

Message from the Project Manager

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Adolescence is the stage of life in which the most enduring patterns of substance use take shape, and it is also the stage in which prevention can be the most effective. For Northern Cyprus, however, the evidence required to design and target such prevention is incomplete. This book was written to help close that gap. It presents the findings of the Northern Cyprus wave of the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD): a study of 1,049 tenth-grade students, aged 15 to 16, surveyed during November and December 2025 using the standardised ESPAD 2019 Master Questionnaire under fully anonymous conditions.

The picture that emerges is both reassuring and instructive. Alcohol is by far the most prevalent substance among adolescents in Northern Cyprus, while cannabis and other illicit substance use remains rare. Across every outcome we examined, two factors stand out with remarkable consistency as the dominant proximal correlates of adolescent substance use: peer substance use and the perceived availability of substances. Truancy emerges as an independent marker of risk, and the apparent protective role of parental monitoring weakens once peer influence is included. These convergent patterns carry a clear and actionable message: prevention in Northern Cyprus should focus on the social environment of young people, their peers and their access, rather than on individual exhortation alone.

The book is organised as a single, cumulative argument across nine chapters. It moves from the research governance and ethical framework that underpin the study, through its theoretical foundations, sampling, and measurement, to a detailed descriptive epidemiology of adolescent substance use. It then presents substance-specific analytical models for nicotine and e-cigarettes, alcohol and intoxication, and other behaviours, before drawing the evidence together in an integrated synthesis that includes population-attributable fractions and a risk-ranking framework designed to inform

prevention policy. Throughout, we distinguished clearly what the data confirm, what they suggest, and what they cannot yet answer.

This research was conducted under the ethical approval and continuing oversight of the Northern Cyprus Prime Minister's Anti-Drug Commission, in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the General Data Protection Regulation. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, with written informed consent obtained from parents and guardians and informed assent obtained from every student. The full ethical and governance documentation is provided in the annexes to this volume.

A work of this scope is never the achievement of one person. I owe particular and heartfelt thanks to my co-authors, Teyfide Tecel Hatipoğlu and Melis Yağmur Minas, whose analytical care, dedication, and steady commitment were indispensable at every stage of this project; without their contributions this book could not have been completed. I am profoundly grateful to our editor, Professor Dr. Dr. (h.c.) Marilyn A. Huestis, whose scientific authority, generosity, and editorial guidance immeasurably strengthened this volume and sharpened its arguments.

I extend my sincere thanks to the staff of the Northern Cyprus Prime Minister's Anti-Drug Commission for their institutional support, ethical stewardship, and shared commitment to safeguarding young people; and to the staff of Dr. Zafer Bekiroğulları Psychological Services Ltd. for their sustained professional, organisational, and logistical support throughout the study. I am likewise grateful to the members of the International Cognitive and Behavioural Psychotherapies Society (CBPis) for their collegial encouragement and the intellectual community they provide.

Finally, my deepest thanks go to the school principals, teachers, parents, and, above all, the students of Northern Cyprus, whose participation made this research possible. It is my hope that the evidence gathered here will serve them, and the generation that follows, well.

Dr. Zafer Bekiroğulları

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On behalf of the Northern Cyprus Prime Minister's Anti-Drug Commission