

CONCEPT PAPER

50 Years Later – Count the Costs!

A) Background

In 1961 the General Assembly of the UN adopted the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs – a treaty that prohibited the production and trafficking of several mind altering substances for non-medical purposes. 50 years later, in 2011 the world is overwhelmed by the unintended consequences of the global war on drugs: an enormous black market that generates civil wars in source countries and street violence in consumer countries, corruption of law enforcement officials and politicians, a rampant HIV epidemic that is fueled by the criminalization of people who use drugs, overdose deaths among young people, overcrowded prisons and broken lives and families.

The harms caused by the international drug control system are manifold and can show different features in individual countries – but the source of suffering is the same, a punitive approach to drugs and people who use drugs. Therefore we think that 2011 is an excellent window of opportunity for civil society to express its concerns about the consequences of 50 years of drug prohibition. NGOs must demonstrate that all the evidence points to the need for change towards a drug policy based on public health and human rights principles.

Instead of isolated efforts of one or two organizations or networks, we need a campaign that unites like-minded drug policy NGOs and lines up several other people and organizations from other fields, like development, human rights and HIV/AIDS. The campaign should target the general population with simple messages and urges them to demand more transparency regarding the unintended costs of the global drug war not only in money, but in human lives and rights.

B) Proposed activities

1. Producing a portfolio report

We have more than enough tools for the campaign, that is, plenty of scientific studies, commission reports and recommendations that prove it is time to reform the international drug control system. However, the evidence should be easily available and accessible for the general public – a **portfolio report** that summarizes the evidence of the unintended consequences could be appropriate to achieve this goal. This short (10 pages) report can be translated into different languages and supplemented with video/animation materials.

2. Launching a campaign website

Based on the model of the [“Now More Than Ever”](#) campaign of the OSI, and learning from the success from our “Dare to Act” campaign last year, we would like to launch a **campaign website** with simple design and mobilizing video messages. The site – its working title is “50 Years Later: Count The Costs!”. The website contains a **short manifesto** that calls the United Nations to count the costs and make 2011 the year of reflection – demanding transparency and

accountability in all levels of the decision making. The one page manifesto can be built around 10 reasons to end the global drug war – a short and adequate way to provide arguments to like-minded people. The 10 reasons shall include the restricted access to pain medications, the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, the lucrative black market feeding organized crime, police corruption, bloody civil wars in source countries, the high risk of lethal overdoses, lack of proportionality in the criminal justice system, prisons overcrowded with non-violent drug offenders, humanitarian crisis caused by forced eradication, ineffective and abusive forms of treatment, human rights violations in the name of the drug war. The manifesto should be signed by as many NGOs and people as possible. Each of the 10 reasons can be featured by one short YouTube video. The manifesto, the videos and the portfolio report should be translated to as many languages as possible.

We can add two more features to the website:

- *Global Drug War Clock*: an online clock that counts major costs of the global drug control system, for example the number of people incarcerated for drug offences, new HIV transmissions due to the sharing of injecting equipment, number of lethal overdoses etc – the estimation should be made with the help of professionals.
- *Global Petition & Email Sending*: online sign on campaign for organizational and individual supporters that can be advertised on Facebook – we provide a possibility for people to express their discomfort with the global drug war and initiate a global Web2 movement for change. The petition and the emails will target the CND, the decision making body of the UN that can initiate reform.
- *Best practices – worst practices*: recently there is no website that provides a collection of good and bad examples for drug policies from all over the world – we provide a online surface where we collect the most relevant positive and negative national drug policy models (e.g., Portugal as the successful model of decriminalization, Russia as the model of failure of criminalization) with their public health and social impacts, with related scientific references and educational videos.

3. Marketing of the campaign

A lesson learnt from the “Now More Than Ever” and “Dare to Act” campaign is that it is not enough to create a website with excellent contents and design – the promotion of the site is even more important to attract the attention of web users and the media. The main focus of the campaign will be to collect as many supporters as possible through Web2 social networks like Facebook and Twitter. The manifesto shall be translated to at least 20 languages. Facebook currently has more than 400 million active users worldwide – this is a unique possibility for NGOs to reach out the general public. A Campaign Manager should be hired – not necessarily based in Budapest – who can coordinate the targeted online activities of local Campaign Coordinators, who can create national campaign Facebook pages in national languages to promote the manifesto and mobilize local communities to support the global movement. Campaign Coordinators can

be paid according to the pay for performance advertising (PPP) model: they will be paid after each new supporter they collect on Facebook.