

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poland shares the opinions expressed by the representative of the Presidency of the EU and we therefore wish to emphasise our full support for the priorities of the EU drug policy.

It is of vital importance for us to develop drug policies that are based on the full respect for human rights, rule of law, fundamental liberties, evidence-based practice as well as participation and listening to all the stakeholders (including representatives of civic society and drug-dependent population) but most of all by respecting human life in any circumstances and regardless of the differences of opinion between us whether of objective or seeming nature. For these reasons, we stress our ongoing objection to the administration of the capital punishment in any case, not only in relation to drugs.

The year 2020, dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic, caused across the international community widespread deterioration in health as well as social and economic standing, including the whole spectrum of personnel involved in healthcare and public security.

A characteristic development in the current state of affairs has been a sharp decline in the capacity of demand reduction interventions (e.g. in the context of problems with conducting prevention as well as providing treatment and access to sport and other alternative activities) with threats generated by the supply of drugs continuing to remain at a high level.

As the available data show, illegal drug markets were not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic the way other areas of social and economic functioning were. Local problems related to the availability of drugs on the illicit markets were noted, but generally the supply did not fall. Additionally, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a rise in the role of the Internet as an effective channel of distributing drugs.

The economic crisis, loss of employment and security, social isolation as well as educational and developmental limitations, especially among children and adolescents, severely affect mental health and contribute to the use of alcohol, drugs, including polydrug use, as well as other behavioural addictions and the related harm. The broadly understood issue of mental healthcare for children and adolescents and the holistic approach to addiction should, in our view, deserve intensified attention and response on the part of all the stakeholders involved in drug and social policy.

On the one hand, we are confronted by the pandemic which marginalizes all other problems, then economic crisis which adversely impacts on all the facets of life at both individual and societal level while on the other hand there is a need to maintain standards of the international law in the field of drug supply and demand reduction and to develop a response to the rapidly emerging problems and challenges.

Considering the above, it seems necessary to focus the attention of the international community on issues related to the dissemination of balanced approach to drugs based on cooperation and coordination between the law enforcement and supply reduction on one side and public health on the other.

In the whole picture, we should point to aspects of positive developmental potential. The pandemic necessitated the design and application of new, sometimes innovative forms of work and response to the drug problem. Many of such solutions will be there to stay past the pandemic. Today, one of the priorities should be the possibly widest dissemination of positive experiences in the effective reduction of the consequences of the pandemic, particularly in the reduction of problems posed by drugs and drug addiction.

That is why, we should strengthen and develop cooperation at regional and global level, share the experiences and prevent both the previously known drug-related challenges as well as the new ones generated by the pandemic and economic crisis, which ultimately affect wide groups of the general population, including those in need of care and treatment due to drug use and drug dependence.

In our opinion, in this complicated epidemiological and economic situation it is of utmost importance to continue the high-quality cooperation and dialogue at international level in the spirit of common ground seeking on one side and respect for the cultural, social and economic needs and conditions of the respective countries on the other.

The best way to achieve this is, for example, through the continuation of the joint translation into practice of the conclusions and recommendations specified in the UNGASS 2016 outcome document and further stated in the 2019 Political Declaration. Both documents in our view allow for the development of evidence-based and balanced drug policy which will be supportive in global activities while building added values for actions implemented regionally and nationally.