

**Cllr. Jim Corr, Chairman of ECAD
addressing the 19th ECAD's Mayors' Conference in Killarney
on the 10th of May 2012**

As Chairman of ECAD's Advisory Board, it is my honour and my pleasure to welcome to the 19th Mayors' Conference, Mayors, Council Members, Local Government Officials and a host of other people with a deep interest in, and knowledge of, the adverse social consequences arising from drug abuse across our European homeland.

Since its foundation in 1993, ECAD has held Mayors' Conferences in cities from Paris in the west to Istanbul in the east, from Stockholm in the north to the Mediterranean island of Malta in the south.

Co-hosting

This is the first time in almost twenty years of the history of ECAD that two relatively small towns/cities, but extremely powerful, in terms of their commitment and concern for the welfare of their citizens are co-hosting the 19th Mayors' Conference.

I want to thank Mayor Michael Sandin of Staffanstorp and Mayor Sean Counihan of Killarney for their generosity in taking on the responsibility for this year's Mayors' Conference and for their initiative in selecting a most interesting theme, namely "Cooperation in Practice – A broader Perspective" and in securing the participation of a range of speakers with widely acknowledged expertise in differing aspects of the drug problem.

International Organisation

ECAD is an international organisation dedicated to the ideal of enhancing the quality of life of people by disseminating information on the life-threatening dangers inherent in illicit drugs, on advising, on appropriate projects designed to prevent people from becoming addicted and should people succumb to the attraction of illicit drugs, by campaigning to ensure that facilities are in place for the rehabilitation of the unfortunate person who becomes dependent on psychoactive drugs, followed by resocialisation and ultimately reintegration, thus enabling the person to regain his/her confidence and dignity as a human being.

Priority is People

ECAD's first priority is service to people – protect them from the life-destroying consequences of illicit drugs and should they become addicted, then with a similar degree of concern to help them back to a quality of life in keeping with their human dignity.

This is a daunting social commitment but is it not wonderful that there are people all over Europe with varying degrees of professionalism willing, on a daily basis, to pursue this social task.

The most important element or ingredient in the life of a city/town is its people and service to people, particularly those in need of care and assistance, is the most noble contribution which a person or an organisation can provide.

ECAD is an international organisation with 96 paid-up members cities/towns of 212 signatory cities.

ECAD is hugely dependent on, and indebted to, the City of Stockholm which provides this organisation with a headquarters in that city with the modern communication facilities and a payment of € 50.000 annually.

Finance

This morning I am appealing to the member cities/towns that have to-date failed to pay their annual subscription to please do so. Otherwise, we will not be in a position to assist our member cities/towns with their anti-drug strategies and to gather and disseminate the most up-to-date research findings on protecting people and the most appropriate treatment to return the unfortunate addicts to normal life style.

Staffing

This organisation is run by three fulltime staff and one person on part time.

Our Director, Jörgen Svidén, travels all over Europe addressing conferences, participating in seminars and seeking out funding from public and private sector sources. In addition, he has to oversee the work of national representatives in Latvia, Bulgaria, Russia, Italy and Portugal.

ECAD cannot run the campaign against illicit drugs in your city/town. It does not have the manpower or, indeed the resources to do so. But ECAD does advise and provide its members with the most up-to-date research findings pertaining to drug prevention and drug addiction.

The essence of the international drug problem is that there are people most anxious to sell their life-destroying products and there are people willing to purchase them.

Drugs & UN

Perhaps this conference, taking place in the scenic surroundings of Killarney with its famed lakes and mountains, should send an appeal to UN's Commissioner for Human Rights requesting her to campaign for the enforcement of the Rights of Children as set out in Article 33 of the UN's Human Rights Convention.

The Commissioner in 2010 listed nine core human rights instruments and, of the nine, the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most widely ratified suggesting that it has strongest claim of any treaty to be considered as a "universally-ratified" instrument. It is the only core human rights treaty which is explicitly addressing narcotic drugs, setting out to protect children from illicit drugs an production/trafficking.

It may seem as a good public relations act for a country to ratify the Convention of the Rights of the Child, but they must follow-up the ratification by taking appropriate measures

including legislative, administrative and educational initiatives to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

Actions by member states of the UN, in regard to drugs which are more honoured in the breach than in the observance, allow the drug situation to fester.

Police Progress

It is most appropriate for us to thank police services throughout Europe for the manner in which they cooperate and share information on the ongoing campaign to reduce the volumes of illicit drugs finding their way onto the streets and roads of urban and rural Europe.

We in Ireland are most grateful to our national police service – An Garda Síochana – for their success in confiscating increasing volumes of such drugs thus reducing the potential level of harm for the individual as well as family and community anxiety.

Holistic Approach

ECAD looks at the drug problem in a holistic way. We seek out information on and the results of detoxification programmes in our member cities.

We have all experience of persons affected by problem substance use who at some point wanted either to reduce or stop the use of their drug choice.

Unfortunately, there are often times when a window of opportunity opens and a person is motivated to take up steps towards positive change but the resources are not available to support them.

The Advisory Board of ECAD exhorts its member cities to seek out ways to ensure that assistance and help is available for the drug addict.

Community Detoxification

I was pleased, at our Advisory Board meeting yesterday, to be able to share with my colleagues the details of the Community Detoxification Protocols which have been formulated in Ireland.

In brief, these protocols outline minimum medical and psycho-social supports to be provided to a service user engaging in community detox.

Community detoxification supports service users to reduce their use of Methadone or benzodiazepines through a structured non-residential process involving key workers and prescribing doctors.

The Irish Community Detoxification Protocols present a cost- effective way of maximising existing resources in the community/voluntary and statutory sectors to ensure a realistic detox option is available for people when they are ready to change.

The Director has promised to examine carefully the Irish Protocols to see if they could form a template which would assist other cities.

Our commitment is to people. The poet, John Donne, in his poem beginning "No man is an island" reminds us:-

"Each man's death

Diminishes me

For I am involved in mankind

Therefore, send not to know

For whom the bell tolls

It tolls for thee"