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*Dianova supports a public health-based approach to addiction treatment and prevention*

# Addiction Policies

## Position Paper

**M**odern society's ideals of individual success and happiness, consumption and immediacy have only exacerbated a phenomenon that has existed since the dawn of humanity: addiction. In order to address this situation, we believe it is essential to carry out an in-depth review of international drug policies which lead to practices that can sometimes be contrary to human rights and the rule of law. Policies in this area need to be based on goals that are not only clear and achievable, but also focused on the health and well-being of individuals.

- 1. The Dianova Network notes the limits of an international policy centred mainly on prohibition and repression.** The ideal of a drug-free world was probably credible fifty years ago, but it does not seem realistic given the data we have today. The inability to stop the increase in trafficking, corruption and the consumption of psychoactive substances, especially among young people, shows the need to revise the current approach.
- 2. The Dianova Network supports reforming the general framework of UN drug conventions and agencies towards a public health approach.** This framework must shift from a primary focus on prohibition and criminalization to a public health

approach that respects human rights. The reform should also encourage innovation and the search for solutions adapted to a constantly changing problem, including an enhanced treatment opportunities. Moreover, we expect United Nations agencies to play a leading role in this shift in thinking by encouraging governments to implement a set of appropriate and complementary solutions.

- 3. The Dianova network supports the establishment of major debates on dependencies on a national level.** We feel it is urgent that attitudes towards dependence evolve in each country. We therefore support holding interdisciplinary political, scientific and societal debates to formulate recommendations for reducing the damage caused by the use of various substances. These recommendations must consider the relative risk associated with these substances.
- 4. The Dianova network advocates decriminalizing the use of all psychoactive substances.** Hundreds of thousands of addicts are prosecuted and punished with long prison sentences, and may be executed in some countries, for having used illegal drugs. Even states that follow the rule of law impose the burden

of a criminal record on users that denies them access to certain jobs. We support implementing policies based on public health and human rights. We also call for ending ineffective and repressive policies that serve only to marginalize drug users and reduce their access to the care that they need.

**5. The Dianova Network supports the implementation of measures based on scientific data and evidence.**

We must limit the influence of ideologies and subjective representations. We must instead promote approaches and programs that are validated by scientific data, then monitored and regularly evaluated.

**6. The Dianova network supports the implementation of complementary measures and innovative alternatives.**

Focusing on a single approach or category of programs (e.g., residential/outpatient treatment or a harm reduction strategy) cannot meet all of the specific needs of addicts. We therefore support implementing complementary solutions and approaches and innovative alternatives to prevent and treat addiction. Such measures must be based on the needs of individuals and their fundamental rights.

**7. The Dianova Network supports patients' access to medical cannabis.**

Dianova believes that current scientific evidence demonstrates the validity of the therapeutic applications of cannabis. Benefits of cannabis include analgesic, relaxing, antispasmodic and antiemetic properties, and its ability to stimulate appetite. Dianova therefore believes patients who would benefit from cannabis should have access to a quality-controlled product at pharmacies or specialized distribution centres. Cannabis access must conform to administrative procedures approved by competent health authorities.

**8. The Dianova Network supports universal patient access to essential medicines and pain relief.**

The drug control system does not provide equitable access to medicines such as opioid analgesics, which are essential for managing avoidable pain and suffering. Access to pain control medicines is a fundamental human right. Dianova therefore calls for the elimination of all political obstacles that prevent some low- and middle-income states from ensuring adequate supplies of these medicines.

**9. The Dianova Network notes the decision of several states to implement a policy of liberalization or regulation of cannabis.**

Dianova believes that current scientific knowledge and the negative consequences of prohibiting cannabis support these decisions. However, questions remain about the health risks linked to using cannabis and to increased consumption among young people. Dianova therefore is refraining from taking a public position pending more thorough evaluation of these policies. We will monitor future research into the effects of using cannabis.

**10. The Dianova Network opposes the liberalization or regulation of other currently illicit substances.**

It is already difficult or impossible for public authorities to reduce the consumption of tobacco and alcohol and to prevent minors from using them. This fact, combined with our knowledge of illegal substances suggests strongly that more liberal laws and regulations would cause the use of those substances to increase sharply.

