

Concurrent Session

Education and Training in Harm Reduction Strategies and Approaches

Title: Lessons from partnership Italy-Balkan countries

Author: Maurizio Coletti

**President, Itaca European Association of
Professionals working in the Drug Field**

Issue: To discuss the problems and perspectives of co-operation between Italy and some Balkan countries in the drug demand field including harm reduction. Specifically, three Balkan countries will be involved: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia. Croatia will be the local partner of Italian Institutions

A balanced approach: the major effort of co-operation between Italy and Balkan countries is concerned with supply reduction and fight against traffic and traffickers (Balkan Route). Now, a new request has been formulated by some countries regarding how to support the demand reduction domain. As there are no respective current Italian initiatives within the different European frameworks, there is a great need to revitalize and strengthen Italian specific actions. The Italian approach to actions in the drug field is focussed on a balanced approach between prevention, education, treatment and harm reduction on one hand, and the enforcement of laws against drugs production and trafficking on the other.

Key points: the current situation in several Balkan countries regarding treatment and harm reduction is very problematic: a lack of resources is accompanied by a lack of knowledge. Italian support will provide a one-year project based on several continuing training activities and on a continuing support for data collection and capacity building. Three Italian Regions of Adriatic Coast (Marche, Emilia-Romagna and Puglia) will be involved in the project, also offering their treatment and harm reduction network for study visits.

Implications: transfer of knowledge and clinical experience, as well as data collection and specific capacity building to different countries and contexts are considered to be an important challenge for the Institutions, NGOs and professional associations involved in the project. A preliminary phase of the project will be dedicated to a need assessment about the main issues in demand reduction (prevention, treatment, harm reduction). The findings will result in an action plan including the following areas:

- a. Data collection and country reporting
- b. Substitution treatment
- c. Psycho-social interventions
- d. Harm reduction and interventions in prison
- e. Preventive activities

Evaluation: an evaluation of the entire project will be carried out in order to understand if the actions will meet the needs and how the project should be prolonged for another year.