

# KONFERENCE (NOVÉ) HORIZONTY PROTIDROGOVÉ POLITIKY VE STŘEDOEVROPSKÝCH METROPOLÍCH

25. - 27. 9. 2014



## Declaration of the New Horizons drug policy 2014

(updated principles on local anti-drug policies)

This declaration is the outcome of meetings and discussions between people with of decision-making powers, representatives of municipal government, workers within prevention, treatment, harm reduction and law enforcement, and representatives of the research community in the field of substance abuse at the conference *(New) Horizons of drug policy in Central European metropolis*, which took place on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in Prague.

The main objective of the conference was to present and define effective and realistic anti-drug policies in major European cities and to introduce New Horizons, i.e. innovative, tested and functional measures implemented on local level to minimize negative health, social, criminal law, security and economic impacts of the production, distribution and use of addictive substances which can affect a healthy development of both individuals and society.

You can support the declaration on <http://www.drug-horizon-prague.cz>, but the most important support is to implement effective and realistic anti-drug policies in your cities.

*(New) Horizons of drug policy in Central European metropolis* is thematically linked to the conference *Urban Drug Policies in the Globalised World – Prague 2010*, which emphasized the key role of the municipalities and anti-drug policies in preventing and/or reducing the impacts of the production, distribution and use of drugs and solving the problems associated with drugs.

Trends in production, distribution and use of addictive substances need to be addressed by appropriate measures, and this has prompted a number of changes in Central Europe since 2010. There has also been development in the knowledge about the phenomena associated with the use of drugs, as well as the interventions and measures for an effective solution. This has, in its turn, motivated the participants of *(New) Horizons of drug policy in Central European metropolis* to supplement and update the basic principles of effective drug policy implemented by municipalities.

We who have signed this policy believe that the problems associated with substance use are most effectively addressed through action and intervention, with anti-drug policies implemented at the local level. The municipal governments and the local anti-drug policies play a key role in the prevention and/or reduction of the negative impacts of drugs and the solution to the related problems. For them to be truly effective, anti-drug policies should in both formulation and implementation follow these ten principles:

### 1. Integrated approach

Experience clearly shows that different types of addictions or addictive behaviour - regardless of the legal status of the addictive substances - are closely linked, and that their characteristics are very similar. Having different drug policies depending on the type of drug - legal and illegal - is dysfunctional and ineffective. An appropriate solution is an integrated drug policy, consisting of many complex, interrelated and evidence-based preventive, educational, health, social, regulatory and control measures as well as law enforcement in relation to these substances - both illegal and legal.

## **2. Accepting responsibility for public health**

The responsibility for protecting the public health, the quality of life, as well as security and order does not only lie with the central authorities, but also the local governments. Therefore, all public authorities - including the authorities of cities and municipalities - have to cooperate and coordinate planned and implemented measures that contribute to the formulation as well as the financing and implementation of policies, responding to the specific local needs and conditions.

## **3. Harm reduction – a common goal**

Measures that reduce the supply of drugs, reduce demand, and minimize the risks (harm reduction) are presented as contradictory, but they are not. Their ultimate goal is to reduce the possible negative health, social, criminal law, safety or economic consequences of the production, distribution and/or abuse.

## **4. Mapping and evaluation of the situation and needs**

Problems associated with the production, distribution and use of drugs in different regions and cities vary and may change over time. The city authorities have a crucial role in the ongoing mapping and evaluation of the situation and the needs, as well as for planning, financing and implementing necessary measures and interventions based on their integrated drug policy.

## **5. The four pillars of anti-drug policy**

The measures and interventions of the integrated drug policy implemented in cities and towns should be based on knowledge from research and build on four pillars: primary prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, risk minimisation, and reducing the supply of drugs. Cities should promote a balance of complex and interrelated actions and interventions in the areas of primary prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, harm reduction and law enforcement in their respective territories, taking into account the needs of both individuals and communities.

## **6. Partnership and mutual respect**

The measures of the integrated drug policy are implemented by professionals from different areas who approach the problems associated with drugs based on quite different theoretical assumptions. With regard to this, different objectives and different methods and forms of work are used, but they all pursue their common goal - to reduce the risk of the diverse potential negative consequences of the production, distribution and use of drugs for individuals and local communities, and to do this on the lowest possible level. To be effective it is essential to not compete, but to cooperate and respect each other and the many different methods and forms of work that are used in the implementation of the drug policies.

## **7. The courage to innovate**

The changing trends in drug production, distribution and patterns of use require courage from decision-makers at all levels of government, but in particular at the municipal level where innovation is necessary when implementing drug policies and reacting to the current needs, which will respond to the current identified needs and foreign

experience. Some measures may not be popular with voters, but their functionality has been verified in a number of European cities. Deciding to adopt these therefore requires political courage.

## **8. Equal access to professional services**

According to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon nobody should ever be stigmatized because of substance use. This is also true for access to specialized medical help and/or social services, which drug users often are denied. This can only be changed with the support of communal authorities through information campaigns, which will seek to influence the public opinion and sometimes hostile attitudes of healthcare workers and social services towards drug users, whose addiction is defined by the World Health Organization as a disease. Sick people should never have to be stigmatized or discriminated because of their illness.

## **9. Lessons learned from experience and knowledge gained from research**

When formulating and implementing local drug policies we should build on the experience from other European cities and from the knowledge gained from research. When designing drug policies moralistic prejudices and stereotypes should not play any role, but we should base our work on evidence-based research and experience from foreign colleagues.

## **10. A plan is not enough**

Cities continuously work with many different types of strategic or communal plans to address the pressing problems which their citizens have, including problems associated with drugs. In many cases the planned activities stay on paper, and for different reason they never get implemented. This jeopardizes the trust of citizens and workers of various types of services, organizations and institutions at the local level in the planning process. Local authorities should develop realistic plans, i.e. such plans as for which they have the necessary financial resources.