

A written statement from the City of Mafra, Portugal, participates of the Mayor's Conference in Gozo (Mrs. Celia Salgado, Deputy Mayor and Lucia Vicente, Secretary)

Dear Sirs

At first, I want to thank ECAD for the opportunity to participate in this Conference in the name of Mafra's Municipality.

This is our first official presence in such an event as this and it is, if I may say so, an honor to be among you and share it with you.

As a brief introduction, I just cannot start speaking of our main theme, without presenting the region of Mafra.

Mafra's Municipality is governed by the City Hall, which is the centre of the local administration. It has more than 70 000 people living in an area of ca. 300 square meter, distributed for 17 parishes.

Although it has such a natural diversity, it still has its roots in agriculture and sea. In the last years, it has been growing and growing, especially because it is only 30 kilometer distant from Lisbon, Portugal's capital.

A consequence of the social economical development promoted by the authorities is consequence of socio-economic development promoted by local community, today is assumed as a county of great expansion and with the motto of "living quality", which has attracted the youth population. So that, at present, Mafra as the highest birth rate of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

This migration of young people has in the same way altered the existing life conditions and consequently, also the political intervention of the town.

I would like to initiate this "conversation" with two quotes:

**When the tree is small, the Gardner works with it as he wants. But when the tree grows, he could no longer work its curves and its sinuosity.**

By Abu Shakur, Persia (Century 10)

**We have received three different educations/teachings: the teaching of our fathers, the teaching of our masters, and the teaching of the world. What we learned is the last one destroys all the ideas of the two first ones.**

By the Baron of Montesquieu

I believe that these two quotes reflect very well our thinking about the use of drugs and our position concerning this problem of the current society.

In a stage when the liberalization of drug abuse is the most used and also the easiest measure for the national governments, it seems that the opinion should be another one.

More than a simple liberalization, it is important to educate the small children, right from the beginning, in order that this “trees” can grow in the right way, preventing the world to destroy its values.

It is through the youngest ones that we try to instill healthier lifestyles in the populations, at the same time we teach the elder ones and prevent the problem of drug addiction. This has been our position and the position we advocate to achieve the goal of a society free from drugs.

In Portugal drug consumption was recently liberalized. Nowadays, possession and use of small doses of drugs, does not have serious consequences for the small consumers and drug dealers.

Then, why is it important for Mafra to join ECAD?

Because for us, from our point of view, prevention is the way to go, instead of repression. And prevention itself can be developed through ECAD and the shared experiences between its members. The given proof is the examples of what we also want to do in the future.

So far, Mafra has focused its action in the prevention among the younger layers of our population. Keeping this idea in mind, a few years ago, we started a profound remake of the education section in our town.

For us, the concept “each place each school” as its model exhausted. Children and young people should learn in wide school complexes, with diverse valences, which allow them to evolve their social and educational competences. Only this way will they take on its right place as XXI century citizens.

The pioneer and innovative concept was systemized by the Municipality on the so called “Basic Universities”. What are these new schools? What do we want of them?

We want to gather a large number of children in one place, in order that they can interact and share their experiences with each other.

But we want more. And did more. We have built gyms, swimming pools, libraries, computer rooms, rooms for artistic expression, canteens and recreation and rest spaces. We have created opportunities!

Afterwards, we have organized events and activities which allowed that children and young people of all ages could spend a healthier leisure time.

At the same time, we have built offices for youth support and promoted information and discussion around the theme of the abuse of drugs.

We believe that this is the right and decisive strategy to move away the young ones of the temptation of experimenting and using drugs.

Now I would like to put you a challenge: the experience exchange between ECAD members is useful and gratifying, however, it is not a project which covers a global level.

The challenge I make is that the countries already members of ECAD analyze the possibilities of developing a structural project, general to all, but which respects the characteristics of each other. A project that can be the face of ECAD in the world.

The French novelist once said: “Nothing is really done while there is something to do”

Mafra is available to help doing it!

Thank you very much.