

Affected Populations: Recovered Users

Submitted by Borislav Goic, CSTF Representative Affected populations: Recovered users

Thematic consultations in category of Affected Populations: Recovered Users were organized by Recovered Users Network - RUN and NGO Proslavi Oporavak/Celebrate Recovery. The Report is based on widespread, global consultations with CSOs from around the world, professionals and experts specialized in the field of recovery and rehabilitation, NGOs working in the field of recovery, users of these services-recovered users; service providers, research community as well as governmental institutions. Timeframe set for collecting the input was between May and December 2015. An electronic consultation letter was sent out and we received responses from global and regional associations. In addition to this, we have organized and/or participated in 12 conferences (Poland -July; Bosnia and Herzegovina, between June and November; Serbia- September and December; Croatia-October; Belgium-September; Sweden- October; UK-October; Turkey- November; Austria- December) and 27 in-person meetings. Approximately 153 representatives of organizations and 73 individuals from around 40 different countries contributed to the consultations. The consultation events were held in an interactive style with NGO representatives and experts working together.

Best practices

A best practice is the one in the *UK*. They have shifted their drug policy from reducing harm to full recovery from addiction. Their paradigm is that the ambition for more people to recover is legitimate, deliverable, and overdue. Previous drug strategies focused on reducing crime and drug related harm to public health, where the

benefit to society accrued from people being retained in treatment programs as much as from completing them. The result of new approach is that more people have started their recovery and have found hope and help in becoming drug free. *San Patrignano Foundation from Italy* is the biggest rehabilitation center in the world. They think that people with drug problems are part of the solution, and not only part of the problem. San Patrignano has thousands of testimony of a changing that can be done, and recovery that can be sustained. Not only they say that they improve, they have become testimonials that Recovery works.

Main challenges

The main challenge is to provide services which will be focused on Recovery and facilitate establishment of abstinence, maintaining abstinence, finding a job; starting a new household; establishing new social networks, etc. Such services should be accessible, affordable or free -especially traditional forms of treatment i.e. abstinence and 12-step based outpatient, inpatient, and residential programmes. Follow up programs after the completion of treatment are crucial for successful reintegration of recovered users. The challenge and opportunity ahead is to develop a coordinated, comprehensive health-focused approach that addresses the individual within the context of communities.

Action-orientated recommendations for the UNGASS roundtables

✓ CSOs urge the need for investing more in treatment, recovery, rehabilitation and social re-integration.

- ✓ Countries need to provide services which will facilitate establishment of abstinence, maintaining abstinence, finding a job; starting a new household; establishing new social networks, etc and follow up programs after the completion of treatment.
- ✓ It is recommended that the monitoring of effectiveness of drug treatment must include data on social reintegration.
- ✓ Recovery should be incorporated as an important facet and paradigm of drug policies.
- ✓ There is a need to improve drug policies and acknowledge the importance of:
 1. focusing on abstinence and recovery rather than simply seeking to reduce harm
 2. having clear goals in services that are regularly monitored and assessed
 3. having a clear pathway into and out of services
 4. recognizing that treatment is not an end in itself, but a journey with a clear end.
 5. investing in support services for close friends and families of addicts, as well as holistic family therapy
 6. the message of recovery and examples of recovered users which can motivate others

Recovered users urge the need for:

- ✓ acknowledging that abstinence is a goal for many drug users seeking help.
- ✓ strengthening the evidence base around recovery based treatment, including the role of family and close friends.
- ✓ recognizing the potential of recovered users and assist them in their way back to the society; and acknowledge their potential to help their peers.
- ✓ Given the crucial role of recovery and social reintegration in limiting and overcoming drug-related problems in the long term, a better

understanding of these interventions is greatly needed.

- ✓ From the costs and benefits standpoint, the costs of drug-related problems outweigh social benefits of drug treatment and recovery programs. Investing in recovering and recovered addicts leads to a positive net gain in the long run, and countries and MS should consider these facts.
- ✓ Multiple pathways to recovery are essential to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of people suffering from drug disorders and dependence. Member States and UN agencies should develop effective drug policies, strategies that integrate prevention, treatment, recovery, enforcement and harm reduction to create policies and communities that are safe and healthy for all.
- ✓ Treatment should be evidence based and culturally appropriate. Such treatment should be accessible, affordable or free for those who seek it. Countries need to focus on reducing inequalities in regard to access to treatment particularly for women and youth.
- ✓ There is a need for anti-discrimination legislation and Governments and UN agencies should continue efforts to ensure that discrimination against people who use drugs and recovered users does not prevent the fulfillment of fundamental human rights. Reducing the stigmatization, stereotyping and discrimination of (recovered) drug users and increasing awareness of the needs of this population can help them achieve recovery goals and facilitate successful reintegration into society.
- ✓ There is a need for strengthen the capacity of NGOs, greater civil society involvement and better cooperation among all stakeholders working in the field of drugs.