

9 September 2014

INPUD RESPONSE



The International Network of People who Use Drugs' (INPUD) response to The Global Commission on Drug Policy's *Taking Control: Pathways to Drug Policies That Work* (September 2014)

“Stop criminalizing people for drug use and possession – and stop imposing “compulsory treatment” on people whose only offense is drug use or possession”

INPUD, the International Network of People who Use Drugs, welcomes the recent call from The Global Commission on Drug Policy to end criminalisation of people who use drugs and of drug use. In addition, INPUD welcomes the call to end the detention, incarceration, and compulsory ‘treatment’ of people who use drugs. We welcome calls to ensure equitable access to essential medicines and to high-quality, human rights respecting harm reduction programmes.

We particularly welcome those elements of the report that seek to move beyond mere calls for decriminalisation, and that go further by encouraging the legal production and regulation of currently illegal drugs. One of the notable consequences of prohibition is that people cannot accurately know the composition or purity of the illegally manufactured drugs which they use, resulting in substantial harm when dangerous contaminants are present. Notable recent examples of this endemic feature of prohibition have included deaths resulting from batches of anthrax-contaminated heroin and deaths from PMA-contaminated ecstasy.

The universality of the harms of prohibition

INPUD stresses that the harms which result from the implementation of prohibition are global and systemic; they are the norm. States continue to fight a ‘war on drugs’ that is, in reality, a war on people who use illicit drugs, their families, and their communities. This is a war that particularly impacts people of colour, women, young people, and the economically marginalised and disenfranchised.

The vast majority of countries, low-, middle-, and high-income, continue to pursue detrimental laws, policies, practices, and human rights violations whilst falling short in terms of service provision and harm reduction. Policies notably include incarceration, forced ‘treatment’, harassment, and violence in civil society and perpetuated by the police and state, policies which drive – and, in turn, are driven by – social exclusion, marginalisation, stigma, and discrimination.

International Network of People who Use Drugs

INPUD | Unit 2C05 | South Bank Technopark | 90 London Road | London | SE1 6LN | UK

info@inpud.net | www.inpud.net



9 September 2014

INPUD RESPONSE



A word of caution – ‘nothing about us without us’

INPUD’s welcoming of an increasing shift towards opposition to prohibition and criminalisation of people who use drugs is tempered with caution. Though we welcome a call to increasingly focus on service provision, healthcare provision, and harm reduction as opposed to criminalisation, moves towards disempowering constructions of people who use drugs as pathological and inherently in need of ‘treatment’ and ‘rehabilitation’ are worrying. These understandings frame people who use drugs as sick, as lacking in agency and self-determination, and they feed into justifications for detention and compulsory ‘treatment’ (a phenomenon that the Commission calls to end), as well as feeding stigma and discrimination.

Furthermore, INPUD is disappointed that, yet again, members of the drug using community and the organisations which represent people who use drugs have not been formally consulted on policy recommendations which directly concern them. We would re-state in the strongest possible terms that people who use drugs are part of the solution. To paraphrase the Foreword of the Chair of the Commission, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, we too are driven by urgency.