think, that all my bad characteristics are only because of drugs. The good, I think ... It's difficult to say...because I don't know about myself... Someone else should look and say what are good and bad qualities. The bad ones, I may know a little, because of drugs. But the good ones, I don't know them, because I don't see them. This is the thing. But they exist.

What things irritate you?

For example?

What irritates you?

Like what? What would you answer if someone would ask that from you?

For example, that people take drugs. Does it irritate you? Or that you can't find a job?

Oh... I understood. Irritate me ... sometimes it irritates me that many young people want to find a job, to start a normal life, so that there would be the stimulus for life. Because, we can't find a good, cool job, we can't even find an easy job. It's even difficult to find an easy job...that irritates me very much, because it's so difficult. I think, that it's the first major problem that we young people face. Because, I think, if we would have a good job, if we would go to work, already it would be the activity to do till the evening. Plus, then we would relax in a completely different way.

What do you think needs to be changed in Estonia to make young people happier?

First, government should think, and give to every young person the possibility to work. If we, young people, start to work, then our time will be occupied; there will be no unneeded spare time. So, we will work, and at the evening we will spend time concentrating on ourselves, on our girl friends, on the weekends we will rest, go to the library, cinema. The most important is to get a job. It's the most important. It is all about the money. Most important is the job.

Would you be ready to speak to young people about drugs?

Yes.

Yes?

Yes. Yes.

If you would be the leader of the Estonian government what would you change to make people happier?

Like it was already in previous question, if I would be one from the government, moreover, a president, then I would immediately...there is almost nothing that you can do so suddenly. But I would achieve it, even if it would take one, two years, but I would achieve that all young people would have a job. Not only for those who, suppose, are plumbers, and have worked for thirty years, that they would get a job. But young ones are not being taken, because they just graduated, don't have any experience. This I would not do. I would give to everyone the chance to work, if possible, free education, if a person wants then let him study for free, because many people who want to study, we may even say that many intelligent people can't study, because everything is to be paid for. This may be the reason why we don't have now much great scientists, writers, because people can't carry out their wishes into reality.

Do you like Estonia? Why?

Let's start from my birthplace. It's Ukraine, when I was one year old; my father took me with my mother to here...So, I started to live in Estonia when I was one year old...I live here already for twenty-two years, because of that...although, I was born in Ukraine, I feel that Tallinn is my homeland. I like and love it. I have lived here all my life, because of that I am happy with my homeland - Tallinn.

Do you want to go to school and get more education?

You know, a lot of time passed since I last studied. Truthfully said, maybe even if I would want, but because I have taken drugs, haven't studied for a long period of time... because there is no big wish I would not accomplish that. Because, the memory is not the same anymore, of course if there would be a big will, and if it would be needed, then I...would put the goal in front of me, to study, to finish, then I think I would have studied ... finished. But, if I would like to learn another profession, then I would, so that there would be a profession to go to work. Overall, of course, I want to work.

What makes you different from others?

I don't differ in anything from ordinary guys, like me. But those who are studying, haven't ever taken drugs, from them I differ very much. They, who are studying in universities, in institutes, we may say that their future is already secured. They don't have anything to worry about. Because of that...of course there are differences, are similarities, it's difficult to list them.

If you could wish three things what would they be?

Three wishes! ... First, is it realistic wish ? Suppose if my first wish would be to give immortality, suppose, to parents, and if possible to everyone. Is this wish realistic? If it would be realistic wish, so that... Overall, immortality is not realistic, because if to give to all people immortality, then add up new born children, then there would be so much people that it would be impossible for mother earth to feed them all. If realistic wishes, then first wish that me ... everything would be all right with my parents, so that they would not get ill, would live long and good life. Second wish, that everything would be all right with me, that I could climb out from these drugs, would find a job. And the third wish is that everyone in the whole world... people would be good, better. That everyone would have some kind of spark of happiness.

INTERVIEW #15: With Andrus (Ethnic Estonian. Occupation - a model. NOT IN TREATMENT)

What made you first take soft and then hard drugs?

I used marijuana just for fun. Tried it first time with my relative and then later with my friends. Was pretty interesting feeling. We laughed a lot and made funny faces. Also drank a lot of water - that seemed pretty odd for me at first.

At what age did you start ?

I think I was at 11th or 12th grade...that is something like 7 years ago.

How did you move to harder drugs? Like heroin or cocaine for example.

I had a small break from drugs when I was working in Europe...When I came back one of my colleagues suggested to me that I would try cocaine. Would help me to lose some weight...I had a small beer belly in front of me when I returned. So it started.

Do you talk openly with your parents or maybe brother-sisters?

My mother has asked me a couple of times about drugs and even warned me about it but I haven't confronted her to say that, hey, I use them. No, I don't talk about drugs with my family...I talk about other issues and things like my work and so on.

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

Among my occupation mostly people use it to lose weight fast. In general I think there is no single answer to your question. Everyone is different.

But what might be the main reasons in general?

You might want to impress someone. You might want to feel better. You might want to appear more attractive. You might want to just get away.

What do you think would stop people from taking drugs?

What has made people stop smoking?!

So you say there is no way?

I'm saying that there are numerous people who start smoking each year and numerous people who stop each year. There are ways - but the method or the thinking against drugs must be thought from 1st grade.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

I stopped using when I was away - had no contact with my friends or any of the sellers. Just kept away. Others...never asked. At one point one friend of mine just said that -enough.

Do you make a distinction between hard and soft drugs?

The effects and the vision is different. there is totally different feeling with cocaine and heroin...you are flying and having sex with angels.

How did you find school?

Mostly disliked school. I'm no fan of 12 grade education...

What would you change/have changed first in your school if you had the power?

Make the classes more active maybe and more student oriented. Leave singing out as a totally useless item and put something like restrictions on chemistry and stuff. Where the hell do you need chemistry in real life? Useless subject.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

Understand in terms of drug usage? Don't care about others... it is their business if they accept me or not. I'm not going to beg for someone to help me or something.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to?

I trust my sister with most issues...there are friends of course.

Do you think most people trust each other?

I don't stick my nose into strangers' business. What I can say about my friends then yes most people - although I have many friends - have a couple of closest friends. So I would say that yes among my friends there is trust between each other.

Do you understand yourself?

There is logic in my decisions. Sometime I only wonder do the visions I see...do they mean anything. I don't understand the visions I see...although they are explicable.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time?

I hope I will have would be the best answer. When I came back from touring I had a lot of people who were bit far from me afterwards. But I think true friends will stay with me.

Do you trust your friends or colleagues? Do your friends understand you?

I haven't let my friends down and vice-versa. So there is trust among my friends and colleagues. The level to where I trust each person individually varies. I for example will not give my bank card to a colleague - not because maybe mistrust but because they are not so close to me as my friends are.

Is there much depression among your friends?

No, I don't think so. There are people who sometimes are feeling bad and so on...but those moods pass. On the other hand I wouldn't call people really that happy either. People are just getting along with life.

Do drugs make you happy?

Drugs have a place in my life. I would but them under passion and desire.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

That is a somewhat problematic issue. I always try to avoid unsafe sex and other items such as needles. What I basically do is that I have always with me some amount of condoms and I always have used a clean needle. In Europe the situation I think is better than what I have seen here. Usage of heroin in form of powder is better in case of avoidance... although the feeling is different.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

I'm afraid there is. People have to think more. I think there should be some sort of free needles in either hospitals or in AIDS prevention houses.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

Love is something we have to define for ourselves. I can't tell what love means to you, and you can't define love to me. Love is a state where you care only about other side of you. I'm not so certain about true love – that it exists. True love I think is the one whom you marry.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day? If so, what do you imagine your children to be like?

Sure I hope to have family. I would like to try African women before that and later get married. Have thought about children...maybe they will be black

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I think we all have made mistakes. And we all have stolen apples from a neighbour's garden. So if they take drugs I would explain what and where it leads them. According to an article I read in some magazine about every 4th child has tried drugs. A bit overestimated but still. The world is no wonderland to live in.

Do you like Estonia ?

I would prefer some other place to live. Sure I have seen nicer and worse places...Estonia is my home and I will always come back here. But I really like the city of Paris and Vienna. Nice places to live.

Would you like to change the world? People?

I think if all nations would live – this is utopia it will never happen but – in same level as European countries do then that would be something to aim to. So I would like to change the living standard in other countries - and in Estonia as well.

If you were the leader of the Estonian government what changes would you make to Estonia to make it a better place?

I would speed up the process of joining the European Union. It is nice when you can travel in so many different countries and you don't have to show your passport all the time.

What makes you different from others?

I have got a fairly good income. Not exactly president of Hansabank but still pretty ok. So I'm relatively rich to enjoy life...and the enjoyment is what makes me different.

What does money mean in your life?

It is good to have a salary and so on. Yeah it means pretty much. Can seduce some girls and can travel with money.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls, think, feel and act?

I think there is not. Both have there weaknesses and strengths.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

Yes they have.

And the attitude...?

I think both desire sex after some point in their life. Guys are maybe more active when they are young while the sexual peak for women comes at age of 40. But sex is sex...both do it. If there is a girl at nightclub and you go and talk to her...then later when you move closer....some 90 per cent will not reject you.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

Around my colleagues and friends it is not so.

Why are there many girls who are heroin addicts ?

I think the reason is the same – they want to lose weight. If you have been “out” for a while then in order to be back you have to be in shape. Heroin helps to reduce weight.

What makes you happy?

I make myself happy. If I get something right or if I'm having a good time with my

friends then that makes me happy. Regardless, with or without drugs. If there is a party then drugs are one part of that...and they help me relax as well.

Do you think most people are happy?

Most people are so so. They are not happy and they are not sad either. They are getting along with life.

Do you ever cry? Cry often?

No, I do not cry. Do I look like the person who will cry?

What makes you feel most sad?

I have been most sad when I lost a friend. It is always sad to lose someone close – I mean not that they are dead or something but when they move to another place you don't see them as often as you would like.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

In the job I have I always have some role model or figure in my head. I don't like to be that role figure in my personal life...

What colours do you prefer? Why?

You can not prefer one colour. Colours should be changed according to moods and other things like events and other clothes. You don't put white socks and black shoes.

I think my favorite colour would be...grey.

Have you ever felt life is useless? For you? For others?

Life has had its ups and downs. Life is something we experience only once. I have had friends who have screamed that they want to die...and I have fallen down as well and prayed for god. When nothing happened I felt pretty lousy. That might have been my only moment when I felt something like that. It happened in my teenage years.

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bores you more than other people?

I can't imagine routine life. My life is pretty moving and in general I think life is routine to those people who wish to make it routine. There is always a possibility to make it more interesting.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

The drug thing is one of my worst qualities - also the short temper. I'm maybe not so devoted to one woman as other men are. That is not a nice quality. Nice qualities...it is hard to point out what you like about yourself. I would pass that question.

What are the things that irritate you?

The poor living conditions where some people live. The people who talk of things they don't know. Some say – this is very fashionable right now in Paris. Like hell! It was fashion six months ago.

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

There is a lot to change. Everyone likes a free ride.

So we should offer more free services?

To a certain extent yes. Why not promote young people more than others?

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

I first have to get the demon out of me then I can think about others.

Do you want to do something extraordinary sometimes?

Sure. Bunji jumping sound nice and other things. Want to do some sport activity like canoeing, riding etc.

If you could wish three things what they would be?

For me? I would like to have nice life in future. That's all...

INTERVIEW #16: With Vladimir (22 year old Russian-speaker, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

We just have to experience everything in our life. Therefore, I did it with my friends.

Do you talk openly with your parents or maybe brothers/sisters?

Yes, we have open relationships. They know everything about my problems with drugs.

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

I think 80 % of people use drugs. Russian-speakers mainly.

Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

No.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

Well, I do not know. You need to change the whole way of your life. It is very difficult from psychological perspective.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

I do not know such people. Actually, I know. They started to believe in God.

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

Heroin makes me calm, but other narcotics more lively.

How did you find school? Like/ Dislike?

When I had to go to school, I did not like it. I wanted to finish it as soon as possible. But I would like to go to school now.

What would you change first in school if you had the power?

Nothing. I do not care.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

Yes, people understand me.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to?

My mother.

Do you think most people trust each other?

Certainly not.

Do you understand yourself?

Sometimes not.

Do you ever have strange experiences, which you would be afraid to admit to anyone? Like energies from another world etc?

I do not experience such things.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time?

No, I do not think so; they will be absolutely different.

Do you trust your friends?

I do not have any friends. I have a brother.

Does he understand you?

Yes.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed?

Well. They all have their own problems. All people are very closed. Nobody takes care of you. Everybody thinks of himself.

Are people your own age happier or less happy than adults?

No. Adults are happier.

Do drugs make you happy?

No, you just forget your problems. You go into your own world.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

What do I do? Nothing. I did injections with my own syringe. I had my own. I did not give it to anybody.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

No, I do not think so.

What does love mean?

Well, relationships. When you love somebody. You cannot live without him/her. You understand each other.

Do you think true love exists?

Yes, I guess.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

No, different. Guys think differently, not like girls.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

I do not know. Maybe they have more problems.

What makes you happy?

Me? If I could stop taking drugs, I would be much happier.

Do you believe in a God?

In God? Yes. If you believe in God with every piece of your heart then he can help you. I cannot yet believe in God as I would like to and do what he tells us to do.

Do you ever cry?

To God? Yes. It happens sometimes.

What makes you feel most sad?

Everything. Life.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

No.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Would you like to change the world?

No. I have enough problems of my own.

Why not?

God has created the world as it is now. It means it has to be like that as it is now.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Estonians visit more discos, but Russians prefer instead to meet at someone's apartment and take drugs there.

Do you have any dreams for the future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

First, I would like to stop taking drugs. What next, I will see then.

What colours do you prefer?

None.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one-day?

Yes.

What do you imagine your children to be like?

I will try to keep them far away from drugs.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I would try to stop that.

Do you feel that life is useless? For you?

I want to start to believe in God, to find the reasons to live.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

I cannot say that right now. I suppose my friends know that.

What are the things that irritate you?

My ex-friends with whom I started taking drugs.

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

To help them to find a job.

What extra facilities in the environment would you like to see for teenagers?

I cannot say right now.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

Yes. I do not want others to have such a destiny as I had.

If you were the leader of the Estonian government, what changes would you make to Estonia to make everyone happier?

I am not interested in politics.

Do you like Estonia?

Yes.

Why?

It is good to live here.

What does money mean in your life?

I do not have money very often. We need it to manage our lives

If you had a possibility not to go to school, would you?

It is too late for me to study.

What makes you different from others?

Nothing, I guess. I am just like other people I know.

Do you want to do something extraordinary sometimes?

Of course.

If you could wish three things what would they be?

Stop taking drugs; find a good job that is all.

Interviewer's (female Estonian) comments:

“Now this boy says he has no meaning to live and that he tries to believe in God in order to find a meaning in life for himself as he claims he lost the meaning to live thanks to drugs. I am not so sure about that. I think he could not see any purpose for living before first taking drugs. I believe very many people live without any meaning in life.”

INTERVIEW #17: With Marek (Russian-speaker 19 years old, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

Are you happy with the facilities available drug users to get off drugs?

I am not happy that I have to come here, but it's the only way not to feel that I need an injection. I hope it will help.

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

With friends, for company. Three years ago, on poppy, then I had felt terrible pain¹⁰ about five times.

Do you talk openly with your parents or maybe brothers/sisters?

At first they had no idea, but now they know everything. When they found out that I'm injecting they turned away from me, they don't want to know me, because I'm injecting.

Why do you think people use drugs in general? Are teenage years a time of crisis?

It depends on with whom to hang around, whether good relations with drug-dealers. Of course it is a time of crisis.

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

There is a distinction - dependence.

How did you find school? Like/Dislike? What would you change first in your school if you had the power?

I didn't like school. I don't know why.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

Nobody except my friends, because they've tried too.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to? Do you think most people trust each other?

No, I can count only on myself.

Do you understand yourself?

Not always.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed? Are people your own age happier or less happy than adults?

Yes, when you inject, you have to pay for another dose, there is no way out, you have to steal.

Do drugs make you happy?

Yes. When I took 'black' (poppy).

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

[No answer]

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

Don't know.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

I have never loved anybody in my life. I don't understand that feeling. I don't know what to answer. Three years from my life are just lost.

What makes you happy?

When I know that I'm not dependent on anything. For now only that makes me happy. And when I don't have a headache where to get money from.

¹⁰ After not having an injection for a long time

Do you believe in a God?

Yes I believe and rely on God, I think it's good.

Do you ever cry? Cry often?

Twice in my life. When my grandfather died and when my father died.

What makes you feel most sad?

Drug addict girls, who are pregnant. Teenagers become worse and worse.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Estonians are cowards.

Do you have any dreams for the future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

Dreams? Yes, to work, to have steady payment. Family, children. More relatives.

What colours do you prefer?

Green, does that mean something, is it good?

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day? If so, what you imagine your children to be like?

I want to have two guys. I don't care what they would be like, I would love them anyway.

What would you do if you found out that your children took drugs?

I think I would be able to prevent them from that.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

The nicest is that I'm generous, and the worst - I have bad habits.

What are the things that irritate you?

Indifference and impudence from other people. Many things irritate me.

What extra facilities in the environment would you like to see for teenagers?

Some sports, pool. Anything to make the time run faster.

Do you like Estonia? Why?

More or less. They do not like Russians, there are normal Estonians, but mostly adults.

If you had a possibility not to go to school, would you? If you have left school would you ever think of going back to get more education?

I would go back, at least because of the communication with other people.

Interviewer's (female Russian-speaker from Latvia) comments:

"I interviewed a 19 years old guy Marek. At first I was a bit afraid and did not feel myself comfortable in asking all these questions, but after some time I realized that the guy was very calm, kind and eager to share with us. First Marek's words were: "I hope that it is not for the police, I don't want to have any connections with the police". But after...he smoked a cigarette and was more relaxed and ready to talk. Many times he was talking about his family I could see tears in his eyes.

Marek somehow felt sorry for his past, he retold that when he didn't have money for another dose he just began to take or steal some valuable things from his own house, sell them in order to get money for heroin, and he lived that way for about three years, though he didn't tell his mother about it.

When I asked him about his wishes he answered that he wishes to have a family and children. It sounded like that guy really wants to begin new life, and tries to do everything in order to become a normal, healthy person. It sounded so truthful and believable that he really wants that. I cannot deny that and in fact he was so convincing that I believed him."

INTERVIEW #18: With Boris (Russian-speaker 18 year old, Attending methadone maintenance centre).

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

In the hospital in Tallinn on Vismari Street they behave with you like with animals or worse. There are always long queues to get there, about one or two months. My minimum queue was three weeks. In Finland everything was different. There is a sport hall and swimming pool; you are offered to do some work on wood and doctor's attitude to you is like to a human. You can visit this "AIDSi tugikeskus"¹¹ only from 18 years old. I was 16 when my mother brought me here and doctor said that he could not help us. I have to be 18. This is ridiculous. Am I supposed to take drugs two more years and only then to come here?

How did you find school? What would you have changed first in your school if you had the power?

I finished school somehow. Some teachers even increased my grades for me just to finish the school and not to stay for the second year...While studying there - it just infuriated me. But thinking today I would probably like to come back to school.

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

I heard about drugs, I saw it in the movies and wanted to try. In Russian, we have a good saying for that: 'Forbidden fruit is sweet'.

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

In general because there is nothing to do - no work, no youth centres, and sometimes - even parent's indifference. Also sharp feelings.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

My mother. She tries to help - we talk quite openly with each other. I am sorry for her.

What do you think about getting off drugs for her sake?

To make it for somebody is nonsense. First of all, you will go to the hospital because of mother; then you will not show yourself at home after slipping the drug in, for mother not to see you; but soon you will not care about her feelings anymore. You are able to stop taking drugs only if you, by yourself, decided to do so. Only you, nobody else.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

First is to find a job. One friend of mine almost stopped taking drugs. He got a job now. I also want to find a job for getting off drugs. Job getting will make me busy, I won't have much free time to think about drugs, I will do my business and distract from drugs. But who needs a drug addict with no education? It is possible to find some job only through relatives or acquaintances.

Do you make a big distinction between soft and hard drugs?

Imagine a swamp with a board across it. If people do soft drugs, they are walking along this board. Hard drugs are the swamps by themselves. If people do hard drugs they fall from the board and find themselves in the swamp going deeper and deeper down.

Do you have anyone whom you can trust and talk about your stresses to?

First my mother. (After thinking a bit more) I have one friend. He is in jail now. I can say that I trust him. But I will say nothing to anybody about my stresses. My problems are my own. I will overcome them only by myself. I understand myself.

Do you ever have strange experiences which you would be afraid to admit to anyone, like energies from another world?

¹¹ Kopli methadone maintenance centre

...By using some specific drugs people have hallucinations. Once I had a vision that worms are crawling through my veins. This situation ended for me in the hospital, as I was shouting that I have worms moving through my veins.

Do you have any dreams for the future?

A lot of money and finding a job.

Are people of your age depressed? Are they happier than adults are?

I think all people of my age are depressed. I don't know about the adults. They have their own problems.

Do you think most people are happy?

I think it is 50/ 50. I don't know if they are pretending or not.

Do drugs make you happy?

No, they don't make me happy, they make me more funny.

What makes you happy then?

Money makes me happy. If I could have one million dollars now, I would probably be totally happy. But generally I am a lucky man - I steal for four years and never have been put in jail. My mom told me that I was born in a "shirt".

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I have my own syringe to avoid it. I've had enough of hepatitis. But if I will become HIV positive, I will do such immeasurable things, and finally I think I would just make a "golden injection" ¹²

Do you ever cry?

I cried only when I was little. Now I can't even remember last time I did it.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

Love is something on the brink of fantasy. I don't think that true love exists, I believe more in material love. I need money for drugs - I go stealing, then make an injection. When you are high you don't need anybody beside you.

Do you think that guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

Don't know.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls think, feel and act?

I don't know.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

No

Do you feel that life is useless?

Life is silliness. I would never made up such thing as life.

Do you believe in a God?

There is no God, He is not real; I cannot touch or see him. I do not believe in it. My grandmother is trying to make me to believe in God, to go to the church. It is ridiculous

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers, who are heroin addicts?

I don't know why, I heard statistics, which told that 98% of drug addicts are Russians, and only 2% - Estonians. I can't say why, I just know that Estonians use mostly only soft drugs.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one-day?

I live mostly for the present and never thought about it. Maybe in the future but my wife has to be clear

What you'll do if you find out your children take drugs?

I'll get them! Of course try to explain to them what it is. Maybe mention that I was also using drugs. But I can't give recommendations; they have to come to the conclusion by themselves only.

¹² To overdose

Do you think that the routine nature of everyday life bores you more than other people?

I didn't ask the others. But people can get bored of using drugs. I am bored.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

Well, the worst are laziness and lack of willpower; can't think of any good qualities.

What are the things that irritate you?

I've already told you - work.

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

Erase it from the world's map. Even from the earth.

Maybe some extra-facilities in the environment for teenagers?

Yes, drug pills in a free sale in drug stores!!

Will you educate younger people against taking drugs?

No.

Imagine you are the president of Estonia. What would you change to make everybody happier?

Nothing. I would be thinking and doing everything only for myself.

Do you like Estonia?

In general it is so-so, normal, but Estonian climate is shit. I would prefer to live in Finland or Germany. You know why? Because there are large social benefits. This is good. You can live on this benefit and even not work, and you still will have enough money. Money means everything in my life.

Would you like to go back to school for getting more education?

Actually, I was thinking about that, but I have no desire.

If you could wish three things what would they be?

First of all one million dollars. Just a lot of money. Then it took some time for him to think of second wish. Finally it was: "To return back that day when I first tried drugs and cross it out from my life. So I would never have tried them..."

Background observations of interviewer:

"Boris has drug experience from 14 years of age, finished 9th grade. Boris speaks Estonian quite well and has Estonian citizenship. Already has a suspended sentence and has hepatitis B and C like most of the drug addicts."

INTERVIEW #19 With Erkki (Ethnic Estonian, active heroin user, age 22. NOT IN TREATMENT)

Has any drug campaign had any effect on you?

Not so far (smiling). Don't really see the danger of using drugs.

So you believe there's no danger of using drugs.

You can put it that way. There is danger in every item in life – the question is what is more dangerous and what's less dangerous. 'Hero'¹³ is not the best one for your health but what is? You have same probability to get hit by a car than to die using 'hero'.

You don't believe in any of the studies that say drug addicts die younger? Because drugs kill?

People die for different reasons. The drunken alcoholic can also die at age of 30 and still

¹³ i.e. Heroin

alcohol is wildly sold and advertised. Nicotine kills as well – and Phillip Morris keeps making more. Why are they not accused of murdering of people? And why are the people who sell drugs put into jail for 5 years?

Maybe that is based on generally accepted norms in society?

In what society? The shit hole we live in? Nothing accepted here. Not in general anyway.

But there are some things you do and some you don't?

Ok there you have a point. I don't kill people. And I eat with fork and knife.

Let's get back to heroin - do you use it often?

I use it when I have money. And when I need it. Yes I sometimes need it.

Can you live without it?

Sure I can. Just that there's no incentive. Why should I? Have to have some kind of habit – can't just take everything away.

Who's taking what away?

I do. When I want to I can quit using drugs. And in future I will stop using drugs.

Do you ever have strange experiences, which you would be afraid to admit to anyone either on or off drugs?

And I should tell them to you? Sure I had some experiences that I find...scary. Lets move on.

Ok – what is then the most memorable experience you have had? First thing that comes to your head...either good or bad ?

You really wanna know, hah? Well it is bit...scary...but it was fun also...it was like this:

I felt I was a bird. A beautiful bird. And I fly like I never fly before and most probably never fly. I was on top of my chair in my room and I laugh. It was a nice dizzy moment for me. Then it came – my worst nightmare. Usually I didn't drink when I used drugs. That time I did. And the effect of bad alcohol came to me like a devil sneaks in the night. He never shows – you just know he is there. And when the feeling gets so real you will fall asleep. And in your dreams you will struggle with the devil, and the devil will win every time. All night long. It was fun because it had logic and thought in it...and it was scary because I was really afraid.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed?

There are some that are really messed up and there are some that are normal. In general I think nothing has change much in the last decade. Same amount of crime as 20 years ago – now we just know if something happens.

What made you first take soft and then hard drugs?

I wanted to try was it worth it. So I have tried them from marijuana to heroin. With some I have good, some I have bad memories.

Why didn't you stay with marijuana?

Marijuana had its time. Now I prefer something in a form of a pill or a powder. Much easier to get to the level and stay at the level. And less hangover.

And maybe also more expensive?

They are not the cheapest ones but quality also counts. The feeling is different. And the method is also different – the way you consume.

Do you talk openly with your parents?

About drugs? No. They have their life I got mine – why bother to relate the two ?

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

They open your eyes and make you come to reality. There are some who use it to work longer and stay in shape – but the reality and openness is what counts.

What do you think would stop people from taking drugs? How did others you know stop taking drugs?

The option to try it freely would be one way. If you try legally then it is easier to stop or continue. And if you try it legally then it will take half the fun away so fewer people will get addicted

Do you make a distinction between hard and soft drugs?

The quality, price, hangover and the willingness are different.

Willingness?

Will to take something harder. Example – in order to dance in Hollywood¹⁴ about 2 hours without getting tired would take – what – something like a 2 – 3 cigarettes of marijuana. Instead – if you want to go the easy way – you take a pill and that's it. We all have taken a pill for medicine during childhood. The pill looks similar...not everyone smokes.

How did you find school? Like/Dislike?

Didn't like it. Been in many schools – Transportation school, evening school. Bunch of shitholes all of them. I can read and write after 7th grade why stay longer? No way you ever need the complex mathematical things or the chemical components of certain items. There's no point of education.

What would you change/have changed first in your school if you had the power?

Nothing helps in those schools. Besides - let others suffer also! Maybe I would make it so that maths and other "needed" subjects have less importance in school – because it is so in the real world.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

I always have had friends who are with me.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to?

Got a couple of good friends. They know my story and they are my old schoolmates. Working together in the same place as well.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time?

I wish I will have the same friends. Life moves on I know that and you can't always have your way. I will do what it takes to keep my friends but nobody can be sure what happens in 5 years.

Do you think most people trust each other?

We're not so far apart – in my opinion. If there's someone who you dislike you move away – free country. It is obvious that you don't tell everything about yourself maybe never - more frequently after you know the person for half your life.

Do you understand yourself?

I'm breathing – I'm alive, I'm thinking – I'm Homo Sapiens. Sure I know myself. Know why I feel this or that way – who else should know but me?

Do your friends understand you?

They know what I use and they stick by me...so I guess they understand me.

Can they see if there is something wrong? By the way you act?

Sure they can. Then we sit down in the local bar and discuss about the issue. Or drink ourselves silly. I got a credit in one bar near my place – drink as much you want basically and later you pay the amount. Very convenient.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed? Are people your own age happier or less happy than older people?

Well, Estonia has a high number of suicides, meaning the people are depressed. People of my age I think are less depressed than older people. We have the opportunities

¹⁴ Nightclub in Tallinn

and – ideally – the education to do what we want. Older people are usually left over from communism.

Is the depression a reason why people use maybe more drugs than 10 years ago?

Don't think so. People are depressed because they have nothing to do. I mean get a life or something! If you are depressed then don't complain about it. Jump into the river or something. Got one friend who gets drunk feels sorry for himself and complains. Come on! Don't drink, or do something to fix the problem.

Do drugs make you happy?

They make me see the colours and enjoy the fullness of life. If you want to call that happiness then go ahead.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

Nothing special. There isn't a big risk in Estonia. Don't fuck a sailor!

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

Nope. If you stay out of whores and try to avoid Kopli you'll be ok.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

Love is something beautiful that happens once or twice a life. Something in your head will dance and make you happy. You wanna scream and jump. That is true love. One more thing – love is between opposite sex. No gay thing – it makes me sick.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

No, they have opposite attitudes. Men hunt women and vice-versa. Based on my experience, girls talk more about it and more openly than men do. Men only talk when they are in a large group and someone wants to impress someone. One of the reasons to use drugs is also this – sex is fucking GREAT. You can hit on women basically.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls, think, feel and act?

Well I'm no girl, can't tell from the both sides. What I think is that men are more closed than girls. Women have maybe one or two good friends whom they tell everything while guys have a group of friends whom they tell a little to everyone. And this little they even may tell one story to one person and another story to another friend – meaning if you put all the stories together you get the whole story.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

Guys are more willing to risk and they are not so afraid of needles. Also I think guys have greater tolerance to any fun – meaning they can party longer and still be ok in morning.

What makes you happy?

You once asked that already.

Ok...but are there something other then drugs?

I enjoy a lot of things. If I get laid...my day is a lot better, if I win the lottery I'm happy. Man is one weird animal – needs lot of things.

Do you think most people are happy?

I think people have their moments. You don't see anyone who would smile all the time...maybe a comedian in a circus. I would say about 30 per cent of a day people are happy, 50 per cent they are ok and rest they are just bored or doing something meaningless.

Do you ever cry? Cry often?

Sentimental question. Why the hell do you ask that?

Just curious to know.

When I have a bad bad bad hangover I have cried because it helps. Once I have felt that there is no one to wait for then I have cried. Does that answer your question?

Yes it does. What makes you feel most sad?

When I have waited for someone – anyone – to talk to me. I was ill – had a fever and stuff a while ago – and no one called me or visited me. Then I was sad.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

Not really. Always want to be like Arnold or Stallone but it is something different.

Is the world basically a nice place?

For me or for everyone. For me – pretty ok. I live in a nice neighborhood. I would hate the world if I would live in some Lasnamäe or Kopli. Ghetto places.

Would you like to change the world? People?

As long as I'm fine or ok I don't care about others. If some 'nigger' dies in Africa – who cares. I'm no saviour nor a God. Let the world stay as it is and strongest will survive.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Don't like that nation – move on.

Do you have any dreams for the future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

Sure I've got dreams. I want to be the president of Estonia. Sounds like a nice occupation and paycheck is not so bad one either.

Do you like Estonia?

If we would have less ghetto areas and less Russians it would be even nicer. Get Russians out and restore the original border areas – that would be super.

What colours do you prefer? Why?

Every colour there is. I think my favorite ones are black and red.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day? If so, what do you imagine your children to be like?

That is distant news for me. I currently enjoy sex – haven't thought about family yet.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

Why do you think I want children? I will make my self a tattoo- "no kids." Maybe then I want to have children if I'm really in love...but if there is some two month relationship and the girls says - hey pregnancy. I would let her get rid of the child.

Do you feel that life is useless?

Life is as useful as you make it to be.

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bores you more than other people?

The work gets on my nerves – have to admit that. So the answer is yes.

How will you make the work or routine easier to handle?

I will have a party once and a while. Makes you feel like it's the weekend.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

I have had stress lately, also I have some sleeplessness and I get nervous once in a while – when things are not moving. But on the other hand I'm a friend to many and I'm a good listener. I'm good at fixing things.

What are the things that irritate you?

Pressure is one thing. Don't like when people rely on me to do everything.

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

Kick the pensioners out of the government. Why should I let other older Russian grandma or grandfather sit on public transportation ? Public transportation is also one thing that irritates me.

What extra facilities in the environment would you like see?

More transportation vehicles. At 5 o'clock it is impossible to get some air on the tram.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?
Interesting question haven't thought about it. Do you think they will let me there? Maybe – depends on who asks and to whom I should give lecture. Probably not but never say never.

What does money mean in your life?
Money is something of importance. You ...basically it is everything. I don't go to work for fun – I want something back.

What makes you different from others?
I get a blowjob more than once a week.

Do you want to do something extraordinary sometimes?
Some assfuck maybe? No, let the world be as it is. A million kroons from heaven sound also nice come to think of it.

If you could wish three things what they would be?
I want to live as a only rich man in harem and enjoy luxury there.

INTERVIEW #20 : With Dima (Russian-speaker 18 years old, Attending methadone maintenance centre)

FIRST INTERVIEW

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?
No, I'm not so happy. You know, here in this centre they accept only those, who are not younger than 18. And I started taking drugs at 14. And by 17 I got bored - and came here. They said I was too young and they cannot begin the cure.

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?
Friends, company - you know. I first tried marijuana at some party, I don't remember - and I liked. You know, it is not so different from simple smoking. But far more pleasant. And I take heroin about two years already. My friends offered me to try heroin - so strong experience, very different from soft drugs.

Do you talk openly with your parents or maybe brothers, sisters?
About what? About some of my personal problems I never say them. About drugs? My mom knows that I'm a drug addict. My mom helps me very much. But my sister - she's too young yet to know that. I don't want to hurt her with my problems.

Why do you think people use drugs in general ?
I don't know people in general. I can say for myself. I want to take everything from life. Living without pleasures is just not worth living. Drugs give me pleasure - and I use them. I don't want to really quit. I just do not want to take heroin any more - all these injections are so troublesome. But ecstasy or marijuana - I will never stop taking them. They just raise the mood.

Are the teenage years a time of crisis?
Yes, I think yes. Is crisis connected to the age? When my father left us, my mom was in terrible crisis. Each person has own ups and downs. Teenagers are just as all other people.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?
I don't know. I have never thought of preventing people from taking drugs. Actually, this experience is just impossible to replace.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

I don't know people who took drugs and then quit. No one ever tried. From our band only my friend and I are taking methadone cure. How it ends - we'll see.

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

What do you mean 'make a big distinction'? They are just different. Marijuana just makes you smile and talkative - great for going to the disco, for example. But heroin is what you feel by yourself. It is so deep and impossible to describe.

How did you find school?

My school? They consider me "difficult" (pause). I've been "difficult" for many years. From kindergarden. And at school - grade by grade - I was always in the list of the difficult.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

I don't know. And I don't really care. The main is that I understand myself.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stress to?

My mom. I have the greatest mother in the world.

Do you think most people trust each other?

No. We all expect that your neighbour hits you. So you hit him first.

Do you understand yourself?

Perfectly. Who can understand you if not yourself. You are together with yourself 24 hours a day, at least you know all your habits ... But no.... Sometimes I lose myself and can't explain why I do this or that. I do not know.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in five years time?

I hope not. From my today's friends I want to see in five years only two. They are real friends.

Do you trust your friends? Do your friends understand you?

I trust my closest friends. If I get into trouble, they do not ask me questions, they just help.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed?

What is many: some are depressed, some are not.

Are people your own age happier or less happier than adults are?

I think, somewhat happier. We are freer than adults are. There are so many things that worry them. They are already unable to relax. Yes, we are freer.

Do drugs make you happy?

Drugs by themselves - no. But they are a part of my understanding of happiness.

What do you use to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I don't use the same syringe for more than once.

What do you think there is a risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

Probably, yes

What does love mean?

Love. I do not know.... I haven't met my real love yet.

Do you think true love exists?

True. I cannot imagine what it means. But I wish it existed. It is... interesting. And, probably, nice.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

No. When you watch the movies of 1950s - there was a big difference. But nowadays - no. We are modern people. I think girls themselves are now very different from the girls of earlier generations.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls think, feel, and act?

Of course, they act and think differently. The guys are the guys and the girls are the girls. They are different in themselves and they act differently.

Why do you think is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

I never thought of it but probably this is more natural for men. Men just need “stronger” experiences.

What makes you happy?

Joyful life. I would be absolutely happy, if I could get from life everything I want. And drugs for me are not happiness in themselves - they are the means. They just keep the mood up.

Do you think most people are happy?

I do not know. Why do you always say “all” or “most”? All people are different. I cannot see them in general - I am not God.

Do you think many people are pretending to be happy even though really they are not?

Probably, yes. At least it is easier to live this way. Nobody asks you stupid questions like “what happened” ?

Do you believe in a God ?

Yes. God does not mean the man on the icon in the church, and faith is not going to the church. God protects every creature, I am not the exception

Do you ever cry? Cry often?

Sometimes... Yes, everyone sometimes cries.

What makes you feel most sad?

When I have to split with my girlfriend because of my drug addiction. When my sister cries. When my mom is tired. When the weather is rainy.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

Ideal person.... Nobody is perfect.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Would you like to change the world?

Of course, I do. I want everybody to be free to do whatever they want and have pleasure. I want to make the world happy. And if I could, I would also make it more sunny. I think people here smile less because of grey wet weather.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Russians. I don't know. I know that if Estonians take heroin, they take it through the nose (laughs). I mean, they sniff it. But Russians, I think, are more depressed. They have more problems. It is easier for Estonians to “survive” here, so why should they help themselves with drugs?

Do you have any dreams for the future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

I never try to think of the future. I am afraid of it.

What colours do you prefer?

I don't have favorites. Sometimes I like white, sometimes I like black. Sometimes I prefer bright colours, sometimes they seem annoying.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day? If so, what do you imagine your children to be like?

In future I want to have my family. I want to have many children. I will do everything to make them happy.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

Beat up his ass (laughs, but suddenly becomes serious). I would explain that it is not the right thing to do. I will never tell my children about my addiction. Yes, I can tell them I tried drugs, but about addiction...

Do you feel life is useless? For you? For others?

Life is only useless if you can't make use of it. People, enjoy your life!

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bothers you more than other people?

I think everyone is now so much depressed. Nobody is able to make use of life.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

I am joyful. I am not stupid. People say, it is interesting with me. What's bad in me? Much. I am probably too selfish.

What are the things that irritate you?

Some stupid little things: when you open beer can, and it spills, when a teacher at school shouts.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

I can't. I am not going to quit taking soft drugs. And if I make some propaganda against drugs without believing - what would it be like?

If you were the leader of the Estonian government, what changes would you make to Estonia to make everyone happier?

To raise wages - all people should have work and enough money. Not to discriminate against Russians. Politicians think only of themselves. But I on their place would think more of people. By the way, they could give citizenship to everybody.

Do you like Estonia?

Estonia is generally nice. But it is too small to live and have fun. I dream to go to Miami. Or somewhere to California.

What does money mean in your life?

You can buy what you need or what you want. But money is a means, not end.

If you had a possibility not to go to school, would you? Why? If you have left school, would you ever think of going back to get more education?

I probably would not leave school. What would I do instead? At least, at school I can talk to people and have fun.

What makes you different from others?

I do not know.

Do you do something extraordinary sometimes?

What is extraordinary for you? Some things that are ordinary for me are extraordinary for others.

If you could wish three things, what would they be?

To meet my real the only one love, to become rich and.... Maybe ... To drop that first time I tried it...

INTERVIEW #21 With Arturas (Lithuanian living in Estonia age 18, NOT IN TREATMENT)

What does “home” mean to you? How do you get along with your family members, do you talk openly with any of them?

There is no home for me, it has always been just a place to sleep and eat. I haven't experienced a close relationship with my mother or my younger sister (we have the same mother). My father is unknown, I found out that my stepfather wasn't my real father...when my parents were getting divorced. I didn't really care about them and neither did they about me. I had no trauma from their divorce. I was always left on my own. And I've always wanted to be left on my own.

How did you find school?

School was like floating, I was changing schools constantly. Friends were changing all the time. I like spending time on my own. Sometimes among groups of people, which constantly change from one to another, often with people a bit or much older than me, they give challenges, share experience, interesting to explore them.

Do you think your friends understand you? Do you understand yourself? Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

No one understands me and it's just the way it is. One could understand me, when anything I do would come as something expected. They are either unable or don't want to. I wish someone could, but not all. I actually don't understand myself, have tried and am still trying, one moment I do, overall don't. I am like a puzzle which has to be gathered together, piece by piece, some of which have to be found, some of which I keep or give away, some I cherish, some are useless... I understand more of my past, but not present or future. I'm actually satisfied the way I am, even though I often surprise myself.

Do you trust anyone? Do you think most people trust each other?

I'm on my own, learning to trust. Most people should have someone they can trust, most do trust each other. There're people who trust me; it's all a matter of a mask. But some people do like and trust me.

Do you have any dreams for the future? What do you think you'll be doing in the future? Do you plan to have a family of your own one-day? Do you think you'll have the same friends in 5 years time?

A lot of dreams, everything is a dream in my head. Future is - whatever happens, spontaneously as always, I'll accept as it is. I believe something comes up and changes everything suddenly and you never know how and when, never expect what it is going to be. No fear for the future. You never know what is going to happen. I don't plan any family of my own one day, just a person to trust. I don't think I'll have same friends in 5 years time, I hope not. I'm going for constant change in the things and people surrounding me.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

Look in the dictionary, into every word and that will be “Love”. For me it is losing confidence, some mixture of hate and love. True love doesn't exist, it's just an illusion.

What makes you happy? Do you think most people are happy or do you think many people are pretending to be happy even though really they are not? Are people of your age happier or less happy than adults?

People understand that they have possessed happiness when it leaves them. When I want to feel happy – I feel happy: I am sad when I want to feel sad. Simple things can make me happy. There is no mask when you are really happy, no need to pretend. The recent event

that made me happy was just a warm sudden rain, which had beckoned me to run outside, feel the rain drops and watch them falling from the sky, not even caring about getting all drenched. The meaning of happiness is different to everyone. For the majority it is money, which they see as some certain freedom. Adults can be happy in the same way as people of my own age.

What do you think is the best age to be?

There is no best age to be. I would always answer “my present age”. Why to skip time?

What makes you most angry? What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

There are none and nothing that makes me angry, that’s one of my positive qualities, which are actually not for me to judge. I don’t let values take over me; there isn’t anything that binds me. Every moment I live as it is, do whatever I feel like doing. The biggest fear in life is to get sucked in a routine of life, become a squirrel in a wheel and one day to wake up and realize that you are racing in a circle.

Do you like spending time on your own? How do you spend your free time?

I like being alone. I don’t distinguish free time from my overall time. Favorite pastimes: readings, writings, poetry, and outings... I see myself as a poet. I write for myself – I leave everything that I write as my memories, they are my only memories. I rarely give them to others to read them and only what is appropriate and possibly understandable for them.

Do you believe in a God?

God is an illusion. Created from fear of the unknown, a need to be ruled by some higher force and own beliefs. They find hope and self-actualization in religion. When you know you must die, it becomes like an asylum for you.

Do you ever cry? Cry often?

I do cry sometimes, when I feel like crying. Sadness comes when I feel that I cannot do something.

Do you smoke, drink alcohol?

I smoke more than I breathe. I drink, it happens often or occasionally. First drunkenness-6 years old, it was fun.

Have you ever dealt with the police?

I have dealt with the police, some treated me in a normal way, once got beaten up. My opinion: they’re just doing their job.

Why do you take drugs?

Drugs are slowly drawn suicide, an escape from unbearable reality, from static and routine environment; they are available all around from drug dealers, friends, in nightclubs and parties. “I choose not to choose life”. Every drug addict has his own philosophy on drugs, not excuse in the eyes of the society, but own unique outlook on reality about why they want to be their own gods and live in an artificially created world. I hope to stop taking them when I’ll find a worthy substitute for this artificial paradise in reality, in which or whom I can believe and will make me be certain in myself. I’m searching; I’m close to one...

Are you happy with the facilities to drugs users to get of drugs?

No. Drug addicts go there for having no other choice. It’s a government, people and surrounding pressure. If there weren’t any pressure, only free will, then it might help.

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

Loneliness, desire to go for something new, to try something out which will make me escape from the depression I had at that time, to escape from reality, to see what is beyond it. Of course, there is a distinction between soft and hard drugs; I’ve tried both almost at the same time. Each is something different.

Why do you think most people take drugs in general? Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

It's the same as asking why do people smoke or drink alcohol. For pleasure and to see life differently. Yes. It's the time when the ideal of your parents withers away, when you realize that they are not all, that they cannot give you everything you look for and need.

What do you think would stop people taking drugs?

It's not likely to be the outside factors, more likely to be the inside conviction.

Do you ever have strange experiences, which you would be afraid to admit to anyone (either on or off drugs)? Like energies from another world etc?

I have, from being under the influence of a drug.

How did others you know stopped taking drugs?

One has committed suicide by shooting in a mortal dose.

Do you think many people of your age around are depressed? Do you often feel depressed?

Not many. Usually I feel often depressed, but not recently.

Do drugs make you happy?

Sometimes.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive? Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS the Baltic States?

I don't care. I have my personal needles to use. In Baltics, there's an increase, but not a big risk.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

Biologically no.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls, think, feel and act?

Yes. What is love for a man could be nothing for a girl. Love for a girl is more sincere and serious.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

Girls may have fewer values, but they are stronger.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

It changes all the time, but I do like having one. I have someone at the moment, but I don't know what tomorrow brings and who might it be tomorrow.

Would you like to change the world? People?

No, because it would be easy to understand and become very primitive, less interesting and challenging. I would leave it the way it is with all its people.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

It can be a case of discrimination of Russians in Estonia, for they have less possibilities and opportunities.

What colours do you prefer?

Classical dark blue, dark green, none of the bright colours.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I shall provide them with proper treatment if it's not too late, if it is I wouldn't give any pressure on them. A house should be a place from which they don't want to run away no matter what

Do you feel that life is useless? For you? For others?

Yes for me, you get stuck too often. For others it depends on themselves.

What extra facilities in the environment would you like to see for teenagers?

A 24 hour public transportation.

What makes you different from others? Do you want to do something extraordinary sometimes?

I want to feel different from others. I'm not like everyone else. Every person is unique, but many don't want to see, hide or never notice their uniqueness, which makes them different from others. I don't want to hide it or show it, I am unconsciously using it. I always want to do something extraordinary, which is often seen as extraordinary for others but for me it is usual, comfortable, romantic or simply I felt like doing it to be honest with myself.

If you could wish three things what would they be? What is your biggest dream?

One is to close my eyes and become whoever I want to become, the other one is to close my eyes and find myself in any place at any time I wish to be. And the last one is that my girlfriend would love me forever as strongly as I do. I don't know which of the three is the most realistic one. My biggest dream I want to find something or always have someone in life for I can sacrifice everything I have and what I am: my mind, my will, my instability, my everything...

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bores you more than other people?

Yes, I need constant change in the place and environment

What are the things that irritate you?

Some daily routine and a phrase: "Calm down!"

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

It depends on young people themselves, on what makes them happy.

Do you consider yourself a strong or weak person?

I want to think that I'm strong, because I believe in myself, I feel strong when I'm on my own. But I feel weak in the society.

Do you ever suffer from yourself?

Maybe physically, I like feeling pain. I hurt myself to feel I'm alive. Mentally I suffer when I do something very unusual and later realize what I have done, what I have lost or what is now impossible to change. I don't regret about it, "regrets don't work", I just suffer.

INTERVIEW #22 With Anatole (Russian-speaker 24 years old)

BACKGROUND: 5 years of drug experience. *"Don't mention my surname in your interview. Maybe I will become famous one day and I do not want anybody to know about my past."*

INTERVIEW

What made you first take soft and hard drugs ?

I started to smoke hash since I was 15. I was told where I could buy it. The drug dealer had an interesting password - "Do you have something to read?" I smoked hash regularly until 18 years; after that we decided to try a drug injection. There were eight of us, but only three tried it. Second try came only after three months. By the time I started to use hard drugs there were only three young men and few elders who did it in our region. Now I know about 150 men doing it. It's all bullshit that somebody, who is using drugs for some period of time

forces or recommends you to do it. When I was at the beginning of my road, old drug addicts kept telling: "Don't do it. Give your dose away. Stop before it's too late." - But I thought that exactly I wouldn't become dependent on drugs. Everybody thinks this way at the beginning. It is hard to talk about some exact dose - more money I have, more drugs I will use.

What about heroin?

Now everybody is on heroin. When I started there was no heroin. But under the heroin the high, kick, is almost the same as under 'black'. I can even make the heroin by myself out of poppy. Only I need a good laboratory. Heroin which is on sale in Tallinn, is not clear, I've heard that somebody mixes it, for example, with rat poison. So, I was using black, then heroin which was much more expensive, then again returned to black. Because heroin just disappeared from sale.

So, first time you tried drugs because of...

... interest. As I have told you, nobody was forcing me to do it. I also received a satisfaction from stealing, when some money was left after I've bought a dose, and I could buy something for myself. Actually, stealing is like a work. We went stealing every day.

How did your parents find out that you were using drugs?

Once they've found glasses with hash in my room. And then I think that by the holes in my veins. I also had such a bad habit that I've put the syringe behind the ear, like a pencil. This factor helped my parents to find out that I was using drugs.

And what did they do?

Nothing. They just submitted to it. My mother still doesn't quite believe me¹⁵. My girlfriend helped me a lot, morally, while I was in the hospital. My mother helped me in material way. I am very thankful to them. I liked puddings and the girlfriend brought them to me everyday. I even put on 9 kilograms weight in the hospital.

Do you talk openly with your parents?

Well, not about everything. For example I don't talk about sex with them, or about where and with whom I drink.

Why do you think people use drugs in general?

Interest. Some of them are just following the crowd.

What do you think stop them taking drugs?

People begin because of stupidity. But every drug addict has a huge wish to quit. They want to become humans but are afraid of 'breaking'. It lasts about one or two weeks...Not everybody can do it. I, by myself, even didn't want to make any injection after the hospital. I only have seen dreams that somebody was offering me drugs for a long time after that.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

I know three people who have quit. Two of them - in the hospitals, one of them is in Russia, and one by himself.

Do you make a big distinction between hard and soft drugs?

Now - yes. They are completely different. While using soft drugs people don't have physical dependence, only psychological one. I know that clear 'black' doesn't make any damage but white drugs ruin people's liver and kidneys. Hash also dries brains. I heard that even doctors do not recommend people who use drugs for 15 years to quit, because their organism just won't withstand it. And as I've told above - people are becoming stupid on white drugs.

How did you find school? And what would you change in your school if you had the power?

¹⁵ after all the failed attempts to quit

School is something stupid. I wouldn't return there. I did not like it at all. I think I would leave only three lessons at school - singing, physical training and laboratory studies. After school I went to naval college...but my exam took place exactly at that time I had to meet with a drug dealer. I failed it. From the college I remember that there was a very good English teacher. We liked her so much...After she was gone, everybody stopped learning English. I've left naval college because of drugs.

Do you have anyone you can talk about your stresses to?

Breaking is a hard stress, I even was thinking about suicide during breaking. But I somehow overcame it by myself. I usually keep everything inside, rarely can speak out.

Do you understand yourself?

Yes. I do. What's in my mind.

Do you have strange experiences, which you would be afraid to admit to anyone?

I saw a terrifying dream when I was little, and this dream repeated when I was on drugs.

Do you think you will have the same friends after 5 years? Do you trust them and do they understand you?

Actually drug addicts do not have friends! They will betray you. One 'friend' of mine betrayed me when he was on 'breaking'. No drug addict will share with you his last dose. I had three best friends. The youngest guy died because of overdoses; two other guys got off and one of them lives now in Moscow, another - here in Tallinn near me. We are still friends. The third guy stayed on drugs and our friendship was broken. My girlfriend is also my best friend. I surely trust my friends and they do understand me.

Do drugs make you happy?

No, people receive the satisfaction only at the beginning. After that it is simply a good feeling - it is warm in winter and cool in summer. Also it is good when there is no breaking.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

HIV positive? Nothing I think. When I was on drugs I used only my own syringe. I've always bought them for future use. While making love I don't have any fear, maybe only in the morning.

Do you think is there a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

Of course. Due to drug addicts there is a huge risk. Hepatitis was a good example of infection spreading among drug users.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

I don't know what does love mean. I cannot describe it. It is something inner. I have an ideal love but not the true one; and I can't say does it exist or not.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

Maybe the same, but girls hide it for sure.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are drug addicts?

Well, it is hard to explain. But guys always drank and smoked more.

Do you think are most people happy? What makes you happy?

There are no totally happy people. People get used to what they've got and after that they want more and more. If everything is ok with me, then the same has to be with my friend. Then I am happy.

Do you believe in a God?

Well, I do, but not fanatically. I think that somebody has made him up for people to be afraid of something. Sometimes I believe in him, sometimes I think that there is no God at all.

Do you ever cry?

I cried when my friend died, I've told you about him already. He was so young. Now, every year when we go to the cemetery, some tears may come out. Strange, but when I feel pain I want to smile, not to cry.

Do you have an idol or ideal person to be like?

No.

Would you like to change the world, people?

To make the whole world as I want it to be. No, that was a joke. I want that there would be no illnesses, no drugs, and no wars. Look how dramatically decreased is the population growth. I want all people to speak one language. I want girls not to hide their wish, but to have the same attitude to sex like guys do.

Is the world basically a nice place?

It is nice in places. But there are dark places also, like rubbish dumps and police stations.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are drug users?

Russians are more brave and desperate. They can steal. Estonians are cowards. They use mostly soft drugs.

Do you have any dreams for the future?

I want to have permanence after I will reach everything I want, and want to have the job that I will like to do.

Maybe you have some particular wish for the present?

I would like to jump with a parachute.

What colours do you prefer and why?

Black - it gets less dirty.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

Parents cannot suppress their children who are using drugs. Nowadays there are terribly many children who are on drugs. I probably will try to explain to my children what it is, maybe mention I was doing it, and how bad it is.

Do you feel life is useless?

Sometimes it is really useless. When I was on drugs I was doing only bad things. But on the other hand, if people would not do bad things - policemen would not have any job to do.

Do you think that the routine nature of everyday life upsets you more than others?

I don't know about the others, but the routine does upset me. And what upsets me most is that there is always not enough money.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

Well, I am kind, honest, I think, sincere, not greedy. I have more bad qualities than good ones, for sure. For example, I know it is bad to do something, but I do it anyway.

What are the things that irritate you?

Mosquitoes and seagulls also. I have a car now and they shit on it every time.

What do you think is needed to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

More a sports ground has to be built; make bicycles cheaper. Sport is also cool thing to do. I like carting and skiing very much.

Do you think sport can help people get off drugs?

Yes. Probably yes.

Would you educate younger people against taking drugs?

- No, I would not do that. I never listened to anybody by myself and I know they won't listen to me.

If you were the president of the Estonia, what changes would you make?

That is a deep question. Maybe I will give more money to everybody, but it is not real; make something cheaper, something more expensive. I would provide everybody with a job.

Do you like Estonia?

I like to live here. It is a very small country, compared, for example, with Russia. What I don't like in Estonia is the climate.

Would you go back to school for getting more education?

Now, yes. I think I would like to finish my studies. Actually I would like to work only as a cook or as a driver in the future. I like driving very much.

INTERVIEW #23 With Maksim (Russian-speaker)

BACKGROUND: Third year student at an Estonian university, 2 years experience in using heroin. Maksim took heroin 5 minutes prior to the interview.

FIRST INTERVIEW

Are you happy with the facilities available to drugs users to get off drugs?

I am not happy because they are often overcrowded. But this is not the problem because drugs are easily available in the recreation centre. People share drugs with each other. And also any person can call a drug dealer whenever he/she wants so.

What made you first take soft or hard drugs?

Curiosity.

Do you talk openly with your parents or maybe brothers/sisters?

No. I don't want them to know I am a drug addict.

Why do you think people take drugs in general? Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

Of course, teenagers tend to use more drugs than other people. It helps to avoid problems. You just don't notice the problem.

Do you make a big distinction between soft and hard drugs?

Yes, of course. You can smoke marijuana without any noticeable consequences for a reasonable period of time. But when you take heroin you just get killed sooner or later. You will die some day. And the reason will be heroin. Overdose or healthy problems will bring you to death. Maybe because heroin and crime are interrelated.

How did you find school? Like/dislike? What would you change/ have changed first in your school if you had the power?

I liked my high school. I was good at studying. I didn't use heavy drugs at that time. I used opiates but it was during summer holidays. First, I used homemade opiates in 1995 when I was 15 years old. I'd have studied better. If I was back in 1995, I wouldn't have ever tried to take heavy drugs.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses too? Do you think most people trust each other?

Yes. I have such acquaintances. No, I don't think so. Because you cannot trust anybody nowadays. Because lots of people deceived me and I deceived lots of people.

Have you ever had strange experiences which you would be afraid to admit to anyone (like energies from another world for example) ?

I had a lot of strange experiences but usually I talk about them with my friends. Not mystical experiences but rather different kinds of phobias or ‘paranoia’.

Do you think many people of your age around you are depressed? Are people of your own age happier or less happy than adults?

Yes. I think many people feel depressed nowadays. “Why”? Because social conditions to a very broad extent changed. Yes, I think they are much more happy because they are more able to adapt to these changes.

Do drugs make you happy?

Yes, they do. “In what way”? They help me relax and make the world around more colourful and attractive.

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

Since we live in the era of black plague—AIDS, I always use single-use syringes.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

Yes there is. Even statistics show that the rate of HIV infected grows very rapidly.

What does love mean? Do you think love exists?

(Sad) I don’t know. I doubt that.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

No. I don’t think so. The guys are much more frank about that.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

That is because the word heroin is derived from the word “hero”. Because it makes you more masculine.

What makes you happy?

Heroin! Only heroin! Friends and parents are number two and three.

Do you think most people are happy? Do you think many people are pretending to be happy even though really they are not?

Yes, I do. I even think all people are happy in some ways. No, I don’t think so. Because I see no reason why people have to pretend they are happy. Lots of people pretend they are sad instead.

What makes you feel most sad?

Inability to get heroin. Also money or I can’t access dealer or have no time.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Would you like to change the world? People? What?

I’d like that there were no drugs in the world. But if there were no drugs in the world I wouldn’t know about them. I wouldn’t like to change people. Because I like them as they are.

Why do you think mostly Russian-speakers are heroin addicts?

They are more intelligent than Estonians. And intelligent people tend to rather use drugs than to drink alcohol.

Do you have any dreams for future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

I’d like to become a businessman. I have a project for a language school.

What colours do you prefer? Why?

I like blue and black colours. These colours represent my mood.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day? If so, what do you imagine your children to be like?

Yes, of course. I'd like to get children from an orphanage house because I don't expect my own children to be healthy enough.

What would you do if your children took drugs?

I'd like to persuade them to quit...I'd hire a professional psychologist and move to some other town or village.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

I think I am too greedy. I am fond of studying and that makes me feel good.

What do you think needs to be changed in Estonia to make young people happier?

More subsidies for sports, studies, etc.

What extra facilities would you like to see for teenagers?

More sports clubs, places of interest, like former "pioneer palaces".

Would you be prepared to educate young people against taking drugs?

Yes, I think so. Because I had a lot of experience in this field.

Do you like Estonia? Why?

I like Estonia because the nature is ok here.

What makes you different from others? Do you want to do something extraordinary sometimes?

I am a drug addict. And still I like to live and study and I am not a pessimist. Yes, I do. I like to walk in the forest, in the nature by myself.

If you could wish three things what would they be?

Syringe, water, and HEROIN.

Interview #24: With Rasmus (20 year old, Half-Estonian, student at an Estonian university, 1 year experience in using heroin, NOT IN TREATMENT).

Rasmus took heroin 5 minutes prior to the interview.

FIRST INTERVIEW

What made you first take soft or hard drugs?

I wanted to have some fun and I was curious. When I started to use soft drugs I simply wanted to experience something new. After I got bored with the soft drugs I switched to the hard ones.

Why do you think people take drugs in general? Are the teenage years a time of crisis?

It is the same as alcohol. At first you use it for fun, then you start 'killing' your problems with drugs. Later the drugs become your main problem. Age does not matter at all. Everyone can start using drugs.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

Some of them understood it was dangerous and stopped it. Some understood it was not an absolute solution.

Do you make a big distinction between soft and hard drugs?

Hard drugs involve people faster. Soft ones have a longer period of getting used to. But the result is the same.

Have you ever had strange experiences which you would be afraid to admit to anyone (like energies from another world, for example)?

I am not afraid to share my strange experiences. There is nothing to be ashamed of, because people can have similar experiences due to other causes - tiredness, depression, etc.

Do you think many people of your age around you are depressed? Are people of your own age happier or less happier than adults?

I can't answer this question. Some people are happy, others not. Age does not influence the feeling of happiness.

Do drugs make you happy?

It is not an 'apparatus' for making people happy. It's just some substance which brings satisfaction. Like food. Drugs become a need.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

I know quite a lot of heroin-addicted females and to say guys are in majority is stupid.

Do you believe in a God?

Not the God you mean. I refuse to explain it.

What makes you feel most sad?

When everything seems extremely messed up!

SECOND INTERVIEW

Why do you think mostly Russian-speakers are heroin addicts?

There are more Russians using drugs than Estonians. The level of life of Russians is lower.

Do you have any dreams for future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

Yes, I do. I don't care what to do in the future, but I just want to feel good.

What colours do you prefer? Why?

I don't pay much attention to it. It is the thing itself that has some colour match it or not.

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day? If so, what do you imagine your children to be like?

I have not thought about it. Can't say I see myself as a family member.

Do you feel life is useless? For you? For others?

Life is needed for all of us. Why live if it is useless?

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bores you more than other people? Why?

No, it influences me the same way. Except for *one more* problem [drugs] that I have.

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

This is a hard question. I can't answer it. I guess other people should reply to this question.

What extra facilities would you like to see for teenagers?

Fitness clubs, recreation areas, workplaces. Anything that would keep people busy.

Would you be prepared to educate young people against taking drugs?

Yes. Because I have a rich personal experience. Besides that I know the scientific nature of drug use.

Do you like Estonia?

Not especially, because there are many better places than Estonia.

What does money mean in your life?

Money is the equivalent of your efforts, your work. You exchange it for other things. The more money I have the better it is. It has a very important place in my life.

If you had a possibility not to go to school, would you? Why? If you have left school would you ever think of going back to get more education?

I have this opportunity, but I still go to school. I do it to improve my qualities, to become a better person.

What makes you different from others? Do you want to do something extraordinary sometimes?

I don't know if I differ much from others, but I believe everyone is unique. My inner properties make me different. I can't explain it better. Sometimes I want to make usual things... I guess my drug addiction is the result of committing one extraordinary thing.

INTERVIEW #25 With Igor (20 years old, Russian-speaker)

BACKGROUND: Had already voluntarily been in the clinic for the usual 10 day course.

FIRST INTERVIEW

Let's talk about you being a drug addict. When did it all start?

It all started 4 years ago. I was in the company of friends. We had nothing better to do but to sit in our yard and smoke. We were talking with each other when somebody, who I didn't know at the time, walked to us. My friends seemed to know him very well. They started talking and I just listened. At first there was nothing special but then they started to talk about how good it would be to buy some drugs (Amphetamines). I wasn't surprised to hear about drugs because I knew that some of them are using it. The person that just came to us told them that he knows someone who can sell it to my friends.

They bought drugs. What made you try those drugs?

Well, when I was asked if I want to try it I refused but they started to make jokes about me. I couldn't stand those jokes. I was kind of interested how it feels like anyway. The only thing that kept me away from the drugs was the fear. TV, Radio, papers...it all tells us how dangerous it is to use them. Anyway.... I thought to myself..." well...what if I will try it...besides what harm it can do to me if I will just do it one time..." So, I agreed to try those drugs.

What kind of drugs did you take?

Well, it was Amphetamines...or "Phen" how we call it...we also call it "White".

Why did you started to take hard drugs?

It was just interest I guess... I wanted to see how it feels like. It was stupid...I know that now...

Are you happy with the facilities available to drug users to get off drugs?

Yes, it was quite acceptable I must say .The people who work here are very nice. I trusted them... Besides I thought that this is the only way out of this.

What about your family? Do you think they are able to understand you?

... we are not very close... I am the youngest, you know. My sister and my brother have

good jobs and they are paid well. I guess I wasn't too good for my parents. Actually, my father left us in when I was two years old. But he was around. We spent a lot of time together when I was a child. I can't say that I don't love him... but really I think that I cannot forgive him that he left my mother. I think I love my mother more than my father. However, we are not as close as we should be I guess. As for understanding... well... I don't think that they can understand me. I would never discuss any personal stuff with them. I feel very uncomfortable doing that. Even if they would try to talk with me now I would probably stop the conversation. I wouldn't feel like it's the right thing... It's too late for that, I think.

What was their reaction when they found out about you using drugs ?

Well, their reaction was not positive, of course. My mother was devastated when she heard about it from our neighbours. She cried a lot. She tried to talk me out of it... but it was already too late for that and I just didn't care much.

How did you find school? What would you change if you were in school now and if you would have the power to do so?

I left school when I was in 10th grade. I guess I was a bit lazy. I missed a lot of classes then. I decided to quit school. It all happened with the help of my so-called friends... If you ask me if I regret quitting school, I say, yes, very much. As for what I would change... well first of all I would change my circle of friends that I had at that time. The other stuff was ok I guess...

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

No... I don't think so.

Don't you have any real friends or just people whom you trust?

No I don't believe I have someone like that.

Whom do you talk with when you are in a stressful situation?

It's different every time... but mostly with my sister. Although I cannot say that I am completely open to her. Sometimes I just keep it in myself; I used to deal with it by my own ways.

Do you think you understand yourself?

Yes... but not always. Sometimes I am really thinking to myself: "What the hell are you doing man?"

Do you think you will have the same friends in 5 years? Do you trust your friends? Do they understand you?

I don't know who would be around me in 5 years... but I wish it will be new people. My present friends are the reason I got into trouble in the first place. Do I trust my friends? I am not sure... well, maybe on some level I do but not always. I would never trust them with my life of course. And I would never tell them any personal stuff... that's for sure.

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed? Are people your own age happier or less happy then adults?

Yes, I think so, I guess it's just because the times are different now. Young people don't feel very secure like our parents did in their times. Young people can't find a job... not a good job but just a job. They don't have anything to do... no interests or hobbies, so they go to drugs and alcohol. It's like a substitute for the feeling of security. They don't have any motivations for living. They can't find their place in this life. Very sad but unfortunately it's the truth.

Do drugs make you happy?

No, I wouldn't say so... It's just fun sometimes...

What do you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

Yes, I have thought about it a lot. Well, I am using clean needles... never using someone else's stuff. Always trying to do it as clean as possible.

Do you think there is big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

Yes I do... and it increases every day.

What's love for you? Do you think it exists?

Love? Well... I am not sure how to describe it. I guess it's when two people are able to make sacrifices for each other. When they are living for each other. I don't know if true love exists or not... I guess it's possible... I don't believe in romantic love. It's like living in a dream... and that's just a fantasy. I am very far from that... it seems so unreal. It's too complicated... I never really thought about it... Yes, I have loved before...

What do you think about your life now after all you had been through? Would you like to change anything?

I don't know how to answer that. But yes, I would like to change a lot of things. Sometimes I even think that I would change everything in my life if only I had a choice.

INTERVIEW #26 With Mart (Ethnic Estonian, 20 years old)

BACKGROUND: Parents divorced, uses drugs since the age of 16, dropped out from school in seventh grade

FIRST INTERVIEW

What made you first take soft and hard drugs?

Just for fun. To see what happens. Because friends were already using drugs and I didn't want to be different. Hard drugs - almost the same reasons. To see is it really better feeling, like the others say it is.

Do you talk openly with your parents or maybe brothers/sisters?

With parents – no. But I can talk with my older brother, because he is also using drugs, but not so often like I do¹⁶.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

No. I know one boy who stopped by killing himself.

How did you find school?

I don't like school. Maybe I would have stayed at school if there would have been less pressure.

Do you think anyone understands you either now or in the past?

Those who use drugs understand me, but the others I think not.

Do you have someone whom you trust and talk about your stresses?

No, I don't have anyone to talk to, but that is good because I don't like to talk about my worries to others. Yes, I think that people trust each other - they have to.

¹⁶ Mart started using drugs before his older brother

Do you trust your friends?

Yes, I have some friends who I can trust, but I'm sure that some people will stay as my friends and others not. Yes, my friends understand me, otherwise they wouldn't be my friends.

Does true love exist?

Love was invented by Russians to get sex without paying for it. True love does not exist.

What makes you happy?

Money!!! If there is no money, its always depression.

Do you believe in a God?

No, I don't believe in God.

Do you ever cry?

I never cry.

INTERVIEW #27 With Siim (Ethnic Estonian)

BACKGROUND: Ex-heroin user. Started using drugs in high school - 7 years previously. He has stayed away from drugs now over 4 months.

You started quite a long time ago. Was it hard to stop?

Nothing comes easy. Sure it was hard - one of the hardest things I have done in my life and one of the best things I did.

What made you first take soft and then hard drugs?

It started with my friends. We had a party and I never had tried drugs. Wanted to know how it was like and to be honest I enjoyed it. I started to consume more and more and sort of moved on from one "product" to another. Before I realized that I was addicted, I was already a heroin user. Wasn't a good feeling but...can't change the past.

Do you talk openly with your parents or maybe brothers-sisters?

Now I do. I used to be lot more closed when I started using drugs. First I told my brother and he suggested that I also would talk to mom. When things were really bad I told her and I got rid of drugs.

So they helped you?

Yes they did. I don't thing I would have pulled through if there wasn't help from them. Also my friends helped me.

What made you realize that you needed help?

There was one party. I used more drugs than I normally did and it sort of went out of control. My friends later told me that I was screaming and seeing things that weren't there. Also I had talked to people that were not in the room. When I collapsed they called the ambulance. The ambulance people gave me some sort of medicine so I would stay alive. After that my fun was over. I realized that if I wanted to live on as a person I needed to quit this habit. So I did.

What do you think would stop people from taking drugs – in general?

I think we all need a wake-up call. To some it is someone's care and saying that, hey,

now it is enough. Someone needs first to look in the mirror and then realize that this is wrong. Like I did.

How did others you know stop taking drugs?

With some help of medical staff and some help from families. Some have been in Wismari.

Did you make a distinction between hard and soft drugs?

Not in the end. It was just a drug and the price was different – that's it. You sort of moved on from one drug to another when you needed something stronger you took something stronger.

How did you find school? Like/Dislike?

I graduated and that was my part. Wasn't really excited about it but I survived.

What would you change/have changed first in your school if you had the power?

I missed in school some excitement. You know – the class was like teacher was talking everyone was writing and no fun. Just theory and endless reading. Some experimental work would have been fun. I realize that you can't make a lot of experiments in the Estonian language but hey, let's go to some famous guy's birth-house or something. And then let the teacher tell us what he was writing and so on.

How about some activities in school?

Sure you can go but the variety of activities was low. You had classes for some odd areas that interest no one.

Do you have anyone who you can trust and talk about your stresses to?

I get along fine with my family now. It used to be just my friends now I also talk more openly with my mom and brother.

Do you think most people trust each other?

I think in Estonia the situation is getting better. Let's face it – during the communist era anyone could have been a spy. There were lot of secrets and a lot of people didn't trust each other. You could count on your closest family members...and even they might have been spies. Now the atmosphere is a little more relaxed and free. Now people – especially young are realizing that this trust thing is not so bad. I think people mostly have a friend or two whom they can trust blindly.

Do you understand yourself?

Yes I do. I know why I did what I did and I'm not proud of what I did. I realize that this is my last chance to be good and I'm trying as hard as I can. My thoughts are much clearer now than what they were a half year ago. Now I know what I do. Back then it was just need and addiction.

Did you ever had strange experiences which you were afraid to admit to anyone either on or off drugs? Like energies from another world etc.?

Sure I had. All my drug years were strange. I saw things that weren't there, I talked to persons that were not saying a word. Once I even talked to a rubber toy. Most of the experiences were on drugs but some were off drugs as well.

What were some that were off drugs?

I mostly heard voices. In mornings when I had a hangover I heard someone speaking to me. Can't remember any of the things said to me but those voices were there.

Do you wish or think you will have the same friends in 5 years time?

A lot of people have stayed away from me when I used drugs. I have to gain their respect and friendship. Hope I have same friends.

Do you trust your friends? Do your friends understand you?

They know that I wasn't thinking clearly when I was on drugs. I trust them because they

have stayed with me. I can't bet on the issue that they trust me – considering whom I used to be but I'm sure they understand my behavior now and before.

[He becomes sad when speaking about friends. He lights a cigarette and his hands are shaking.]

Do you think many people your age around you are depressed?

If you use drugs you will be depressed at some point of time. Otherwise people are ok.

Did drugs made you happy?

When I used them and when I was up in the clouds then I was happy. When I had a hang-over I felt miserable and sad. After I stopped using drugs I realized that there are lot more things to be happy for than just drugs. Next thing I try to do is to stop smoking because it is a drug as well.

What did you do to avoid becoming HIV positive?

I didn't do anything special. Luckily enough I didn't get it. I did get some sort of disease from one drug addict. Some minor sexual disease. Doctors took a HIV test a week ago and it was negative.

Do you think there is a big risk of increase in AIDS in Estonia?

If you are on drugs or trying to get there...you really don't stop thinking about it. So I would say yes there is a big risk. I think that – usually there are a group of people who inject stuff – if one of them gets it the others are in danger as well. Among some of my friends who still use drugs we used our own needles. We were lucky in a way that we had our own place and we used drugs there and only there. With the exception of a few times in 'Hollywood' (nightclub).

How do you get along with those friends that still use drugs? Do they also plan to quit or...?

I get along fine. They don't tempt me with drugs and we don't talk – or actually they don't talk about drugs in front of me. We don't go to the same parties together any more but otherwise we will meet once in a while to play some bowling etc., some of them also move towards quitting the drug use and if they make the decision I try to be there for them and help them.

What does love mean? Do you think true love exists?

Love is love. It is between friends and families and loved ones. True love exists only in movies. There isn't such love that you would go through fire and water and rescue your loved one and then the orchestra plays.

Do you think guys and girls have the same attitude to sex?

Girls need more commitment if they want to have sex. There are very few girls with whom you will get "lucky" on the first date. There are them but they are rare. And there are very few guys who will refuse sex on the first date. On drugs, tolerance or respect towards principles is forgotten. If you want to have sex you will certainly find someone who will also want it. Easy...but dangerous.

Are there many differences in the way guys and girls, think, feel and act?

Guys maybe think more with their head and use that to solve problems logically. Girls then follow the heart and make decisions based on that...I also think that guys are a little less willing to get to a long term relationship...they tend to wait and see what is going on.

Why do you think it is mostly guys who are heroin addicts?

I think it is a group thing. I started my journey when I was with my friends. If we do it together it will not look so against the law because others are with me. I'm not the only one.

What makes you happy?

Life and what it has to offer me. I'm glad that I got rid of drugs. It took lot of will and help to pull out...but I managed to do so and I'm just glad.

Do you think most people are happy?

That depends on whom you ask. As a drug user - an ex one now – I would have said when I was on drugs that the world is not a happy place because most people don't use drugs. As a non-drug user I will say that people are happy. They have every reason to be happy because they are alive just like you and me.

Have you ever thought really they are not happy?

Yes when I used drugs I actually thought they are not happy. That they have not realized what was pleasure because they haven't met 'Ants'¹⁷. Now I know better.

But there are still lot of people who use drugs. Do you think they are going through the same thoughts as you did?

Most certainly. They also think that the world is not a worthy place and we should all get high as soon as possible. I was most certain that I was superior to others when I was high. I got in fights with other people and minority groups.

Do you ever cry? Cry often?

I cried when I was in pain. When I tried to stay alive from one day to another. It was not a pretty sight... and the pain was something unbelievable. The thought to get some heroin and end the pain ran through my mind more than once. My family and friends were there and they sort of watched over me like I was some sort of lunatic...those were the moments when I cried.

How about now?

Now I'm pretty much ok. Still think about the past and the pleasure. But the worst is over.

Did you also have some professional help like a psychiatrist?

I talk to one now – every week.

What makes you feel most sad?

That there are still many people who will go through the same that I did. I must admit I had fun and it was exciting... but moving from marijuana to heroin was one of the biggest mistakes I made.

Do you have an idol or some ideal person to be like?

Not really. Just have to be my own idol and admire what I have accomplished.

Would you like to change the world? People ?

Don't have so big plans there's always something to fish for. I guess my biggest hope would be the ending of complaints from all levels of society. I have been through a hell...and I didn't shout to people hey look at me I'm feeling bad. You have to make things work the way you want them to work.

Is the world basically a nice place?

[He takes a deep breath and looks around for a few seconds. Then shows all surroundings to the interviewer...near lake in Mustamäe, Tallinn]

Look at this. It is pretty much close to heaven. It is my home here.

Why do you think it is mostly Russian-speakers who are heroin addicts?

Don't know. Maybe something to do with the lower income that Russian-speakers usually earn. Or maybe they just feel they have been left out from society and sort of give up.

Do you have any dreams for the future? What do you think you will be doing in the future?

Just trying to keep away from drugs at this point. I want to quit smoking after that as well. Those are my hopes for the future.

What colours do you prefer? Why?

White because it is so calm and relaxing.

¹⁷ i.e. Amphetamines

Do you hope to have a family of your own one day? If so, what do you imagine your children to be like?

Too far in the future for me. Sure I look for appropriate candidate...but haven't been so successful yet. What comes to children then I hope to have a son some day.

What would you do if you found out your children took drugs?

I would try to help them to realize that this is bad for them. Also I would explain what I went through and maybe hope they come to their senses. If a person doesn't want to quit then there is nothing others can do to help them.

Do you feel life is useless? For you? For others?

Life is something to fight for. We only live once and we better not waste it.

Do you think the routine nature of everyday life upsets or bores you more than other people?

When I used drugs I could not stand the same schedule. I felt like nothing would ever happen. I wanted to change I wanted to move to do something other than sit and relax. Now the only thing that I want to do is to relax and watch the grass grow

What are your nicest and worst qualities as a person?

I still tend to get upset from minor things. When I was clear for a couple of weeks I yelled at almost every little thing – there was no juice in the fridge. I screamed like hell... now I'm a little more relaxed but there is still some nervousness. I think my nicest quality is the realization that I'm clear from drugs and I will not touch them again. I have realized that they are not worth dying for.

What are the things that irritate you?

People. I still can't stand public transportation. The amount of older persons just waiting to die...that gets on my nerves.

What do you think needs to change in Estonia to make young people happier?

I think young people are happy. They have every reason to be happy because they have more of everything compared to people ten years older than what we are.

Would you be prepared in the future to educate younger people against taking drugs?

Absolutely. I have got the experience and the will to do so.

If you had a possibility not to go to school, would you?

I think education to a certain level is necessary and should be stated by law. I, for example, am looking for a job...want to get a better one. The education is one of the first things that is asked.

What makes you different from others?

We all are different. So there are many differences. One of them, for example, would be my previous drug use and the clearness now. Not many persons have done so.

Do you want to do something extraordinary sometimes?

No, I just want to be ordinary for a while.

If you could wish three things what they would be?

I want others also to realize the things they do. That would be number one. It would also be nice to have a plenty of money. I think my biggest wish would be that I would get rid of drugs once and for all. The ending doesn't stop in one week or one month...it will take months and still there are temptations.
