

Boro Goić, Recovered Users Network

Ladies and gentleman, distinguished guests

RUN is an initiative established by the European platform EURAD, a registered non-for-profit organization from the Netherlands. We currently have 34 member organization and lots of individuals who support recovery. The mission of RUN is to be a network which provides a voice for recovered/recovering drug users to promote and share experience of recovery, on both the political and practical level. We aim to strengthen and expand our network so that we can enhance impact on drug policies, and advocate for balanced and recovery-oriented policies on International, European and national political forums.

RUN bring more voices from different countries and has more diverse individuals coming forward with similar messages as a common voice of a lot of people who advocate for more balanced drug policies.

To that end, after UNGASS, our members and supporters have organized several conferences aiming to promote cooperation and exchange of information, good practices and lessons learned among national practitioners from different fields and at all levels to effectively implement an integrated and balanced approach to the world drug problem and its various aspects and consider additional measures to further facilitate meaningful discussion among those practitioners.

We believe that only through evidence based, integrated, multidisciplinary and international work we can gain a stronger support to the idea of recovery. This also means that there is a need to engage with physicians, psychologists, social workers and many more professionals and national and NGO practitioners from different fields who work not only in the addiction field but in many different institutions like health centers, safe houses for women, employment services to be able to implement integrated and balanced approach. Another important point worth mentioning is that there is a need to establish more global recovered and recovering networks that exchange ideas and support groups to re-socialize and reintegrate members into their respective societies. In this sense we have been in contact with NGOs, therapeutic communities and networks, as well as public institutions to help them develop and acknowledge the importance of cooperation and networking on national and international levels. We participated and organized several side events during CND and UNGASS and exhibition during CND which also contributed to further development of cooperation and sheared responsibilities among international state and NGO actors.

We are pleased that RUN has been able to move the focus from drug users alone towards recovered users as well. This can be seen in recent policy papers at EU and UN that was never incorporated before and this is a huge step towards more balanced drug policies.

After adoption of outcome document which clearly showed that recovery should have a place within balanced drug policies, RUN has reviewed the complete feedback that we received from recovery organizations during the preparation process for the UNGASS, including from researchers and governments that already have recovery as a goal in their strategies. This information can serve to other organizations to improve their policies and practices that would lead addicts to the ultimate goal of Recovery, and that is full integration of recovered addicts and long-term and sustained abstinence.

Furthermore, it is also very important to spread the information that even if the public sector might not be interested, the drug strategies within each country and now the UNGASS outcome document clearly state that the state and civil society should implement treatment, recovery and rehabilitation programs, hence there is a tool to advocate for increased cooperation and state can be held accountable if they are not cooperating on the principle of common and shared responsibility. To achieve the recovery and integration objectives of any drug policy, continuing financial and the necessary ancillary supports are required. Experience has shown that where the strategy is balanced not only on paper but also through financial support much better results are accomplished compared to the situation in states who are not balancing their policies on the grassroots level. Any approaches or treatment programs are financially driven with strong commitment to achieve whatever goals and objectives i.e. recovery. In order for recovery to be effective and successful, it must have all other necessary supports. These are: moral, cultural, family, friends, communities, and support groups etc. But most of all culture and ecology of recovery should be changed. It presupposes also that the motivation and self-motivation is precondition for any individual's recovery.

Returning to a regular life and living drug-free after treatment for drug-related issues tends to be even more complicated than treatment process. Treatments programs must aim to assist former addicts during this difficult transition period, but even though these programs are recommended in Drug strategies, those needs are ignored, and underfunded, resulting in a failed recovery and an enormous waste of human resources and money.

Croatian Government has been implementing reintegration programs for almost 10 years, and due to our previous cooperation, we were invited to moderate one workshop and present RUN at their conference which was held this October. The evaluation of reintegration programs has shown that these programs are crucial for long-term and

sustained recovery, as many recovering addicts have found employment and have completed various education programs and/or secondary school.

RUN through our international engagement gives great importance to networking between governmental and NGO sector as well as effective engagement of recovering addicts in implementation of the UNGASS outcome document. Therefore, we have been involved in several projects aiming to exchange information, good practices and lessons learned among experts from the field.

One of the lessons learned, very important good practice, and at the same time the one we are advocating for when it comes to implementation of the outcome document, is the UK Drug Strategy. The strategy was adopted back in 2010 and recommends that all services should be recovery oriented systems of care, which is the approach that has proven to be the most beneficial to target group which RUN represents, and those are recovering and recovered users. In this concept, Recovery is a process through which an individual is enabled to move from their problem drug use towards a life without drugs as an active and contributing member of society. The main feature of this concept is that the focus shifts from the problem of addiction to the individual and his life, who has its own needs, aspirations and so on. If we perceive recovery like this, than instead of focusing primarily on reducing the harms caused by drug misuse, our approach must be to go much further and offer every support for people to choose recovery as an achievable way of dependency, to live a drug free life and achieve long-term and sustained abstinence.

Thanks for your attention