

Student's wristband checks for 'date rape' drug

Germany

David Crossland Berlin

A wristband that allows wearers to check whether their drink has been spiked with a "date rape" drug has gone on sale in Germany having been invented by a student whose friend was assaulted.

The Xantus Drinkcheck band was created by Kim Eisenmann and is coated with a chemical that reacts with GHB, gamma-hydroxybutyric acid or "liquid ecstasy", which is commonly used in drug rapes because it is cheap and has no strong taste or smell.

Ms Eisenmann, 25, studies industrial engineering at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology and had the idea after a 17-year-old friend had her drink spiked.

"Last summer my friend Sven and I were at a city festival and a friend of ours fell victim to a knockout drug," she told *Handelsblatt*. "She was found in a park that night, she couldn't remember anything and was badly hurt. That was a total shock for me because we were also at the festival and it could just as easily have hit me. The danger felt so close."

Police in Berlin started recording drug rape incidents in a separate database in 2012 and reported a record 230 cases in 2018, up from 211 in 2017. Experts say that the figures grossly understate the true numbers because many victims do not report attacks.

Although tests to check drinks for GHB already exist, Ms Eisenmann and Sven Häuser, founders of the startup Xantus, felt there was nothing that was

entirely suitable so took out a loan and worked with chemists to coat an armband with the agent that reacts to the drug. Wristband wearers are instructed to stir a drink, place a few drops on the white band and wait two minutes. If the test area turns blue, the drink has been spiked. Each band can be used for two tests. A pack of four bands sells for €9.95 and can be bought online.

Ms Eisenmann said that the white armband was partly intended as a deterrent to potential rapists. It is easy to see in dark clubs in

Kim Eisenmann's wristband reacts with the drug GHB



artificial light, meaning that it can be used without having to go somewhere brighter. "We tried to put ourselves in the minds of the criminals. The substance GHB lends itself to them because it is simple and cheap to get hold of. Also, people who have been given it simply look totally drunk," she said.

However, Ms Eisenmann said nightclubs were hesitant about selling the wristbands. "They all say the same thing: 'If I sell your product here, people will say you get your drink spiked here,'" she said. She hopes sales will be so strong elsewhere that club owners will be under pressure to make them available.

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