Expert de la semaine

No more infections through injections

Seven interventions, one aim – no infections among people who inject drugs. Two EU agencies, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC, based in Stockholm) and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA, based in Lisbon) have joined forces to produce a new guidance report which identifies seven effective interventions to reduce and prevent infectious diseases – such as HIV, and hepatitis B and C – in this vulnerable population.
Commission en direct met experts Dagmar Hedrich (EMCDDA) and Mika Salminen (ECDC) to find out more about this initiative.

What is the aim of the report?

We explore good public health practices that can support effective policies to reduce infections among people who inject drugs. These infections are mainly spread through the sharing of needles, syringes and drug preparation equipment, or unprotected sexual contacts.
Many European countries have made substantial progress in recent years in preventing drug-related infections, but drug injecting remains a major cause of infectious diseases across Europe.
We propose seven measures that could help reducing infections. These are best applied in combination and ideally in the same venue for maximum effect.

What are the seven interventions?

We invite Member States, through the competent authorities to:

- provide free access to clean drug injection equipment, as part of combined prevention, harm-reduction, counselling and treatment programmes;
- offer vaccinations for infections for which effective vaccines exist, such as hepatitis A and B, tetanus and influenza, and pneumococcal vaccine for HIV-infected individuals;
- provide access to drug dependence treatment;
- provide access to testing for HIV, hepatitis B and C, and other infections, including tuberculosis, and ensure the link to treatment;
- provide antiviral treatment as clinically indicated for those infected with HIV, hepatitis B or C, or active and latent tuberculosis;
- provide health promotion focused on safer drug use and sexual behaviour to enable people to increase their ability to control and improve their health;
- offer a range of services, delivered according to user needs and local conditions, such as drug treatment, harm reduction, counselling and testing and referrals to other medical services.

MATTEO MANZONETTO, CEND

▷ http://tinyurl.com/ecdc-inj
▷ http://tinyurl.com/emcdda-inj

Ekiden 2011

Courir pour une bonne cause

En enchaînant les kilomètres, ils luttent contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale. Répartis en 34 équipes, 202 fonctionnaires européens issus de la Commission, du Parlement et du Conseil ont mouillé le maillot - offert par Afiliatys, une asbl interinstitutionnelle au service des fonctionnaires - pour l'association GIVE EUR-HOPE lors de l'Ekiden Course Relais qui s'est déroulée samedi 15 octobre au stade du Roi Baudouin, à Bruxelles.

L'évènement a permis à GIVE EUR-HOPE de glaner plus de 5 mille euros, mais pas uniquement. *«Le marathon nous donne une visibilité et revêt un côté symbolique. Ceux qui courent pour l'association courent pour ce qu'elle représente, les exclus de notre société. Nous voulons ainsi redonner de la dignité aux personnes, leur permettre de ne plus vivre dans la dépendance. C'est pourquoi on se focalise sur des aspects essentiels tels que le logement, la santé, l'accès à la culture ou à l'emploi»*, témoigne Baudouin Sury, vice-président de l'association créée le 10 décembre 2010, date de la journée universelle des droits de l'homme.

De la théorie à la pratique

A l'approche de son premier anniversaire, GIVE EUR-HOPE a déjà financé plusieurs microprojets en Belgique — rénovation d'un immeuble, achat de matériel informatique pour un foyer de jeunes et de matériel scolaire à la suite de la campagne *«Pour une rentrée scolaire solidaire»*. *«Nous avons démarré à Bruxelles car, vivant et habitant ici, nous sommes concernés par la pauvreté qui est assez proche et parfois très visible»*, rappelle Baudouin Sury.

De gauche à droite, Dominique Levieil, président de GIVE EUR-HOPE, Sarah Ironside, vice-président et Graziana Lonero and Jean-François Tardiff, INFSO.

Toutefois, le terrain d'action de l'association s'étend à l'ensemble des 27 Etats membres, comme en témoignent la participation apportée à un dispensaire médical en Hongrie ou ce projet de financement d'une rampe d'accès pour des sans-logis handicapés en Pologne.

Pour chaque projet, GIVE EUR-HOPE souhaite apporter un soutien financier à des associations locales ou à des ONG qui ont du mal à accéder aux financements nationaux ou européens. Ces bénéficiaires doivent remplir certains critères tels que le respect des droits de l'homme, l'amélioration de l'insertion sociale, la viabilité économique du projet ou encore sa faisabilité.

Dans le cadre de la stratégie Europe 2020, l'UE s'est engagée à sortir 20 millions de personnes de la pauvreté. GIVE EUR-HOPE entend passer de la théorie à la pratique et promouvoir par des actes concrets la solidarité du personnel des institutions européennes, en espérant que de nouveaux membres et donateurs viennent grossir ses rangs.

BENJAMIN DUSAUSSOY, CEND

▷ www.giveeurhope.eu

Interreligious dialogue

Chapel for Europe celebrates its 10th anniversary

The Chapel for Europe is a vibrant place for Christian faith and interreligious dialogue in a Europe still searching for its soul. Over the last decade, thousands of politicians, civil servants and visitors have found spiritual, cultural, and intellectual inspiration there. On 25 October at 19.00, the Chapel will celebrate its 10th anniversary, followed by a cycle of conferences and concerts (see link below).

Fifteen years ago, the Van Maerlant building, a former Roman Catholic monastery at the heart of the European Quarter, was in ruins. Plans to replace it with a skyscraper were ready. But in an unprecedented communication exercise, a group of EU officials decided to mobilise against these plans and managed to convince the relevant stakeholders to save the Van Maerlant building and transform it into the Commission's visitors centre. They also created an international association under Belgian law to maintain the little chapel annexed to the building as a space for prayer, liturgy, and cultural events.

With donations from the Catholic Episcopal Conferences of Europe, the Conference of European Churches, the Evangelical Church in Germany, the Finnish Church, the King Baudouin Foundation, and numerous other institutions and individuals, the chapel was renovated. On 25 September 2001, Belgium's Archbishop Godfried Cardinal Daneels inaugurated the Chapel in the presence of then Commission President Romano Prodi and several Commissioners and MEPs.

Jérôme Vignon, the Association's first President and former Director at the Commission, remembers: *"The plan to save the Van Maerlant building and to re-open the Chapel was an act of faith in believing that it was possible to achieve the impossible."*

The Chapel has become a place where people with different backgrounds come together to pray and to share their joy and grief. *"Be it at the daily morning prayer, commemoration services for deceased colleagues, baptisms, conferences, concerts or services organised in solidarity with regions hit by disasters or terror attacks, the Chapel of the Resurrection offers a place where we can be filled with new life and hope,"* says Ilsemarie Weiffen, the Chapel's spiritual director.

As René Leray, the Association's President and former Commission official, explains: *"The bigger the EU becomes, the more the questions concerning its values and its soul arise. The Chapel for Europe wants to be a place where people can pray, discuss and meet, and, through this, contribute to creating a Europe which not only is efficient but also has a soul."*

The Chapel for Europe – a promoter of interreligious dialogue.

ZACH HESTER, CEND

▷ www.resurrection.be