



Human being in the centre of our policy



Some comments on the Vilnius conference

On 28-30 April, a major Conference took place in Vilnius, the 5th European Conference on Clinical and Social Research on AIDS and Drugs. The Conference addressed a vast number of issues - both scientific and practical. Overall it was a very good conference, well organised and with many fruitful lecturers and seminars. I'm sad to say, many of the speakers who talked about ways of preventing abuse of drugs and treatment to abusers seemed to believe that the so called harm reduction-approach is the only answer to all questions. In their mind, harm reduction is a goal, not a tool. I made two speeches at the Conference; one about alternatives to imprisonment and one about ECAD, drugs and AIDS. In the latter I emphasised that we need to move on from this counterproductive debate on policies and start to focus on good role models and well proved experiences on how to deal with a problem we all want to find solutions to. Diversity is positive for the sake and something to defend, but when it comes to illicit drugs, it often ends up in an unbal-

anced picture; either you are pro harm reduction as the only solution or you are against. If you are against you are an enemy. To me, this is very tiring. We do not have to love what others do but we have to accept their manner, as long as it aims at reducing illegal drugs in the society. I stressed that the ECAD member cities support a restrictive policy, combined with humanity and a holistic approach, as the most appropriate way to prevent people from being addicted to drugs in the first place and to help abusers to find way out of their situation.

Jörgen Svidén

ECAD, Drugs and AIDS:

"There are tight connections between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. We need to tolerate that people have different approaches towards the problem we all want to find solutions to. In the work against drugs and the problems that drugs cause - we can and must accept that policy makers and decision makers choose different methods.

ECAD Award

ECAD institutes a yearly award for member cities to honour outstanding achievements in the work against illicit drugs and thereby encourage engagement and commitment in anti-drug fieldwork and policy making.

The ECAD Award shall be conferred annually at the ECAD Mayors' Conference for the achievements in the following areas:

- creating of best practice, role models and good examples,
- spreading of good examples,
- involving new actors in the work against illicit drugs,
- implementing with excellence of best practice, e.g. well-functioning action plans,



creating of substantial differences in a positive meaning,

- contributing to ECAD as an organisation, &
- other achievements of importance in the ECAD's topic filed.

Every member city, as well as policy makers, civil servants, experts and voluntary actors within member cities are welcome to nominate candidates for the ECAD Award. Every nomination shall include a short description of the referred activities in the nominated city and the reason for the nomination.

Submission of a city for the ECAD Award consideration shall be sent to the ECAD Office in Stockholm no later than March 31, 2010. The ECAD Award 2010 will be conferred at the 17th Mayors' Conference in Malta, April/May 2010.

Choice of Göteborg non-random

Conference follow-up



Conference was a place for many fruitful discussions -
Ove Lundgren (to the right) with conference participants;



Antonio Maria Costa
Photos Björn Olsson

On 5-6 February, the Second World Mayors' Conference together with the ECAD 16th Mayors' Conference took place in the Swedish city of Göteborg.

Pelle Olsson interviewed one of the organisers of the conference, Mr Ove Lundgren for the Swedish magazine "Narkotikafrågan".

- The initiative to arrange the World Mayors' Conference in Sweden belongs to Antonio Maria Costa, Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, said Ove Lundgren. Costa hoped that the conference would voice its support to the UN Conventions on Drugs ahead of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs meeting in Vienna later in March. The Conventions are constantly subjected to pressure by the legalisation lobby.

Ove Lundgren, who has a long experience of anti-drug fieldwork in Göteborg, means that it was not by chance that the combined ECAD Conference and the World Mayors' Conference took place here. Göteborg is distinguished even among the Swedish cities by its straight restrictive approach to drug policy, in the spirit of the UN Drug Conventions.

- For example, we have not even brought up the issue of introducing needle exchange in our city. Our politicians, independently of their political stance, prioritise drug issues and share their views as regards drug combat.

He names Anneli Hultén, the Mayor and Chairperson of the City's Executive Board. When she took up her post in the beginning of the year, among the prioritised areas in her press release stood "We fight for a society free from drugs". Even during the previous economic crisis in the 90ies which hit Sweden hard and forced many municipalities to cut down on drug issues, Göteborg continued with planned establishing of treatment centres for young drug abusers.

Talking about the speakers, Ove Lundgren marked the performance of Antonio Maria Costa as a brilliant one.

- Costa has an enormous civil courage. He always goes into a debate with drug liberals even at their own conferences where he at times has to stand rather lonely. He fights diligently for the sake of the non-weakening international drug control.

Costa has brought up two themes. Partly what a mayor can do to prevent drug abuse and the importance of the municipal efforts. Partly he pointed out anew that the drug control is needed and works, despite what the opposition to the UN Conventions says. He

made a comparison 100 years back in time when opium production was many times bigger while the world's population was smaller.

The Conference ended with a powerful common statement in support for the UN Conventions on Drugs which was handed over to the UN.

- I realise more and more the importance of the international issues for the anti-drug work in a municipality. The international agreements on drugs influence our local conditions in the anti-drug field-work as regards for instance legislation, says Ove Lundgren.

All conference materials are available at www.ecad.net

Drug tourists are not welcome

At the 16th ECAD Conference in Göteborg, the mayor of the Belgian city of Visé called for solidarity with the smaller cities which are forced to deal with the consequences of the coffee shop policy of the neighbouring Dutch city of Maastricht.

As of the latest developments: The mayor of Maastricht Gerd Leers came up with a proposal to transform the coffee-shops in Limburg province - the southern part of the country - into "clubs" for members. The proposal implies that in order to purchase cannabis a membership will be needed which might take a couple of days to obtain. Further, it is proposed to ban cash payment which means that all purchases would be possible to track down. Leers suggest also cutting the quantity of drug for sale for a customer from 5 to 3 grams.

★ NEW MEMBERS



ECAD WELCOMES
THE CITY OF MONTANA,
BULGARIA!

Human being in the centre of our policy

From page 1

Jörgen Svidén on the issue *ECAD, Drugs and AIDS*:

... As long as they are in accordance with the UN Conventions on Drugs it is not a problem. A successful policy is built on a holistic perspective and a balanced approach. I strongly believe that a restrictive policy, combined with humanity and with a holistic approach, is the most appropriate way to prevent people from being addicted to drugs and infected with HIV. In a restrictive and humane society you will see fewer addicts and the ones who are addicted or infected will be offered help, not punishment. In fact, if you look at a map you will discover that in the areas where you have less restrictive view on drugs, you will find more people infected with HIV/AIDS. The so called harm reduction measures can never be a goal in and of itself, but they can be a tool".

Jörgen Svidén on the issue *Alternatives to imprisonment*:

"Imprisonment should not be taken for granted as a "natural" form of punishment for drug offenders as that has shown to be counterproductive in the rehabilitation and reintegration of this group of people and these measures are far more expensive than most alternatives. The vast majority of the imprisoned population are drug addicts and there is a number of evidence based alternatives to help these people more effectively and less expensively. If we really want to change behaviour and reduce crime, improve health, social well-being and minimize costs for the society, we should prefer alternatives that benefit not only one individual drug user but society as a whole".

Overcrowded prisons create HIV time-bomb

HIV spread through drug abuse is rampant in overcrowded prisons across the world, posing a health risk to society when infected inmates are released, the head of the U.N. drugs and crimes agency said on a press-conference in Vienna, report Reuters.

If prisons are a reflection of society as a whole "we are seeing a disaster around the world," Antonio Maria Costa said, highlighting substandard prisons as one of the major concerns of the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Costa warned of a time-bomb when large numbers of infected inmates are released.

"This is a health bomb because of HIV they take along and this is a bomb because prisons are universities for criminals," he told a news conference.

One prison he visited in Haiti contained around 4,000 prisoners but had been built for 420.

The United Nations has led a 54-year campaign to improve prisons, developing a set of standards for how they should be run and how inmates should be treated. Costa said the United Nations needed to encourage countries to follow these standards and to look at alternatives to prison for minor crimes to ease overcrowding.

Drug use: an overview of general population surveys in Europe

In many European countries, one or more general population surveys have been carried out to get an impression of the characteristics of illicit drug use at national level. Despite valuable efforts to standardise national drug surveys among the general populations in European Member States and to enhance cross-national comparability, national drug surveys still use different instruments, reporting formats and methodologies. To facilitate the comparison of survey practices in EU countries and to provide a tool for everyone planning, organising or executing a survey about drug use among the general population, a meta-analysis of 25 population surveys on drug use in Europe was carried out, including intrinsic and methodological discussions and a description of financial sources, timetables and accessibility of the fieldwork and data documentation.

An EMCDDA publication

<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers/gps>

Court rules khat illegal in Malta

The Magistrates' Court determined that khat, a plant whose leaves are chewed for a mild stimulant effect, is illegal in Malta, even though it is not included in the list of illegal drugs.

Magistrate Miriam Hayman ruled that although the plant itself was not listed, it contains the scheduled substances cathinone, a stimulant similar to amphetamine, and the less potent cathine.

The ruling was made in the case of Aweys Maani Khayre, a 32-year-old British national of Somali origin, who was arrested at the Malta International Airport on May 9, 2008, after being found in possession of 14kg of khat leaves. He had arrived from the UK. Khat is legal in the UK, although it is illegal or controlled in many other countries.

Magistrate Hayman noted that khat use was popular among Africans living in Malta, but added that Malta was not bound to accept all traditions, particularly dangerous ones. She therefore jailed Mr Khayre for 6 months and fined him €466, the minimum sentence possible.

/di-ve.com

ECAD NEWS

Even when they listen with half an ear...

SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that that most youths have been exposed to some kind of substance use prevention message - whether having seen or heard an alcohol or drug prevention message through the general media, participated in special classes about drugs or alcohol, or talked with a parent about the dangers of tobacco, alcohol, or drug use.

The general media (such as radio, TV, posters, or pamphlets) was the primary source for substance use prevention messages. In general, youths who had been exposed to some kind of substance use prevention message were less likely to report past month use of alcohol use, cigarettes, or illicit drugs than youths who had not had such prevention messages.

<http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k9/prevention/prevention.cfm>

Teenagers drink less - thanks to change in parents' attitudes

Swedish experience: in spite of the increasing quantity of alcohol advertisements and illegal import of alcohol into Sweden, during the last 7 years the alcohol consumption among the Swedish adolescence decreased. The explanation Swedish experts seek in the change of parents' attitudes and in a recently outlined trend to sobriety among the youngsters.

Seven years ago it was common among the parents to treat their teenage kids with alcohol at home. Today only some per cent does it. Then, every fourth parent was buying wine for their daughters studying at the 9th grade. Today, only every tenth. The changed attitudes are the result of an active educational campaign among the parents of teenage children.

Swiss Research: Teenagers who have a strong relationship with their parents may start drinking at a later age -which may, in turn, lessen

their risk of developing alcohol problems, a new study suggests.

The findings, published in the May issue of the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, underscore the important role parents play in the risk of problem drinking.

364 teenagers were surveyed three times over two years. They found that in general, teens who reported an earlier drinking age during the first survey tended to be drinking more heavily by the second survey, and were at greater risk of drinking-related problems by the third survey. But a closer look at the data revealed the importance of parents' influence. In fact, only teenagers who reported both a later drinking age and a high-quality relationship with their parents had a lower risk of drinking problems compared with their peers. A high-quality relationship was one where teenagers felt they could discuss their problems with their parents and that their parents respected their feelings.

Dutch police use mini helicopter to sniff out cannabis

The first flight of a newly-designed mini helicopter, or canna-chopper, fitted with cameras and a sniffer had already led to the discovery of a cannabis drying shed and a plant cutting facility. The canna-chopper is fitted with apparatus that takes air samples out of ventilator shafts and chimneys. A dedicated gas analyser is able to recognise traces of weed smell in the air samples. Designed and built by Dutch police engineers, the mini helicop-

ter, which can stay airborne for a maximum of eight hours, is used to track down indoor cannabis plantations.

Cannabis plantation is a huge industry worth as much as EUR 2 billion where 80 percent of the marijuana is exported.

The helicopters are not breaking the law as samples can be taken without entering the building, stressed the police.

/Radio Netherlands

Facts: Netherlands' authorities have created The Programme for Tackling Organized Cannabis Cultivation for 2008-2011. Enormous profits and low risk of arrest have made cannabis cultivation an interesting business for the criminal organisations in the Netherlands. Murder, blackmailing and money laundering are connected to this activity which is now addressed by the Dutch authorities.

Cannabis links to suicide, schizophrenia

Drug Free Australia (DFA) launched the publication of a research paper which draws on world-wide current research into the effects of Cannabis.

"National attention is currently focussed on dealing with binge drinking and so-called 'party drugs'", says DFA Chairman, former Sydney magistrate, Craig Thompson, "but we must not underestimate or trivialise the devastating effects of Cannabis on too many of our young people. This paper gives a clear and concise report on these effects".

DFA would like to see more government action to curb the use of this illicit drug, it wants to reach out to ordinary Australians to ask them to help turn the tide on its social acceptance.

www.drugfree.org.au

Our European societies have experimented and evaluated both tolerance and intolerance to illicit drug use and drug abuse. It is our reflection upon this which guides us towards non-use. This in regard to our children's well-being.



ECAD is Europe's leading organization promoting a drug free Europe and representing millions of European citizens. ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives against drug abuse supporting the United Nations Conventions.
Has your city joined ECAD?

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