

Statement BE Day III : Cross-cutting issues: drugs, and human rights, youth, children, women and communities

Thank you Madam Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished delegate of Austria on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Allow me to zoom in on some of the cross-cutting issues that have received particular attention in Belgium.

We believe in **the importance of applying a gender perspective in drug policies** and the development of gender-sensitive measures that take into account the specific needs and circumstances faced by women and girls who use drugs. Our government has funded the research project "***Towards gender-sensitive prevention and treatment for female substance users in Belgium***". This research project has given us an insight in the strengths and weaknesses of the current policies and programs in Belgium. Recommendations were formulated around five major themes, such as a comprehensive and integrated approach, training and exchange of good practices, the attention for gender stereotypes and women's responsibilities, targeted and gender-sensitive prevention campaigns, and evaluation and monitoring.

Second, and more broadly, Belgium is reforming its mental health care landscape. The aim of the reform is to establish a more **community-based mental health care**, bringing care as close as possible to the needs and demands of people with mental health problems, including people with drug problems. The organization of both acute and chronic mental health care programs by establishing stronger networks between service providers are at the core of this reform. The development of a better equipped low threshold primary care will ensure that mental health care will be **more accessible** and **less stigmatizing**.

To end Madam Chair, allow me also to restate the position of my country to call for an abolition of the death penalty for all drug related offences.

Thank you.