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## NEWSLETTER

### Interview with Mr Timo Jetsu, European Commission Directorate General for Justice, Freedom and Security Drug Policy Coordination Unit

This month, the Rome Consensus coordination team interviews Mr Timo Jetsu from the Drug Policy Coordination Unit of the European Commission's Directorate General for Justice, Freedom and Security on his thoughts on the role played by European Drug Strategy and Action Plans.\*

**Q. RC:** Why is drug use an issue that deserves the attention of the European Commission?

**A. TJ:** There are several reasons for this. Some of the most important are:

- Illicit drug trafficking and drug abuse are global threats that can not be adequately addressed by single countries;
- In the EU, free movement of people, goods and services creates a special challenge. One of the side-effects that needs to be addressed at the EU level is drug trafficking. According to the *Eurobarometer* studies, EU citizens expect the EU to act in this field;
- The Commission is in charge of overseeing the compliance of the Treaty on EU. Although the Community competence as such in this field is rather limited (precursor chemicals, and prevention of money laundering), the Commission can act in many different fields e.g. in external relations, public health, etc., using different (financial) instruments to complement Member States' activities in the drugs field.

**Q. RC:** How is civil society an important player within the commission framework?

**A. TJ:** Involving civil society is one of the key priorities of the Commission in general and all the more so in the drugs field, where civil society organizations (and individuals) are often in the front line in contact with the drug users and in providing services for drugs users, particularly low threshold and harm reduction.

**Q. RC:** Can you tell us more about the new project you are developing under the working title of the *EU Alliance on Drugs* and the role that initiatives such as the Rome Consensus Europe can play within it?

**A. TJ:** The Commission is launching a new initiative, initially called "European Alliance on Drugs", aiming at engaging civil society to work towards the common objective of raising awareness, interest and commitment about drugs in Europe. The "European Alliance on Drugs" which is based on the principle of "shared responsibility" by all members of society, not just professionals, will involve bodies, people or groups whose actions will have a multiplier effect.

**Q. RC:** What are main achievements of the EU Drug Strategy since its beginnings in the 1990s?

**A. TJ:** The main achievement is the development of an evidence-based, pragmatic and balanced framework for drug policy in Europe, the so-called European model.

Even though the policy making competence is still at the Member State level, they have been able to agree unanimously on this approach. Because of the work done by the EMCDDA in Lisbon and Europol, much more reliable and comparable information is available as evidence for drug policies.

**Q. RC:** What is the Commission's top priority for the next 5 years?

**A. TJ:** : The top priority is to continue with the development of the indicators, in particular on supply reduction, to be able to evaluate the current EU Action Plan and EU Drugs Strategy after 2012 in order to move a further step forward in evidence-based policy. It's also to ensure that the EU continues developing a common approach shared by all Member States and leading to the development of e.g. EU minimum standards in treatment, even if these formally remain areas of national competence.

**Mr Jetsu will be speaking at the Rome Consensus Europe Conference – Rising to the Challenge of Drug Use in Europe which is being hosted by the Spanish Red Cross in Madrid from the 25-27 March 2009.**

**Next month, the Rome Consensus coordination team will be talking to a Red Cross-Red Crescent National Society about their initiative to tackle the drug issue.**

## Upcoming event

The Rome Consensus Europe Conference, hosted in Madrid by the Spanish Red Cross on the 26-27 March 2009 is an initiative of the Rome Consensus supported by the European Commission and ICOS. The Rome Consensus Europe Conference will bring together National Societies of Red Cross and Red Crescent in Europe, European Union (EU) institution representatives and other leading practitioners to exchange best practices in prevention, treatment and care, and explore concrete ways for National Societies to contribute to drug policy responses in Europe. For more information on the Conference visit [www.romeconsensus.net](http://www.romeconsensus.net) or contact Diana Copper on +33 1 49 96 67 22 or [europe@romeconsensus.net](mailto:europe@romeconsensus.net)



\* Disclaimer: These are the personal views of Mr Jetsu and do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission