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NOTE

from : Portuguese Presidency
to : Horizontal Working Party on Drugs

Subject : Conference on Evaluation of Public Policies and Programmes on Drugs, 19 and
20 September, Lisbon, Portugal - Conclusions of the Presidency

Please find herewith the beforementioned conclusions.



Conference on the Evaluation
of Public Policies and Programmes on Drugs



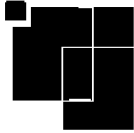
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Conclusions of the Presidency

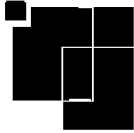
Conference on the Evaluation of Public Policies and Programmes on Drugs 19 and 20 September, Lisbon, Portugal

Evaluation in the area of Drugs showed a significant development in the past 5 years. We should profit from the favourable moment to do more and better and to facilitate exchange of knowledge and experience amongst countries.

1. On the 19th and 20th of September a Conference on Evaluation of Public Policies and Programmes on Drugs took place in Lisbon, Portugal. This Conference was part of the official programme of the Portuguese Presidency of the Horizontal Drugs Working Party of the Council and was organised by the Institute on Drugs and Drug Addiction from Portugal. Over 150 participants attended this event, representing 22 European countries, as well as Australia, Brazil, Mozambique, Cape Vert, Turkey and Russia, and representing the European Commission, the Council Secretariat, the European Parliament, the European Monitoring Centre for Drug and Drug Addiction, Europol, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime;
2. The Conference was a follow-up to the section on evaluation in the EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2008 and EU Drugs Action Plan 2005-2012;



3. The Conference was chaired by João Goulão, Portuguese National Coordinator on Drugs and Chair of the HDG. The session was opened by the Minister of Health of Portugal, António Correia de Campos.
 4. The Conference was organised around two plenary sessions and two parallel panels. One of the plenary sessions focused on the situation concerning the evaluation exercises at UN and EU level, made by the European Commission and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the other one on supporting public policy decision making with presentations by the European Monitoring Centre for Drug and Drug Addiction and Europol and two independent experts. The two parallel panels were devoted to public policies evaluation and programme evaluation.
 5. The main objective of this Conference was to promote the dialogue and exchange of experiences and good practices in evaluating public policies and programmes in the field of drugs. This was done through a series of presentations concerning the state of play in Member States and European and International Institutions which were the basis for a reach and fruitful discussion. A keynote speaker (the Scientific Coordinator of the Conference) presented some issues on policy and programme evaluation in general, contributing to a wider perspective on this issue.
- 6. The Conference arrived at the following general conclusions:**
- The complexity of intervention in the area of drugs and drug abuse, both at policy and programme level, and of the policy and decision making process;
 - The need of evaluation to improve public policy, as it holds Governments accountable to their citizens and it is a key condition for the legitimacy and justification of governments interventions;
 - The importance of evaluation as a tool to promote evidence-based approaches and organisational learning;
 - The need for the use of complementary and reliable evaluation methodologies that can contribute to a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the interventions under evaluation, appropriate to each stage of the process;



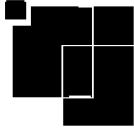
- The need for evaluation report to include pragmatic and realistic recommendations that can have an impact on subsequent policy and programme design steps;
- Evaluation has had a stronger focus on the demand reduction field. Other areas, such as supply reduction and international cooperation seem to have been less widely addressed.

7. The Conference arrived at the following conclusions on Public Policy Evaluation:

- Evaluation/assessment steps need to be included as part of the policy-making process, and to have strong political commitment and support;
- The involvement of stakeholders is very important;
- Main objectives of policy evaluation exercises include:
 - To monitor success and identify necessary improvements;
 - To better respond to emerging trends;
 - To assess the consistency/gaps between policy documents and implementation at regional/local level(also top-down bottom up approach);
 - To support planning of future strategies and or action plans;
 - To assess the effectiveness of coordination and implementation mechanisms;
- Policy makers and evaluators need to address, from the early stages of the evaluation exercise, the balance between evaluation expectations and evaluation outcomes and impact;
- Quality data and information are the basis of any evaluation approach. “Blackboxes” which are too complex to address or for which data is not available should be identified from the beginning and realistic alternative approaches should be considered;
- The development of monitoring instruments play an important role on the follow up of strategies.

8. The Conference arrived at the following Conclusions on Programme Evaluation:

- Programme evaluation provides a basis for:
 - Identifying needs and improving service delivery;
 - Establishing ground for acceptance of innovative interventions;
 - Identifying and disseminating knowledge of effective practices;



- Appropriate methodology should be essential for the acceptance of the evaluation outcome;
- Results from programme evaluation can be used as a basis for policy decision-making and may have a significant impact on public/individual health;
- Evaluation can influence professional activity, political debate and public opinion and perceptions.

9. The way forward:

- Policy makers, professionals and evaluators need to work together to establish evaluation objectives and to ensure that recommendations are taken into consideration for improving service delivery and policy implementation;
- Evaluation exercises need to make use of reliable methodologies, which are appropriate to the objectives of the evaluation, and balance the need to know with the available resources;
- Evaluation exercises in this area need to take into account the dynamic nature of the drugs phenomena and of society and adopt, as much as possible, a prospective approach;
- Investment in research and data collection networks needs to be proportional to the quality and availability of the information needed for evaluation;
- Policy evaluation should consider the potential for interaction between policy objectives and be aware of the possibility of unintended consequences;
- The area of policy and programme evaluation should be used to create more opportunities for identifying and exchange of knowledge and effective practices and to promote cooperation within and amongst Member States.

10. The Presidency will draw attention of competent European Union bodies on the above mentioned conclusions as a contribution for the assessment process of the current EU Action Plan on Drugs and elements for the forthcoming 2009-2012 Plan.