



## **Hungarian Priorities at UNGASS**

*by Károly Dán\**

The UNGASS 2016 is an important opportunity to take stock of the world drug problems on the road to the global drug policy review of 2019. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) based in Vienna is charged with preparing the UNGASS and is currently working on organisational modalities as well as on drafting the outcome document. The five-member-UNGASS Board composed of one country from each regional group is coordinating these tasks. As a member of the UNGASS Board I consider it is crucial to make sure that all key players are involved in the process and that the UNGASS will have a broad participation and end up with realistic results that reflect all the views.

Ahead of the UNGASS meeting in New York to take place between 19 and 21 of April, Hungary and the EU will advocate for the following main subjects to be included in the outcome document: integrity of the 3 drugs conventions, notion of risk and harm reduction within the framework of demand reduction; recovery orientation and a public health approach to improve the wellbeing of people; abolishment of the death penalty; involvement of civil society, reflecting the UN Guiding Principle of Alternative Development and linking the process to the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are aware of the fact that global thinking and approaches to the problem largely differ. The drug problem continues to pose a global threat to public health, safety, and in some parts of the world even to the rule of law. The drug problem continues to be treated as a law enforcement question in many countries, while many others prioritize drug-prevention, treatment, rehabilitation programmes and even decriminalization. The drug market continues to change rapidly, the consumption levels of both heroin and cocaine stabilized, but simultaneously the use of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and the abuse of prescription drugs rose significantly in our region.

Hungary was among the first EU Member States to introduce legislation to regulate NPS. This was important because in the past years the majority of seized drugs were NPS in Hungary. This underlines that the illicit drugs market moved swiftly away from the “classic drugs” towards the NPS.

In Hungary recent control regulations allowed the law enforcement authorities to seize these harmful substances, and step up against their illicit trafficking. For an effective



and swift response to the challenges posed by these substances, an all-new control system was created in 2012. It is based on the generic formula of substances while also applying individual scheduling. The definition of NPS had been created: It is regarded as a compound or chemical compound group that currently appeared on the market; has no therapeutic value; affects the central nervous system in a way that it has the ability to change mental state, behaviour or perception; therefore it can pose as serious a threat to public health as the substances listed on drug schedules. We welcome that there is an ongoing process of establishing a new EU regulation on NPS which would enable a common EU response to tackle the challenges posed by NPS. The sharing of best practices is key and Hungary is happy to offer its experience in tackling NPS.

Due to the need of a new approach towards drug policy the Hungarian Government aimed to establish a new drug strategy. Based on the EU strategy and action plan 2013-2020 on combating drugs which takes into account the relevant political documents adopted in the UN, our strategy was entitled 'National Anti-Drug Strategy 2013-2020: Clear consciousness, sobriety and fight against drug crime'. The object of the new strategy is to decrease drug use significantly by 2020 applying different interventions in the field of demand and supply reduction. Besides putting more emphasis on prevention, the reinforcement and involvement of families and local communities have a bigger role in showing alternatives to drug-use life. Simultaneously, the strategy represents an exceedingly strict attitude towards drug-trafficking. It is also highlighted that a recovery-oriented approach shall prevail in the fields of treatment and care.

Hungary uses the model of universal, targeted and indicated preventions. We are continuously improving medical and social care, and the main object is to cover the whole spectrum of care. The development of treatment and care systems based on needs is justified especially in the area of addiction treatment of children and youth. There are a number of treatment centres providing opiate substitution treatments in Hungary. An aim is to approach and assist drug users who have not joined a treatment programme, such low-threshold services for addicted persons include information, crisis-intervention and motivation to make them participate in the care system, handling lifestyle problems related to addictions through recovery based harm reduction.

The UNGASS brings the international community together not just to discuss these issues but also to agree on an outcome document. The results of our deliberations should lead to duplicating our efforts to achieve the ultimate aim of a world free of drugs. The UNGASS Board is working according to the Vienna spirit to find consensus among Member States.



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