

## Upcoming Seminar in Rome: 13-15 December 2009

Rome Consensus Europe is pleased to announce its final event for 2009, enabled by the support of the European Commission and the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS).

Rome Consensus Europe Seminar, *Drug Prevention, Treatment and Harm Reduction: Scaling-up of Red Cross-Red Crescent Best Practices* will take place at Villa Maraini Therapeutic Community in Rome, from the 13-15 December 2009.

The Seminar will aim to scale-up some of the best practices currently in place in Red Cross National Societies in European Union member states, candidate countries or potential candidate countries, and to encourage their use in the broader network of the Red Cross-Red Crescent Movement in the European region.

Addressed at practitioners in Red Cross drug initiatives or related health and social programmes, the Seminar will, in three practical sessions, focus on drug prevention, treatment and harm reduction, using concrete examples of best practices to come up with a set of benchmarks for wider implementation within the Red Cross-Red Crescent Movement.

During the three focus sessions, six National Societies from around Europe will present their drug outreach programmes. Following these presentations, a working session will aim to identify benchmarks and best practices from the work of these National Societies in order to come up with a set of concrete Guidelines for each area of focus.

Villa Maraini Therapeutic Community, which benefits from the support of the Italian Red Cross, provides the ideal venue for the event: founded in 1976 by Dr Massimo Barra, it is now a leading organisation in providing assistance to drug users and people living with HIV and AIDS, as well as in the fight against the discrimination and stigma related to drug use.

Villa Maraini has grown from being a small centre, treating no more than five people a day, to one of the most comprehensive structures of its sort in Italy. Today the Foundation provides a wide range of free therapies to approximately seven hundred drug users every day.

One of the highlights of the programme will be a tour of Villa Maraini and the services it offers – a true source of inspiration for Seminar attendees.

### Services offered by Villa Maraini

Villa Maraini offers a wide range of services to those who need them. These range from residential rehabilitation services to overdose interventions in the streets, and from offering support to drug users in prison to providing shelter to homeless drug users. Teams of Villa Maraini social workers (approximately 30% of whom are former drug users trained under the programme), psychologists, Red Cross Volunteers and medical doctors, go out into local communities on a daily basis, interacting with drug users in the places where they use drugs. These teams also liaise with the criminal justice system to recommend and provide methadone drug therapy.

The Centre also works in close collaboration with the local police, who seek assistance from Villa Maraini when a drug user is arrested within Rome, to help deal with withdrawal symptoms or to assist in any kind of drug dependency crisis. This close and regular contact with drug users both in the streets and at Villa Maraini has enabled the development of a strong bond and trust between the drug-using community and the Foundation. This helps to bridge the gap between the social exclusion of drug users and wider society, working towards drug users' reintegration.

Villa Maraini staff also provide social and legal counselling and self-help groups for drug users and people living with HIV and AIDS. Former drug users now make up one third of the staff at the Foundation, meaning peer-to-peer education is growing as an important part of the programme.

To register for the event, please contact Jorrit Kamminga at [kamminga@romeconsensus.net](mailto:kamminga@romeconsensus.net), or go to [www.romeconsensus.net](http://www.romeconsensus.net).

## News from the EU

### The Consensus continues to grow

Rome Consensus Europe is delighted to welcome three new signatories from European Member States and candidate countries: the British Red Cross signed on September 10, the French Red Cross on May 26, and the Macedonian Red Cross on March 27.

The arrival of our latest three European members is a reminder of the important goals of our work, and we look forward to involving the new signatories in our projects and policy work, and hope that as many of you as possible will be able to meet them for yourselves at our next meeting in Rome.

### New EU report on drugs and drug policy in Europe

An important body of the EU drug policy structure, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), has recently released its annual report into drug issues in Europe.

The report underlines the commitment of the Lisbon-based EMCDDA to working more closely with national and European partners to address the issue of drug supply, in keeping with their conclusion that Europe's drug situation "must be assessed at the national, sub-regional, European and even global levels". Among the findings of the report is that "the dynamic nature of the drug problem in Europe" means that the policy community must "keep pace with changing conditions".

The free, 99-page document can be downloaded (in 23 languages) from the EMCDDA's website:

<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/annual-report/2009>

### Rome Consensus urges support for the most recent project of the European Commission: the European Action on Drugs

Many of you will be aware that the Rome Consensus is participating in an advocacy campaign of the European Commission, the European Action on Drugs (EAD), launched on June 26 in Brussels. The main aims of the Action on Drugs are to:

- Provide European civil society, and professionals involved in the drugs field, with a platform to increase awareness and commitment about drugs and the risks of drug abuse.
- Encourage the concept of shared responsibility, under which all members of society have a role to play in raising awareness on drugs and their impact, particularly on young people.
- Create a network of responsible and committed European citizens and organisations, to work to help reduce drug-related harm and to solve related problems.
- Promote the non discrimination and stigmatisation of drug use.

We encourage national societies to become involved in this initiative, which shares many objectives with the Rome Consensus.

For more information, please consult the consensus coordination team or visit the EAD website at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/ead/html/index.jsp>

## Questions and Answers

Jane Francis from the Rome Consensus coordination team asked Charlotte Hall from the British Red Cross, the most recent signatory to the Rome Consensus, about the work of the British Red Cross in response to drug use

*JF: Why is drug use an area that the British Red Cross has decided to work on?*

CH: The British Red Cross aims to teach first aid skills to people who are most likely to need them in order that we have the maximum impact in terms of saving lives. There is a clear need and a direct benefit from learning first aid for this community. Knowing CPR can significantly increase the resilience of drug users who face the threat of overdose.

*JF: How does your work on drug-related issues fit in within the wider social and health programmes of the British Red Cross?*

CH: The British Red Cross is keen to unite its first aid education with other services such as health and social care in order to deliver beneficiary focussed programmes. Although this is in the early stages of development it's a clear strategic direction for the organisation.

*JF: Do you see drug use issues as an area that the British Red Cross will become more involved in and develop in the coming years?*

CH: In the last few years, we have seen a noticeable increase in the amount of first aid education targeted towards drug users. Although this activity is relatively small at the moment, many first aid teams have identified this group as a priority in their area and are planning to address it over the next few years.

*JF: What developments (if any) within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement do you think would be useful regarding response to drug use?*

CH: The British Red Cross focuses exclusively on harm reduction in this context i.e. teaching drug users, their friends and family how to respond in the event of an overdose. We have found that working in partnership with organisations that have specialist knowledge of working with these groups is effective. It would be useful to compare different approaches to harm reduction with other National Societies to learn about alternative approaches and share best practise.

*JF: Do you collaborate or interact with any other National Societies with regards to the drug-related programmes? If not, do you see this as something that could be beneficial to your own work?*

CH: We collaborate through the RCRC First Aid Education European Network on many aspects of first aid education and look forward to the Rome Consensus conference in mid-December to learn more about this subject.