

Statement BE Day I : Demand reduction and related measures, including prevention and treatment, as well as other health related issues.

Thank you Madam Chair,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished delegate of Austria on behalf of the EU and its Member States. We take this opportunity to highlight three practices regarding demand reduction policies in Belgium.

Since many years, the implementation of a **drug policy, based on evidence and best practices** is an important guiding principle in Belgium. An ear-marked program for policy oriented research on drug related issues was put in place in 2002. Since then several projects are financed every year and followed by guiding committees in which public authorities as well as members of civil society and scientific community take part. This way of working helps **closing the gap between policy and practice on the one side and research on the other.**

Secondly, in the area of prevention activities, the key messages Belgium focuses on are health promotion and determinants that have a positive influence on health. This positive approach has shown its efficiency, given its **non-stigmatizing character.**

Thirdly, we started to promote more actively the implementation of demand reduction policies and measures in prison settings. Indeed, analysis within the **Belgian prisons** has shown that, despite countermeasures, a significant number of people in prison still use drugs. Although a small, and often local, treatment offer is available in several prisons, these services do not always cover the main needs, such as a thorough screening of drug use, medical or psychosocial expertise, a meaningful use of time, and so on. A more coordinated and strengthened approach is needed in order to support the development of **services with regards to screening, early intervention, treatment, after-care, social integration, recovery, and so on.** Last year, Belgium has therefore launched a **pilot in three prisons.** The final goal of the project is to be able to offer a more tailor-made demand reduction model for people who use drugs in prison. The project will be evaluated by an independent research team. The results are expected by June 2020 and we are willing to share these with interested partners.

Thank you.