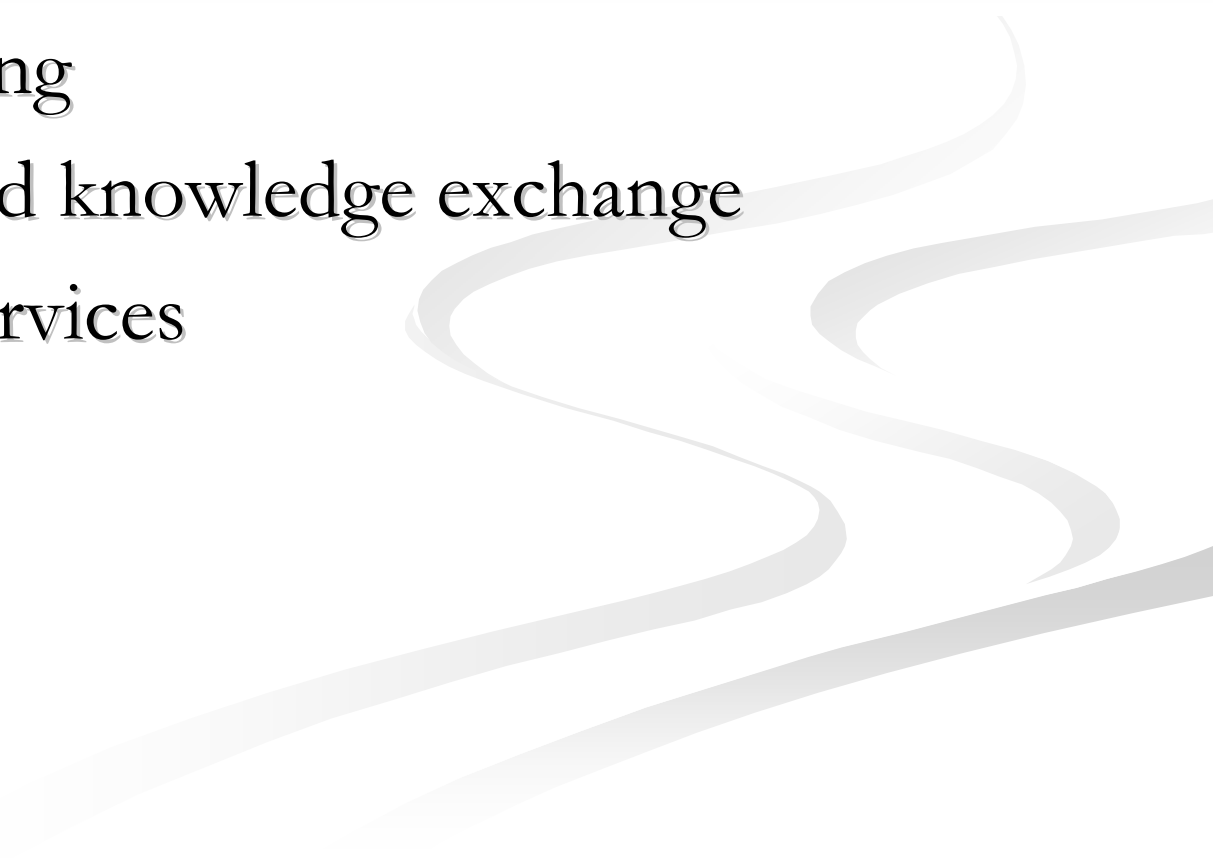


Prisons, HIV and drugs: NGO role and perspective

Civil Society Forum & Think Tank April 2007



Civil society role

- Agreeing on the principles
 - Advocacy
 - Capacity building
 - Networking and knowledge exchange
 - Provision of services
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Declarations and platforms

- Dublin Declaration on HIV/AIDS in Prisons in Europe and Central Asia (2004)
- Lisbon Agenda for Prisons (2006)
 - Consensus papers with principles and recommendations for actions
 - Prepared by NGOs, academia and governmental experts; Endorsed by variety of NGOs and researchers
 - Lisbon Agenda influenced recent Portuguese new action plan on infectious diseases in prisons

Principles in the documents

- Integration of prison health and public health ('Prison Health is Public Health')
- Human rights
- Evidence based and reality based approaches
 - Drugs, sex and violence exist in prisons, high rates of HIV, hepatitis, TB, mental health problems
 - Harm reduction approaches rather than zero-tolerance policies

Examples of civil society work

- Documentation of evidence (incl new trends, cost effectiveness of interventions)
 - Study on substitution therapy implementation in Europe, studies on amphetamine-type stimulant use in prisons etc (ENDIPP in partnership with academia)
- Facilitating exchanges through European conferences and facilitated partnerships of prison service and NGOs
 - ENDIPP, a number of new EU member states)

Examples of civil society work II

- Advocacy through legal mitigation
 - Harm reduction in Baskian prisons started after prisoner brought prison service to court demanding for such services and he win (mid-90s)
- Identification of problem and raising the issue
 - Bavaria in custodies juvenile (16-21 yrs) are tested for HIV on 'compulsory voluntary' basis (you are treated as HIV+, if you refuse to get tested) – information collected and ongoing advocacy

Examples of civil society work III

- Provision of services (including drug rehabilitation, harm reduction, pre-release and after-release care)
 - UK Prison Service buys drug services in prisons from NGOs (RApT, Cranstoun)
 - Estonia: self-support and counseling, treatment preparedness in prisons implemented by NGO Convictus Eesti with GF and Prison service support

Obstacles to effective responses in prisons

- Neglecting problems, reality and not evidence based strategies (big focus should remain on advocacy for policy and practice enhancement)
- Not all prison services or prisons easily allow to enter prisons
- Funding for delivering of services
- Not as many NGOs are ready to enter prisons (in some countries)
- Lack of national standards (e.g. on T&C) and their inaction

Priority recommendations I

- Prison health should get higher on agenda
 - Jointly by Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Health (involving Ministry of Interior)
 - Possibly topic in some EU presidency
- Involving all stakeholders in decisions
 - Joint leadership of Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice (involving Ministry of Interior)
 - Including AIDS practitioners, prison staff and guards, (ex)prisoner groups/drug user groups, community-based services and NGOs etc
- Considering broad range of options of evidence based policies and strategies
 - Including harm reduction, alternatives to imprisonment, responses to new phenomena (increasing stimulant use), promoted volunteer, confidentiality-based T&C for HIV, hepatitis, vaccination for hepatitis A, B, linking services in penitentiary, custodies and community, treatment with support mechanisms
- Means to implement those strategies (funding, human resources etc)

Priority recommendations II

- Strengthening of national cooperation, sharing good practice and joint good practice standards
 - including through WHO HIPP (Health in Prisons)
 - Enacting existing recommendations and guidance (e.g. EU Council's *Recommendation on the prevention and reduction of health-related harm associated with drug dependence*; Council of Europe's *Committee of Ministers to Member States Concerning the Ethical and Organisational Aspects of Health Care in Prison*; *Moscow Declaration*, existing WHO status papers on Prisons, Drugs and Harm Reduction; on Tuberculosis and Prisons; upcoming WHO guidance on prisons and health)
- NGOs work in the field should be supported; however they cannot substitute governmental services and commitment for universal access to HIV services

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