PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH AS A BASE FOR DRUG POLICY: THE PORTUGUESE EXPERIENCE
Public health approach as a base for drug policy: the Portuguese experience

57th Session on the Interamerican Drug Abuse Control Commission - CICAD

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General-Director for Intervention on Addictive Behaviors and Dependencies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEO-DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North/South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East/West</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surface</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1990’s:
Heroin, injection, HIV => CRISIS

Ongoing national debate:
Criminalise / incarcerate users, addicts?

1998: Appointment of commission to define a new national strategy on drugs
Where should the balance be?

Punishment

Alternative
1. Reinforce International Cooperation…
2. Decriminalise consumption, forbidding it as unlawful administrative offense
3. Redirect towards prevention…
4. Expand and improve the care network…
5. Extend harm reduction policies…
6. Promote and encourage social reintegration…
7. Ensure access to treatment for addicted prisoners…
8. Enlargement to other dependencies and addictive behaviours…

…
From July 2001: Decriminalisation

Up to 10 doses, no supply
⇒ Administrative offence
⇒ CDT (Ministry of Health)

More than 10 doses, no supply
⇒ Criminal offence
⇒ Court (Ministry of Justice)

- CDT (Comissão para a Dissuasão da Toxicodependência):
- Exist in every district, see every user
- 3 members (Ministries of Justice and Health), plus support team.
- Aim: treat any addiction and rehabilitate the person using the most appropriate interventions

- Options: warnings; banning from certain places or from meeting certain people; obligation of periodic visits to a defined place; removal of professional licence or firearms licence; fines (not for addicts), which may vary by drug involved.
COORDINATION STRUCTURE FOR DRUGS, DRUG ADDICTION AND THE HARMFUL USE OF ALCOHOL

MINISTER OF HEALTH

INTER-MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
* Headed by the Prime-Minister

NATIONAL COORDINATOR

NATIONAL COUNCIL

TECHNICAL COMMISSION
* Headed by the National Coordinator

IDT - SICAD

SUBCOMMISSIONS

REPRESENTATIVES OF CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Executive functions

Subsidiary functions

Advisory functions
THE INTERMINISTERIAL COUNCIL

- Foreign Affairs
- Budget/Finances
- National Defense
- Internal Affairs
- Justice
- Economy
- Agriculture
- Environment
- Labour
- Social Security
- Health
- Education
- Science and Higher Education

NATIONAL COORDINATOR
The balance in Portugal

UN Conventions – “may provide, as alternatives to conviction or punishment, ....”

Punishment

Alternative

Consistent and coherent...
Young Adult Population (15-34 years), last 12 months prevalence, by type of drug (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Any Drug</th>
<th>Cannabis</th>
<th>Heroin</th>
<th>Cocaine</th>
<th>Amphetamines</th>
<th>Ecstasy</th>
<th>LSD</th>
<th>Hallucinogenic Mushrooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intravenous drug use in the last 12 months

Patients starting treatment in the year:
Public Network– Outpatient
Evaluation – does it work?

Positivist:

• Many statistics, many interpretations
• “Resounding success” or “disastrous failure”? 
• How much has the situation changed because of the policy?

Social Constructivist:

• Various governments of different colours have not changed the system
• Not mentioned in national Parliament
• Not a concern of the public
General-Directorate for Intervention on Addictive Behaviors and Dependencies (SICAD)

Thank you for your attention

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www.sicad.pt