

A brief historical account of European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD) and Norwegian Cities Against Drugs.

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Mr. Chairman, Dear colleagues

Almost exactly 20 years ago, in 1993, the Mayor of Stockholm invited representatives from several cities, among them Berlin, Paris and London, to a conference. The city of Oslo was also invited. The main topic to be discussed at the conference was the growing market for illegal drugs and the increasing number of drug abusers. I represented the municipality of Oslo at that meeting. I very well remember the deep concern the representatives from the participating cities expressed, and how much they stressed the importance of developing a joint strategy and a common network to fight this unfortunate development. One of the most important measures considered necessary to develop, was a restrictive policy against drugs. The purpose of this was to strengthen the international

resistance against illegal drugs, in the light of the ongoing legalizing debate both in Europe and in the U.S.

The Mayor of Stockholm followed up the intentions expressed at the conference. A Stockholm-resolution, European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD), was drawn up. In April 1994 it was signed by 21 European cities, among them Oslo.

The resolution contained five main points, the ECAD platform, stating that ECAD would:

- **Oppose legalization of narcotic substances**
- **Support the use of various methods in the fight against illegal drugs**
- **Further develop different kinds of treatment for drug abusers**
- **Actively introduce offensive preventative measures**
- **Increase international cooperation.**

Mayors Meeting, i.e. the mayor conference, is the highest authority of ECAD, and the organization is lead by an Advisory Board, a committee with at least nine members

(London, Athens, Paris, Berlin, Hurst, Lugano, Stockholm, St. Petersburg and Oslo had members in the first Advisory Board, chaired by the London member, Mr. Peter Rigby).

Stockholm took on the responsibility to keep a secretariat and has made substantial economic contributions to run it every year since. The secretariat is lead by a managing director, currently Jørgen Sviden.

The fourth Mayors Meeting, held in Paris, was a very important meeting. The delegates passed a Mission Statement for ECAD: A Europe free from drug abuse.

The Mayors meeting in Varna some years ago designed a new strategy plan for ECAD.

Since 1994 some cities have left the organization, many more have joined. At present ECAD encompasses more than 200 member cities representing 30 European countries. Half of the member cities are active, especially cities from Northern Europe/the Nordic Countries. As time has passed, both ECAD and the member cities have

managed to sustain the organizational network and bring about a greater understanding of local adaptations. ECAD has also had regional offices established, for example in St. Petersburg, Riga and Bourges.

ECAD supports the UN`s narcotics convention which opposes legalization and calls upon national and international cooperation to fight drug abuse. The main focus of the Network is to exchange knowledge and experience among the members, both on the political and administrative level in the municipalities. Further the Network imparts knowledge of evidence-based and successful methods as well as new research in the field. It also arranges conferences and seminars, gives lectures and initiates local, regional and international projects on drug-related subjects all over Europe. In addition, the secretariat, on behalf of the Network, keeps and develops contact with local, regional and national authorities, with EU, UN and other international agencies in order to actively represent the interests of the ECAD members.

The Municipality of Oslo has committed itself to this work. Oslo has been a member of Advisory board from the beginning. In 1998 the city council proposed a plan of action: “ECAD – The Municipality of Oslo. Combating drug abuse.” The city parliament passed the proposal in January 1999. Part of the plan, article 12, emphasized cooperation with other Norwegian cities and larger municipalities. This cooperation had already started, as several of the cities were members of ECAD. Oslo took the cooperation further. For five years Oslo hosted annual conferences, before the relay baton was passed on.

At the fourth Norwegian conference, held in Oslo on October 11th 2002, the participating cities decided to establish an organization “Norwegian Cities Against Drugs”. The objective was that the partaking Norwegian cities should reinforce each other’s efforts to combat drug abuse, especially regarding preventive and secondary preventive work, by exchanging information in a systematic way, establishing joint projects and arranging conferences open for all member cities. Since then the

responsibility for leadership/secretariat and arrangement of conferences has been taken by turn.

At present the organization has seven member cities, Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger, Drammen, Fredrikstad, Kristiansand and Oslo. An important goal for the near future is to double the number of member cities. Each of the current member cities should manage to recruit a new city to join ECAD and Norwegian Cities Against Drugs .This pairing of cities may contribute to enlarge the Network. It is also important that cities from Northern Norway rejoin the Network. A strong City Network can do more together in Norway and in ECAD organization.

The Norwegian Network is as important today as it was ten years ago. The goal is still to prevent the extent and use of narcotic substances, and to organize and further develop care centres and rehabilitating facilities for drug abusers. In addition we hope the Network represents a centre of expertise in the ongoing public debate on narcotics and drug abuse.

One of the major goals for ECAD is to establish joint projects. Focus is also put on exchanging experiences from different projects and initiatives taken on by the member municipalities. This gives new knowledge and inspiration and contributes further to develop the measures taken by the different municipalities. By taking part in ECAD and Norwegian Cities Against Drugs each member also establishes contact with key persons in other member cities, which in turn contributes to simplify cooperation and interaction.

Let me also mentioning another important Network In ECAD:

I would like to emphasize a specific joint project in ECAD, Youth in Europe (YiE). YiE was initiated by ECAD as an international project in 2005. On June 1st 2006 the Vice Mayor of Welfare and Social Services in Oslo at the time, signed an agreement with ECAD to take part in this drug preventive project addressing youth in larger cities.

The city of Reykjavik initiated this project. The city had already experienced, in the project Drug Free Iceland

(1997 – 2002), that involving all major instances, especially the parents, had resulted in reduced drug abuse. In Drug Free Iceland both the state, the city of Reykjavik and the other municipalities participated, along with the schools, the parents and many volunteer organizations representing both sports and the temperance movement. This gave the project a legitimacy that among other things made it possible to engage the TV channels and the newspapers in promoting the project and making its name, goal and work known.

Involving the parents in particular made this project a success. The basis for involving the parents was found in a partly sleeping paragraph in the Child Welfare Act. This paragraph stated that children and youth are not allowed to stay outside after a certain time of night if they are not accompanied by grown-ups. Informing of this paragraph and discussing the attitude of the parents towards it on many meetings have renewed its actuality. The work has also been followed up by a special team that contacts and takes care of children and youth that do stay out alone after curfew hours. The parents have had to pick up their

offspring at special centres and have been told that recurring episodes would be reported to the Child Welfare Authorities.

The extensive media coverage and the focus put on Drug Free Iceland did also have an effect in itself and contributed to the good results achieved.

Reykjavik wanted to share these experiences with the other larger cities in ECAD and at the same time learn about other successful drug preventive methods developed in the member cities, hence the initiative to start YiE. YiE has the president of Iceland, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, as its patron. He often meets at Mayors Meeting and has shown great commitment to the project. Thirteen cities take part. Besides Reykjavik and Oslo, there are participating cities from Sweden, Russia, Serbia, Lithuania, Latvia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy and Finland. Research workers from Iceland direct the work of comparing the results from the inquiries made by all the participating cities.

Another joint project worth mentioning concerns Norwegian Cities Against Drugs. The member cities did prepare and give a common submission to the report on narcotics and drug abuse made by the Stoltenberg committee. This common submission was based on the submissions that each member city gave separately. The members of Norwegian Cities Against Drugs represent between 20 and 25 % of the inhabitants in Norway, and they have political leaders from different parties. A common statement from these cities therefore carries weight.

An important purpose for ECAD and Norwegian Cities Against Drugs is to exchange information on the current status on drug abuse in the member cities, related to new trends, among other things. By exchanging information regarding both drug abusers and illegal drugs in the European cities, we acquire new knowledge that we can apply in our work. As examples of useful information of this kind I will mention new criminal legislation related to selling drugs, new illegal drugs on the market and new measures taken and proven effective.

The open drug markets in Oslo are characterized by internationalization. In the last years we have for example seen a marked increase of sellers from both North Africa and West Africa. Velferdsetaten, our welfare agency, knows that several of the drug sellers previously have been affiliated with drug environments in other European cities. This is useful knowledge and underlines the importance of a good dialogue and cooperation between a broad spectre of European cities as well as Norwegian cities.

The five main points underlined in the ECAD resolution carry broad legitimacy in our society. Still, in certain areas the ECAD platform may seem rather strict. Some cities have chosen to terminate their membership in ECAD because they found that their new strategies were not in accordance with the ECAD platform. The reason for this may be related to some rather aggressive voices from a number of member cities, in Sweden for instance. Some years ago Oslo was, for a period of time, heavily criticized for opening an injection room for drug addicts. This critique has subsided. We believe that ECAD`s new

chairman Odd Christian Reme will contribute further to reconcile differences in the organization.

ECAD has on several occasions discussed how to relate to member cities which take action, or have attitudes or strategies, that are not fully in accordance with ECAD`s platform. There is now a broad consensus on the futility of excluding members. The main focus must be on the preference for staying a member and taking part in the organization, along with generally supporting the main issues of the platform. Oslo is one of the member cities that has given preference to injure reducing activities among drug addicts. This work is not contrary to a restrictive stand against narcotics. Stockholm, which previously stressed a restrictive view on injure reducing activities, has now started handing out syringes to injecting addicts, while the city at the same time is an active contributor in ECAD. This illustrates the importance of being part of an international organization. By taking part in the Network we acquire new knowledge from the other member cities, but we are also able to tell others how, for example Nor-

wegian cities, cope with drug-related problems and which actions we have experienced to be effective in our cities.

The Municipality of Oslo looks forward to continued good co-operation, both nationally and internationally in ECAD. Together we will remain a counter-force against a negative development! At the same time we have every reason to evaluate our efforts: Are they effective? Why do we do this? In the 1980'ies I worked on actions against drug abuse under the auspices of the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. We thought we could fight and win the battle against drug abuse, but the battle never subsided! At the same time we must believe that our endeavours to fight drug abuse and give addicts qualified help are fundamentally right and important. Attitudes and actions must go hand in hand. We will always debate the means to achieve our goals, because we wish always to go forward in a dynamic reality.

I look forward to exchanging experiences with you during these Conference. It has been very interesting to follow

ECAD since the beginning 20 years ago. I wish ECAD success to dag and in the future !!.

Thank you for your attention !