

## NOTICE

*from the Conference “Challenges In the Field of Addiction - Do We Have the Right Answers?”*

*Medena Hotel, Trogir, 10-12 October 2016*

Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Ministry of Health and Euro-TC, with the expert and organizational support from the Office for Combating Drug Abuse, organized a Conference with international participation titled “Challenges In the Field of Addiction – Do We Have the Right Answers?” which was held at Medena Hotel in Trogir from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> of October.

The purpose of the Conference was to strengthen/revitalize cooperation of authorities in the field of addiction through the exchange of new scientific knowledge and good practice, and open a debate on the need for the development of new approaches in treatment, rehabilitation, re-socialization of drug addicts as well as finding the appropriate response system for new forms of addiction and addictive behavior.

The Conference was attended by 246 participants from various Croatian and international institutions that deal with subjects related to addiction and addictive behavior as well as 24 foreign and Croatian lecturers, all of whom are renowned experts in the field of addiction.

Given that the one of the particular goals of the Conference was to develop new approaches to treatment, rehabilitation, re-socialization and effective response to new forms of addiction and addictive behavior both at national and local level, it included 16 plenary lectures, 9 workshops and a Round table on which conclusions of the Conference were adopted.

The conference was opened by Minister of Social Policy and Youth, Mrs. Bernardica Juretić, Deputy Minister of Health Dr. Ivan Bekavac, Mr. Željko Petković, authorized to perform the job of the Director of the Office for Combating Drug Abuse and Mr. Thomas Legl, president of Euro-TC.

A series of lectures were held in the plenary part of the Conference in which was pointed out that the research shows rapid change of the trends in the domain of addiction that are setting new challenges for the carriers of the implementation of policies on addiction. Aforementioned requires finding the right answers and adaptation of the existing models and structures for new needs, and the concept of recovery and networking of the system need to be taken into serious consideration in the future. Furthermore, the development of the prevention programs and treatments oriented towards users of new drugs and particular groups of addicts such as addicted women, minors with problematic drug use and children of drug addicts, are one of the priority areas in the following period. A coherent approach to policies for all types of addiction is one of the key challenges that need to be taken into serious consideration in the future.

On the first day of the Conference, representatives of the international institutions and national experts held a series of lectures on topics such as: The consequences of drug use in Europe: trends and challenges, Prevention and treatment of addictive behavior: gambling, Internet and other information and communication technologies, The integrative policies in the field of addiction - can we do it together?, The experiences of youth drug use in educational institutions, and the research of attitudes of high school students from Split-Dalmatia County towards drinking, smoking and using drugs in 2015 was presented. Also, lectures were held on the topics: The concept of recovery: reducing social stigma and improving of treatment, rehabilitation and re-socialization of addicts, New approaches to rehabilitation and psychosocial treatment in therapeutic communities and associations - program standards and the creation of a network of therapeutic communities and Pharmacotherapy and psychosocial treatment in prison system and probation - cooperation with authorities outside of the judicial system.

Plenary lectures on the second day of the Conference were primarily dedicated to the development of the treatments towards specific groups of addicts and the issue of evaluation of the treatment as a key tool for getting the answers to the questions about the effectiveness of the treatment and its availability according to needs of the user. Thus, in the second day of the Conference, lectures were held on topics such as: Treatment and psychosocial rehabilitation of addicted women, Residential treatment of youth with addiction problems - presentation of the pilot project, Care for the children of addicts - challenges of the system cooperation, Treatment of the drug addicts and their children, Development of the treatment for addicts with psychiatric comorbidity, Evaluation of the treatment – key issues of the treatment on which the evaluation can provide the answer, Youth and drug use: how to reach out to the young people who are at risk and provide them with adequate treatment, and Preliminary results of the research on addiction treatment in Croatia (all presentations from the Conference are available on the website of the Conference: <http://www.konferencija-ovisnosti.com/>).

Within the workshop, participants had the opportunity to discuss the key themes of the Conference such as: 1. Development of the treatment towards the addicts with psychiatric comorbidity, 2. Prevention and treatment of addictive behavior: gambling, Internet and other information technologies, 3. Challenges of the coherent policies in the field of addiction - can we do it together? 4. What does the concept of recovery bring? 5. New approaches to rehabilitation and psychosocial treatment in therapeutic communities and associations - program standards and the creation of a network of therapeutic communities, 6. Pharmacotherapy and psychosocial treatment in the prison system and probation - cooperation with authorities outside the judicial system, 7. Treatment and care for specific groups: a. The treatment and psychosocial rehabilitation of addicted women, b. The treatment of the minors with addiction problems and c. Care for children of addicts - challenges of the system cooperation, 8. Characteristics of young drug users and strategies of their inclusion in assistance programs and 9. Evaluation of the treatment – key issues of the treatment on which the evaluation can provide the answer.

After the discussion at the Round table joint conclusions of the Conference were adopted.

1. In regard of the workshop on the subject 'Development of the treatment towards the addicts with psychiatric comorbidity', a model for the treatment of addicts with psychiatric comorbidity within the Institute for dual diagnosis of the University Psychiatric Hospital Vrapče established in 2012 was introduced. The problem of more frequent hospitalization of cannabis users as a result of the development of psychotic disorders in one of ten users was highlighted. It was concluded that the problem is the *lack of common diagnostic criteria for dual diagnosis that would allow selection and application of the appropriate treatment*. Also, it is necessary to work on the better connection to be able to obtain data at all times on whether the patient is in the hospital or outpatient treatment and if he or she is in one of the penal institutions or therapeutic communities.

2. Within the second workshop on the subject 'Prevention and treatment of addictive behavior: gambling, Internet and other information technologies', the need for continuous education of professionals on the problem of addictive behavior and the need for a stronger directing of financial resources in this issue (lottery funds) were highlighted. Considering that the strategy documents and the system for combating drug and alcohol abuse already exist, it is also necessary to create a system for addictive behavior which should be coordinated and comprehensive.

3. On the third workshop titled 'The integrative policies in the field of addiction - can we do it together?', project 'The assessment of coherency of the policies towards addiction in in Republic of Croatia' conducted in collaboration with the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe during 2014 was introduced, and it was emphasized that the system of combating drug abuse is the most advanced one while systems for the suppression of other addictions are underdeveloped. It was stressed out that the Conference, in its very structure, pointed to some concrete answers in relation to the challenges in the field of addiction. Particularly, these are: the need for effective prevention and treatment; recovery as a new paradigm in rehabilitation and treatment characterized by a holistic approach and respect for human rights, with a focus on the individual and society; and a coherent approach to policies for all types of addictions. During the workshop it was discussed how effectively consult experts in the development of policy coherence, and how can vertical coherence in the implementation of policies to addictions be provided and arranged, how to encourage public discourse that will support the paradigm of coherent policies and what are politically compelling arguments. In developing policy coherence it is necessary, to the fullest extent possible, make use of existing structures and resources, conduct analyzes of the costs and the impact, include civil society organizations in the development process. In conclusion, it is necessary to define which are the weakest points in certain policies against addiction and encourage coordination and increase synergy of national policies towards all types of addictions. It is also necessary to define the key challenges that encourage us to move towards coherent policies, especially in the field of prevention and treatment of addiction.

4. In the fourth workshop 'What does the concept of recovery bring?', the results of evaluation Project of re-socialization - challenges and achievements were presented, and a discussion

was held about a number of key topics such as: How important is social reintegration in the overall treatment of people who abuse drugs and how to change perception on the concept of recovery where the focus shifts to the individual and his needs. The discussion emphasized that the Republic of Croatia is investing five times more funds in substitution therapy than in the re-socialization, which tells us about the primary concept that is prevailing among experts dealing with the treatment of drug addiction. It was concluded that *the concept of recovery requires a multidisciplinary approach and a change of expert's perception on the concept of recovery which needs to be reconsidered in the future.*

5. In the fifth workshop, 'New approaches to rehabilitation and psychosocial treatment in therapeutic communities and non-governmental organizations – program standards and the creation of a network of therapeutic communities', the debate was conducted regarding the problem of the treatment of people with comorbidity, the need for the full implementation of standards for therapeutic communities and the need of narrow specialization of therapeutic community for specific groups. The pilot project of residential treatment for minors drafted by an expert group in coordination with the Office for Combating Drugs Abuse was also discussed. The problem of education within the therapeutic community carried within the Project of re-socialization was also highlighted because it doesn't function well due to the long waiting period for approval of funding from the Ministry of Science and Education. Given that, in recent years interest in drug free programs was reduced, there was a discussion about the necessity to modify the program in accordance with user needs and new trends in drug abuse among youth. It was concluded *that the residential community as a transitional form of residential treatment should be established in all major cities and that the training of professionals and assistants in therapeutic communities should be carried out continuously in line with new scientific and expert knowledge and examples of good practice in this area.*

6. The sixth workshop was held on the theme 'The pharmacotherapy and psychosocial treatment in the prison system and probation - cooperation with authorities outside the judicial system'. During the workshop, it was emphasized that the prison system has a well-developed system of treatment for addicted prisoners, including the ability to obtain substitution therapy in all stages of the sentence. Some of the problems that have arisen in the prison system following the introduction of substitution therapy are a frequent phenomenon of trafficking with substitution therapy, the problem of the working ability of people who are on high doses of pharmacotherapy, and the appearance of prescribing substitution therapy for people who were not at all addicted before entering the jail. In terms of psychosocial treatment of prisoners, the system is well designed but lacks the professional staff who could implement it in all penal institutions. In the probation system, the lack of staff was also noticed. It was concluded that the treatment of drug addicts in the prison system *should be further developed in more individualized and multidisciplinary way and at the same time it is also necessary to promote and develop cooperation with non-governmental organizations.*

7. The seventh workshop was entitled 'Treatment and care for specific groups', and within this subject specific sub-topics were discussed such as: a. The treatment and psychosocial rehabilitation of addicted women, b. The treatment of minors with addiction problems and c. Care for children of addicts - challenges of cooperation among different systems. Two lectures were held, namely: Treatment and social integration of addicted women - the results of the evaluation of the Project of re-socialization and Care for children of addicts from the perspective of social welfare, and finally a documentary 'Road to a New Life' was presented. The documentary was made by the Office and it's about rehabilitation and re-socialization of a former drug addict. During the workshop, the need to develop specific programs for treatment and rehabilitation aimed at addicted women in accordance with their research-based specifics, and especially for pregnant women and addicted women with young children was discussed. With regard to this issue there was a discussion about the ethical question of the report by doctors to the welfare center in all cases when they detect a pregnant drug addict or drug addict that has young children. The question of making the protocol related to this issue was initiated together with the question of strengthening cooperation between health and social systems. In the social welfare system, there is an additional need to change the perception in users as well as in individual experts in the health care system that it's a primarily a helping and not a punishing system. There is also a problem of attracting minors with addiction problems in treatment. It was concluded that it's necessary *to improve the cooperation between health and social systems in the treatment of addicted women and children whose parent or parents are addicts*. Given that a large number of addicted women who have small children chose not to go into treatment because they need to take care of the children, it is necessary *to encourage the initiative for the establishment or adjustment one of the existing therapeutic communities that is in the social welfare for addicted women with small children*.

8. The eighth workshop was held on the theme of Characteristics of young drug users and the strategy of their inclusion in assistance programs, and within the same workshop, the DUDIT (Drug Use Disorders Identification Test, available at: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice/eib/dudit>) pilot project - consumer's self-assessment of psychoactive substances was presented. The Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe in September 2015 set up an expert group of countries of South Eastern Europe on the subject of on-line intervention. It was agreed that the countries (Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Serbia and Romania) will use an instrument for self-assessment of risks associated with drug use, and it was decided that it would be DUDIT. During 2016, under the coordination of the Office for Combating Drug Abuse, the instrument has been tested among drug users/beneficiaries of the program held by Teaching Institute of Public Health 'Dr. Andrija Štampar', the Teaching Institute of Public Health of the Split-Dalmatia County and non-governmental organizations – Sirius, Pragma and the League for the prevention of the addiction. In the context of this workshop, the tool was presented to professional public, and the instrument was well received, as well as the idea of the implementation of online intervention. The possibilities of improving the collection of feedback were discussed, together with increasing the visibility of the mentioned tool through online marketing, financing options and making variations of this

tool for use in alcohol abuse. It was concluded that the advantages of such an instrument for self-assessment are that it is easily accessible and it can reach out to high-risk groups of young people, and the limitation is the ability to manipulate the answers. The final version of the tool will be available in online format by the end of the year, and all relevant stakeholders will be informed on time.

9. The ninth workshop was held on the topic 'Evaluation of treatment – key issues of treatment on which evaluation may give us an answer' in which the need for evaluation of treatment at the level of the treatment system and at the level of institutions for the provision of treatment was discussed. The evaluation of issues associated with the assessment of needs, evaluation process and evaluation of outcomes and the ways in which it can measure the effectiveness of treatment, and in particular measuring the effectiveness of service provision of psychosocial treatment was also discussed. The aspects of treatment were, such as availability, relevance to the needs, effectiveness, cohesion, integration and comprehensive access were debated. It was concluded that in the Croatian context, it is necessary to combine the evaluation of treatment system at the national level (as defined in strategic documents) and local level (how it is realized at the level of certain institutions and the local community). Also, on both levels, it is necessary to ensure financial resources and experts who will conduct an evaluation of treatment.

After the presentation of discussion and the conclusions of the certain workshops were presented on a Round table, a debate was open which has largely been focused on the question of the concept of recovery, coherent policies, measuring the effectiveness of treatment, but also on the use of marijuana for medical purposes and the issue of combating the use of new drugs. Participants have noticed that the part related to the prevention of addiction is missing and that in planning a future conference this subject needs to be included. Also, in terms of treatment, it should be aimed at the evidence-based approach and standardized intervention, but the issue may represent a balance between individual needs and standardized intervention. The issue of integration of coherent policies in the area of addiction is one of the key issues that should be seriously considered for future strategies. All expressed views lead us to the conclusion that it is necessary to re-examine and revise all elements of the system for combating addiction and to give an answer to questions that brings addiction as one of the most important problems of the modern world.

**It was concluded** that the conferences of such content should be organized at least once in two years and that they should include representatives from countries in the region that develop similar programs.

**A note was drawn up:**

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**Approved by:**

Authorized to perform job of  
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