

**CCPCJ Side Event**  
**20<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 – 12.15 CET**

***It's Not Possible for Police and Drug Treatment to Work Together.  
Until Now...The Global Emergence of Law Enforcement Deflection***

**SPEECH**

Times and approaches are changing rapidly. If we compare the level of debate on drug issues of a few years ago within the international community, today it looks radically changed thanks to evidence and to those organizations that are providing humanitarian alternatives to the old-school approaches, which were based on repression and punishment. The search for more effective responses by law enforcement authorities on drug issues has been improved and this debate today can testify to the changes in progress.

We must be aware that what the international community has done so far has been insufficient and often counterproductive, blinded, as it were, by the promises of the war on drugs.

The strategic strands of punishment and treatment conflict with each other. Punishment and Treatment do not and cannot go together. Each government has the duty and above all the interest to get in contact with people with drug disorders and treat them all.

For this reason, particular attention should be paid to the key role of public actors who meet drug users every day in the streets: those who work in law enforcement and those who work in treatment services. They cannot ignore or conflict with each other anymore.

They need each other to reach the common goal of an improvement in decreasing drug demand and illicit behavior on one side and in decreasing the harm and the social isolation of people with health problems on the other side.

We believe that Law Enforcement can play a key role in offering a public service that is not limited to repression, but that can also be the first step towards assistance, as a referral to start a recovery path.

Law enforcement is in a unique position to be able to switch from a repressive approach to a supportive one, helping to avoid useless suffering.

The common objective is to lead the person in a recovery path and not in a judicial one.

It is convenient also in terms of public safety and public savings, if we consider that almost 1 out of 4 inmates are in prison for drug-related problems.

Police and health workers can find a common meeting point and work together to promote the well-being of those citizens with drug problems they encounter. This requires a huge review of the practices in place and efforts in terms of cultural change.

Today we can give a clear answer to the provocative question that is in the subject of our encounter. Until now it seemed impossible to unify the forces of police and treatment services. We, the Rome Consensus can demonstrate that is not like that.

The Rome Consensus 2.0 can be the compass in this process. It represents a summary tool in which the objective of public safety is substantially favored by concrete proposals of health interventions that work.

We can testify that police can work and collaborate with health professionals in order to reduce the negative consequences of drug use for those who continue to use illicit drugs.

Harm reduction requires change of mindset, together with a commitment for close collaboration between police and drug treatment services to maximize the effectiveness of overdose prevention programmes and other health based approaches.

In this debate we will find concrete and effective examples of cooperation in which people of good will have started virtuous paths.

One of those is Jac Charlier, a key partner of the Rome Consensus, and a source of inspiration in the Deflection field. A very good practice that works and can be easily implemented, which aligns the priorities of the police system with that of public health, throughout a humanitarian framework. Please Jac, the floor is yours.

Thank you.

Massimo Barra