

SOLIDIFY project: a broad European partnership stands for a local drug policy based on the principles of harm reduction and supports the implementation of Supervised Drug Consumption Facilities

On 5 and 6 December 2019, 150 participants took part in the final conference of Efus' SOLIDIFY project, held in Lisbon, Portugal. Co-hosted with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the Municipality of Lisbon (CML), the event showcased work produced over two years on how to foster local multi-agency partnerships around Supervised Drug Consumption Facilities (SDCFs) in order to capitalise on the positive impacts they can have for urban security and public tranquillity.

A hub for intense exchange and discussion

The participants – representatives of local, regional and national authorities, civil society organisations, research centres, law enforcement agencies, and initiatives and networks of people who use drugs – discussed a range of key questions relating to the future of European drug policies.

These included:

- How to foster local multi-stakeholder partnerships?
- How to improve cooperation between providers of health services, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the police?
- How to better assess the impact of harm reduction on public health and urban security?
- What role can drug checking play in reinforcing prevention and harm reduction at the local level?

These questions were discussed during lively panel discussions, breakout sessions and workshops, but also during 7 study visits to local harm-reduction services. These visits were organised by the Municipality of Lisbon in cooperation with the NGOs CRESCER, Medicos do Mundo, GAT and Ares do Pinhal, as well as the parish of Lumiar and the EMCDDA.

Co-producing balanced drug policies in Europe

In her keynote speech, Ruth Dreifuss, former President of the Swiss Confederation and Chair of the Global Commission on Drug Policy, called on the participants to further intensify and professionalise their efforts in the face of a current global pushback against progressive drug policies: "My experience has led me to believe that cities are the level where reforms are

required and can take place, beyond national legislation. This is where professionals from health service providers, law enforcement and policymakers are working together on the ground. We should not wait for a technical organisation with a limited mandate to tell us what to do in order to save lives and ensure the safety of our citizens”.

Alexis Goosdeel, EMCDDA Director, said: “I am particularly pleased to see so many health, security and law enforcement practitioners together at this conference. Multi-sectoral cooperation at the local level is what will make the difference in the future. We must prepare new generations to continue this work.”

Nuno Veludo, advisor for health policy at the Lisbon City Council (CML), stressed the link between harm reduction, drug policy and democracy: “We must reinforce our measures to support drug users and other vulnerable groups and empower them to participate actively in local democracy and public deliberation – all citizens have an equally important place in the public sphere.”

Bernard Rivailié, Deputy Mayor of Lormont and member of Efus’ executive committee, stressed the need for peer-to-peer support among cities: “Through the promotion and exchange of experiences and successful practices between European cities, we wish to continue to work on this issue by mobilising local elected representatives and all local actors in order to bring out the full potential of drug prevention projects and programmes.”

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