



Solidarity - Way to Sustainable Political Decisions



ECAD Advisory Board meeting in Visé

On February 5th, the ECAD Advisory Board held its regular meeting. This time the members of the Board visited the Belgium town of Visé which joined our organisation last year at the Mayors' Conference in Göteborg. Mayor Marcel Neven's address at the Mayors' Forum is available at www.ecad.net/conference-papers.

The Advisory Board discussed routine issues on the agenda and the remaining preparations ahead of the 17th Mayors' Conference which will take place in Malta on April 22-24, 2010.

The meeting of the Board fortunately coincided with a festive event - a reopening of the town's old church after nearly 20 years of renovation. At the picture, all participants of the ceremony assembled in the chancel, letting the photographers to do their work...

Visé, a town with about 17,000 inhabitants, is strategically located half-way between Liège and Maastricht, on a bank of the major waterway of the region, river Maas. There were not many historical twists and turns which did not affect this small French speaking Walloon town. It is then not a surprise that the citizens are proud of their 700-year old club of arbalesters and two significantly

younger but still beloved clubs of harquebusiers which have shown their treasures at the church ceremony.

Mind you, even in today's united Europe the neighbours continue to cause citizens of Visé a headache. Maastricht, the neighbouring Dutch city, tries to push some of its burden over the border. In his address at the ECAD Mayors' Forum, Marcel Neven called for solidarity with the regions' cities which suffer from the consequences of drug tourism - a phenomenon which is fuelled by Maastricht's many "legal", "high quality" and "comfortable" cannabis outlets, so called "coffee shops". This Dutch municipality was not able to resolve the situation on its own, though it came up with a number of different measures, among them a proposal to move some of the coffee shops out of the city centre and closer to the Belgian border!

Visé organised a meeting with a representative of the Maastricht city administration, Mr Peter Corsius. This, in order to deepen the Board's understanding of the situation which the cities of the region are faced with. The cities, which do not agree that consumption of marijuana upon the municipal indulgence is a good response to the drug abuse problem...

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Malta Conference

17th ECAD Mayors' Conference in

Malta: April 22-24, 2010

Location: Island of Gozo

EMPOWERING OUR CITIZENS TO
HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES

*Hosted by the Government of Malta and
Pembroke Local Council*

Register at
www.ecad.net/conferences

ECAD AWARD



The call for nominations for the 2010 ECAD Award is still open!

ECAD instituted 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. Nominations are accepted until March 31st, 2010.

Read more at www.ecad.net/award

New WFAD in May

The Second World Forum Against Drugs will take place in Stockholm, Sweden on May 24-25, 2010 under the high patronage of H.M. Queen Silvia of Sweden.

WORLD FORUM
AGAINST DRUGS



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The Incredible President

By Dr. Manuel Pinto Coelho, President of APLD - Association for a Drug Free Portugal

Dr. Manuel Pinto Coelho, President of APLD - Association for a Drug Free Portugal, shared with us his selection of statements made by the new EMCDDA Chairman for Portuguese and International media before his election to this position.

Dr. João Goulão, current President of the Institute for Drugs and Drug Addiction in Portugal (IDT) and the National Drug Coordinator, was elected Chairman for the next three years of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), based in Lisbon. He was also a member of the Portuguese commission which proposed the current national drug strategy.

Europe is based upon democratic ideals and values promoting the highest levels of Health and Safety for its citizens. Therefore its leaders should not try to weaken or repeal strategies related to policies on drug abuse and drug addiction adopted both nationally and internationally.

Internationally, effectiveness in combating the plague of drugs has been defined by: prioritizing objectives, timing interventions, concerted efforts, and the determination to implement these measures. Promoting policies that accept or encourage any kind of drug abuse or dependency is a serious violation of human rights as well as individual dignity.

To defend and allow a portion of the population to remain chemically or psychologically enslaved by drugs is not only illegal, but also inhumane.

Society should not and cannot be a part of the degradation of drug addicts, and must not send mixed messages of tolerance towards drugs to the youth.

The message given to drug users should be clear: "We are interested in getting you out of where you are, and we will not allow you to destroy yourselves or destroy those around you!"

Therefore, it is worrying that the recently elected Chairman of a respectable and important institution as EMCDDA has produced statements that contrast with the legitimate options of the International Community, as shown below in his statements:

- "I'm not a fundamentalist with drugs since people can live in balance with them."

Source: "Farmácia Portuguesa" No. 160, Nov / Dec 2005.

- "A drug-free society is a utopia. All societies have drugs. Our traditional drugs are alcohol and tobacco. But perhaps we have to think that cannabis may now also be embedded in our culture. Kids might have seen their parents or grandparents using it and this must be incorporated into the argument ... " ... "The new model should perhaps be legalization and regulation of the sale and consumption of drugs. I think this is inevitable, and is something that must be done jointly by several countries. I think the programs in therapeutic uses of heroin may one day be a need here ... It is evident that I would like to create an assisted injection room. It would start in Lisbon, in the area of the Intendente eventually."

Source: "Diário de Notícias", May 5, 2005.

- "Do not share pipes or other materials used to snort"; "Alternate the nostril you use"; "In case of taking LSD, it is good that there is someone with experience of consuming it nearby, because it can help in case of a 'bad trip'."

Source: Published by IDT (where Dr. João Goulão serves as Director): leaflets distributed in 2007 to Portuguese schools.

- "There are no recipes." This was Dr. João Goulão's answer to the question: "How do I prevent my son from becoming dependent on drugs?"

Source: Published on the IDT official website www.idt.pt/id.asp?id=p9p25p320 <<http://www.idt.pt/id.asp?id=p9p25p320>>."

- "Cannabis is not any more seen as a gateway to other drugs ..."

Source: Portuguese magazine "Mundo Universitário", May 5, 2008.

- "We made a set of proposals to the Government, among them the decriminalizing of drug use, with a commitment to the policy of harm reduction."

Source: Portuguese weekly newspaper-magazine "Sol-Tabu", No. 92, June 13, 2008.

- I pity the change of Dr. João Goulão's opinion from this one ...

Journalist Inês Menezes asked: "But it is possible to believe that drug addicts are all recoverable, since this is what they want?"

Answer: "Absolutely. I believe that anyone is able, at some point in their lives, to stop taking drugs and start a new life of total abstinence."

Source: Portuguese weekly magazine "Xis-Publico", September 16, 2006.

- ... to this one:

"The heroic attempt to stop addiction to heroin does work in some cases, but rarely. As a diabetic needs insulin, some people need an opiate - more and more scientific evidence points to this. There is on nerve receptors level a deficit that is installed in the production of certain chemical mediators which requires that these people need an opiate to achieve a socially, family and professionally well-integrated life. Very often when trying to stop, these addicts 'fall', and return to the 'street' consumption, demolishing all the work already achieved. Hence, the IDT prefers to keep users in programs."

Source: "Diário de Notícias": "Many are attached to methadone forever", February 23, 2009,

This selection of public statements made by the new Chairman of the EMCDDA clearly reflects an erratic thought and a lack of reflection.

/Dr. Manuel Pinto Coelho

Low support for legalisation among Britons

A January public opinion survey indicates that UK policy is broadly in line with core public opinion. There is a lot of stridency and very well financed hot air around drug legalisation and liberalisation. Because it is so well financed and supported so often by media advocacy, it no doubt misrepresents what the electorate and passive majority really think, comments British drug expert David Raynes. Most respondents oppose making marijuana legal. 56% believe the UK has a serious drug abuse problem and it affects the whole country 35% are in favour of legalising marijuana; 58% are opposed. More than 75% would not legalise other drugs (such as ecstasy, powder cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and crack cocaine).

Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 2,007 randomly selected British adults who are Springboard UK panellists. The margin of error — which measures sampling variability — is +/- 2.2%.

The drug situation in Norway:

Comprehensive report

Sirus, Norwegian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research, published its Annual report on the drug situation in Norway to be sent to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction – EMCDDA. Here are some highlights.

National policies: Injection rooms made permanent

On 15 June 2009, the Norwegian parliament decided to make the temporary Act relating to injection rooms permanent. The injection room scheme will serve as a supplement in an overall chain of measures targeting those with major health problems who have difficulty quitting their drug use. Based on local needs, the individual municipalities can decide whether they wish to establish an injection room scheme. The legislative amendments with pertaining regulations enter into force on 17 December 2009.

Drug use among young people: stability

The figures showed stability and, in part, a decline in relation to previous surveys (ESPAD). The decline is most pronounced in the use of cannabis. In 2007, around 6 per cent stated that they had ever used cannabis, while the corresponding figure for 2003 was 9 per cent and, in 1999, 12 per cent. There were no significant changes for use during the last 30 days, however, which has been around 2 to 3 per cent in the last two surveys. The decline in cannabis use also reflects the tendency in Europe as a whole.

Use of heroin: reduction

In a new survey covering the years 2000 to 2008 it has been estimated how many people have used heroin in Norway, including those who have only smoked it. Based on different methods, it is estimated that between 6,600 and 12,300 had used heroin regularly in 2008, a considerable reduction in relation to 2000 when the estimate was 9,550 to 17,750.

Health consequences: stable

The incidence of HIV among injecting drug users in the group has remained at a stable, low level, with about 10 to 15 cases reported per

year. The reason for this is not entirely clear, but a high level of testing, great openness regarding HIV status within the user milieu, combined with a strong fear of being infected and strong internal justice in the milieu, are assumed to be important factors.

Cannabis market: highly flexible

The market seems to be highly flexible and has ties to several quite distinct milieus. We have a fairly good overview of street-level sales. Knowledge about smugglers and couriers is also relatively extensive. On the other hand, we know little about the so-called ringleaders and wholesale dealers. The question is whether there are any clear ringleaders. There are many indications that there are few links in the chain between importation and the direct sale of hash to users. Price estimates suggest that sellers buy from persons who themselves have bought the drug from importers, or that there is one more link in the chain.

Problem amphetamine and methamphetamine use: increase

The main findings in the data collated indicate that there has been an increase in the use of amphetamines in Norway for many years and that this increase has mostly concerned the use of methamphetamine. This represents something of a contrast to previous reports that indicate little use of methamphetamine in our part of Europe, while it confirms previous reports from

EMCDDA indicating that Norway is the country in Europe with the quantitatively largest and highest number of seizures, and where the problems associated with methamphetamine can also be substantial. The most remarkable finding in the survey presented is that most of the amphetamine used now appears to be methamphetamine. There is reason to believe that the trend has more to do with supply. New drug trading patterns have developed in step with the liberalisation of border controls in Europe, and there is reason to believe that the most important explanation for the shift from amphetamine to methamphetamine as the predominant substance in Norway is new producers and importers in the market, possible production in the Baltic countries.

Sudden deaths foil cocaine myth

More than three percent of sudden deaths in Europe can be cocaine-related. A combination with tobacco and alcohol increases risks. It is a conclusion from a Spanish study which examined a consecutive series of sudden deaths with focus on the prevalence, the toxicological characteristics, and the causes of death in cocaine-related fatalities.

With an estimated 12 million consumers in Europe, cocaine is the illicit drug leading to the most emergency department visits. The results of the study show that the myth of cocaine as a safe recreational drug is what it is, a myth. Cocaine abusers risk their life every time they take the drug.

- Even small amount of cocaine can have

catastrophic consequences, such as sudden death, says Joaquin Lucena who led the study "Cocaine-related sudden death: a prospective investigation in south-west Spain" for European Heart Journal.

The researchers analysed 668 cases of sudden death in Sevilla, Spain, in 2003-2006. They found out that 21 case or 3.1 per cent were cocaine-associated. All 21 persons were men aged between 21 and 45.

The study found out also that the majority smoked (81 %) and in three cases of four alcohol was consumed concurrently with the drug. These combination increases the probability for sudden death, the study concludes.

- Our research showed that cocaine has dramatically worsened the cardiovascular system's function which led to death, comments Lucena.

★ ECAD NEWS

Since the misuse of cocaine looks similar all over Europe, the results might be applied for other countries, the researchers suggest. As it is pointed out by the EMCDDA, cocaine abuse represents a growing public health issue: about 3.7 per cent of European population between 15 and 64 years of age, about 12 million people, misuse the drug. The problem is biggest in Spain and the UK.

Solidarity - Way to ...

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A conclusion which could be drawn from a rather expletive address of Mr. Corsius is simple: some 30 years ago, when the Netherlands have chosen their way of dealing with cannabis, not all Dutch cities realised what spectrum of consequences their policy would bring about in a Europe without borders... Mr Corsius invited "to think together" about what could be done in the present state of affairs. What are the chances that an adequate decision would be made – to close down coffee shops? The decision making process seems to be greatly complicated by the fact that the income from sales of this illegal by both international and Dutch laws narcotic drug has become an important source of the city's budget.

A short discussion between the members of the ECAD group after visiting one of the drug outlets located some hundred meters away from the city hall, revealed that we all have been stricken by the same observation: customers, which were many on a Friday afternoon, all looked pretty much as any "ordinary" young people... this led us to a sombre reflection on how the present system of coffee shops with the authorised sale of 5 g hashish or marijuana per purchase occasion broadens a circle of potential drug consumers...

However, there are signs that the situation in the Netherlands might be getting straightened out, thanks to the efforts of national and international communities. ECAD is glad that Maastricht has a neighbour which is ready to help to create a sustainable solution.

ECAD thanks colleagues in Visé for their great hospitality and good organisation of the meeting.

Editorial

Follow development of drug situation in Czech Republic

From 1 January Czech Republic decriminalized "small" possession of drugs (all drugs – from cannabis to cocaine and heroin), a fact which is likely to further aggravate the extremely precarious drug situation in the country. ESPAD data from 2007 reveals that the highest life-time prevalence of cannabis use among schoolchildren aged 15-16 years in the Czech Republic (45 %), while Estonia, France, Netherlands, Slovakia and the UK reported prevalence rates under 32%. The lowest levels (less than 10%) reported in Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Finland, Sweden and Norway.

*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 communities'** 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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World Forum Against Drugs

Again in Sweden



John Walters at the WFAD'08;
photo Marcus Haggström

- We look forward to establish an international forum to strengthen a balanced, restrictive global drug policy, says Sofia Modigh, project leader for the 2010 World Forum Against Drugs.

The Executive Director of UNODC, Antonio Maria Costa, and the Swedish Minister for Public Health, Maria Larsson, will give key note speeches at the conference.

The World Forum will take place in Stockholm, Sweden on May 24-25, 2010 under the high patronage of H.M. Queen Silvia of Sweden.

Delegates from 80 countries participated in the first Forum which took place in Stockholm in 2008.

International and national scientists, politicians, policy makers, NGOs, law enforcement agencies, social workers, parents and other organisations and individuals are expected to participate.

- We have worked hard for a couple of years to bring together drug-restrictive forces from all over the world. On the global arena, the pro-drug lobby has stood unchallenged for too long. We are very pleased that the World Federation Against Drugs has been founded as this enables us to work effectively on the international arena, says WFAD Board Secretary Per Johansson.

The World Federation Against Drugs (WFAD) is a multilateral community of non-governmental organisations and individuals. Founded in 2009, the aim of WFAD is to work for a drug-free world. The members of the WFAD share a common concern that illicit drug use is undercutting traditional values and threatening the existence of stable families, communities, and government institutions throughout the world.

Visit the conference home page at www.wfad.se

HeSaidSheSaid

He said: *You don't need to do it for my sake!*

She said: *It's for my sake I do it for your sake.*



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