

Democracy, Cities and Drugs resolution

Drugs trafficking and consumption are phenomena that are deeply part of our cities' public spaces. As elected representatives in charge of the common good, we have to face this reality, and make sure we limit its harmful effect on people, families and the general public.

Thus, any approach has to be based not on ideology but on realism and the analysis of facts, more specifically on the results of the scientific assessment requested by the European Commission¹.

A certain consensus already exists in this matter. We can see it in the Zaragoza Manifesto (2006), the Vienna Declaration (2010), and the Prague Declaration (2010) which state some principles and recommendations that we would like to recall here.

The issues of security and public health should not be seen as two opposed notions, but rather as complementary and interdependent.

We must make sure that the basic human rights of people suffering from severe distress due to drug consumption are guaranteed. Indeed, these distresses have to be considered above all as diseases.

It has become clear that policies, mostly repressive against users, have proven to be inefficient. They only intensify the stigmatisation of drug users, and put them and their community more at risk. The priorities of such policies are the fight against drug trafficking, in particular at an international level, and the organization of the market. But the drug users are not part of it.

It is known that local policies have the most direct effect on any situation linked to drugs. Also, local authorities play a key-role in gathering information and implementing innovative solutions. It is the responsibility of local authorities to promote favourable conditions for coexistence among people, allowing each individual to assert him/herself as a citizen, and contribute to building social cohesion. This also concerns drug users.

Local policies must be part of a precise national and international framework, while adapted to each specific local situation. Local authorities must have the means and freedom to experiment innovative responses. Public financing must allow a good balance between the need to reduce the offer, the demand and the damages.

¹ Reuter, Peter (RAND) and Trautmann, Franz (Trimbos Institute) (Editors) : A report on Global Illicit Drugs Markets 1998-2000, European Communities, 2009

International conventions must also take into account this necessary balance. They must be re-assessed in light of the previously mentioned scientific evaluation requested by the European Commission, given their failure both in terms of public security and public health. Realism and pragmatism must match individuals' fundamental rights and freedom.

In reference to the above-mentioned texts and following the “Democracy, Cities and Drugs” project, European cities members of the European Forum for Urban Security and the project partners have agreed on the following principles:

1. Partnerships and cooperation must be reinforced, once and again, so that everyone (including drug users) may contribute to a common approach ;
2. Fostering a global debate on a controlled decriminalisation of these health issues that are drug consumption and in particular the addiction to psychotropic substances;
3. Repressive means must be targeted more clearly towards markets control, especially international ones, which means recognising drug trafficking, and the underground economy linked to it, as one of the most destructive factors against social cohesion and coexistence in our cities;
4. Cooperation and dialogue between the scientific, political and technical arenas must be constantly favoured and strengthened;
5. The task of local officials when it comes to adapting treatments offered to the actual needs of affected citizens must be facilitated;
6. Any prevention or therapeutic approach must focus more specifically on women. Vulnerable groups must also benefit from specific and adapted policies;
7. Therapeutic monitoring has to be considered as an effective alternative to imprisonment. But it has to be seen that adapted treatments also have to be offered to the inmates.
8. Any national or international policy must take into account the fact that drug trafficking and consumption does not only affect large cities but also small and medium ones that, throughout Europe, are currently struggling to tackle these issues, and are prejudiced by flagrant inequalities in terms of financial means and health capacities.

[1] <http://zaragoza2006.fesu.org/>

[2] <http://www.viennadeclaration.com/>

[3] <http://www.praguedeclaration.com/>

[4] European Commission report: the world drugs problem, ten years on, March 2009