

Your
**Freedom
of Choice**



**DRUG USE
PROHIBITION KILLS**

The war against drugs has been lost. Prohibitive policies have multiplied the worldwide problems associated with drugs, instead of solving them. Wherever drug policy has been guided by repression, the consequences have been war, violence and death. The illegal production of drugs has increased drastically. Worldwide, approximately three million people who inject drugs are living with HIV. In many parts of the world their health condition is grave.

It is high time for a peaceful drug policy. Drug use and addiction are health issues, and so need to be tackled by health policy, not the police and the military. Only gradual legalization will break the power of the drug cartels. The health needs of drug users must not be sacrificed to a destructive battle against drugs.

Abstinence must not be a dogma. People are different. Whether it is abstinence, substitution, or continued drug use – the most helpful available treatment always depends on the user and his or her individual circumstances. Offers of support that are dependent on forced abstinence simply do not reach the majority of users.

Harm reduction is the best strategy. Survival should be the top priority of any drug support strategy. The aim is a pattern of drug use that does as little damage as possible. This strategy depends on the easy availability of counseling, clean needles, drug consumption rooms, and substitution treatments.

Drug users can make decisions, too! In fact, they know best what is good for them. Good drug policy gives users the freedom to accept or reject certain treatment and support offers. And they have a right to neutral counseling. To promote this approach worldwide, European self-help organizations have started the *mytreatmentmychoice.eu* campaign in 12 different languages.

Peaceful drug policy has positive effects! Legalization dries up the black market and actually reduces drug consumption. It also reduces crime associated with drugs, such as theft and prostitution, because users who have access to legal drugs or substitute treatments are under no pressure anymore. Aid organizations have less difficulty reaching drug users, because they lead more stable and healthier lives. Since the introduction of survival aid and harm reduction programs in Germany, the number of newly diagnosed HIV infections among drug users has dropped significantly. There were only 100 new cases in 2011.

It is both a scandal and a fatal signal that drug users are not allowed to enter the United States to participate in the International AIDS Conference. Freedom of choice for drug users! Now!