

## NEWSLETTER

### Rome Consensus Europe receives support of European Commission

The European Commission has selected the Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy as a privileged partner to promote a public health based drug policy in Europe. With the support of the European Commission, The Rome Consensus is establishing a *Rome Consensus Europe* initiative to bring together Red Cross National Societies and European institutions to promote health based responses to one of Europe's foremost humanitarian challenges: drug-related suffering.

#### What is a Rome Consensus "Chapter"?

The *Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy* is a joint project of the Italian Red Cross and the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS) formerly known as The Senlis Council. The Consensus now commits 114 national societies of the Red Cross Red Crescent worldwide. During the 2007-2008 regional meetings in Spain, Uganda, Grenada, Cape Verde and the Philippines, the need to address the specificities of each region was identified. The Rome Consensus therefore intends to articulate itself in regional sections. *Rome Consensus Europe* is supported by the European Commission.

By participating in *Rome Consensus Europe* National Societies have the opportunity to engage with the European Commission regarding key drug legislation, exchange best practices and receive training and assistance in programme implementation. Through this unique opportunity presented by the European Commission, the Red Cross-Red Crescent Movement can make a very real and direct impact on reducing the suffering of the vulnerable people affected by drug use in Europe.

The European Union acknowledges the major threat that drugs cause to the health and security of European citizens, in particular of young people. To tackle this threat the EU has elaborated a strategy to achieve high levels of health protection, wellbeing and social cohesion in preventing and reducing drug use, dependence and drug-related harm. This objective strongly resonates with the *Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy's* key aim to mobilise National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to promote healthy lifestyles among individuals and communities, providing treatment and fostering reintegration of drug users.

### Get Involved in the Rome Consensus Europe

*Rome Consensus Europe* was established to maximise synergies between the Red Cross-Red Crescent and the European Union to relieve drug-related suffering. The initiative activities will focus on bridging the gap between the European Drug Strategy and Red Cross-Red Crescent engagement in drug policy.

**To achieve this goal of Rome Consensus Europe, the Coordination will carry out a set of activities:**

- A set of European Drug Policy Guidelines: Bridging the Gap between the EU Drug Strategy and Humanitarian Drug Policy
- A European Drug Policy Conference in Madrid, Spain
- A *Rome Consensus Europe* page on the Rome Consensus Website

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## What can your National Society do for *Rome Consensus Europe*?

By getting involved in the European Chapter, National Societies in Europe can help the Red Cross-Red Crescent Movement and the European Union to strengthen, reinforce and promote a humanitarian response to Europe's drug crisis for the generations to come.

The Coordination team strives to keep up to date with evolutions in the field of drug policy in European countries and to promote best practices and information sharing among the European National Societies. To best achieve this aim, we are building a resource centre on the website where a directory of National Society activities, concerns and needs in the area of drug prevention, information and treatment will be followed. We kindly invite you to contribute to this endeavour, sharing with the Coordination Team any activities/concerns/interests on drug policy in your country.

The Coordination is also available for advice you might need on demand reduction programmes or advocacy strategies and can provide background research on the state and patterns of drug use and drug policies in your country.

## Recent Events

### The Rome Consensus Participation in the National Conference on Drug Addiction in Burgos

The Rome Consensus Coordination took part in the 21st National Conference on Drug Addiction of the Spanish Red Cross in Burgos (22-24 October). The Conference was focused on "Social commitment with the individuals affected by drugs". The Red Cross volunteers' role in drug prevention, information, and treatment was presented and discussed during the meeting. Volunteers and professionals from all around Spain presented their ongoing projects, discussed volunteers' current involvement in activities and ways to enhance volunteers' roles in drug programmes.

The Spanish Red Cross is involved in many local humanitarian drug policy projects. For example, in Avilés, the Red Cross has a Project named "Zona Clave" ("Key Zone"). Through this project, Red Cross volunteers initiate contacts with young users, or potential users, to offer evidence-based information, in an accessible and objective way, on the effects and risks associated to the use of drugs and to reduce the risks associated with drug use. "Educación de Calle" ("Street Education") aims at prevention drug use among the youth, minimizing risk factors leading drugs initiation among vulnerable youth.

Through the organisation of many activities, the project seeks to recover urban public spaces and use them as places of coexistence between children, adolescents and youth. Both projects show that it is possible to implement sensitive, pragmatic and innovative projects which can really improve one's livelihood in some neighborhoods or places in the cities.

Jorrit Kamminga presented *The Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy*. In line with the aims and objectives of the Rome Consensus European Chapter, Mr Kamminga highlighted the European framework of drug policies and the possibilities of cooperation between National Societies in Europe. The European Chapter is an ideal forum to discuss and promote, on a European level, effective programmes in drug prevention and information.

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