

Declaration to promote Harm Reduction (HR) and HR based services

Until today, people in situations of homelessness who use drugs and/or alcohol lack access to Harm Reduction (HR) services which strongly increases their risk of being infected with life-threatening diseases.

Advocacy organisations as well as academics have been emphasizing the need to improve HR support for people in situations of homelessness who use drugs and/or alcohol in a problematic, i.e. non-recreational, way.¹ The [independent evaluation of the previous European Drug Strategy](#) (2005-2012) showed that HR services remain largely under-implemented in the EU and suggests scaling up HR services. Not only are more HR services needed in the European Union, services also need to ensure that specific and multiple support needs are effectively addressed (including substance use specific needs, mental health needs, target group-specific support provision etc.).

The Erasmus+ funded project [HR4homelessness - Integrating Harm Reduction in Homeless Services](#) (2019-2021) recognises the urgent need to improve HR support for people in situation of homelessness and contributed to improving HR services through extensive training, sharing of knowledge and existing best practice. The project partnership, comprised of homeless and drug use specialist organisations in six countries (Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, and Portugal), aims at engaging with policy makers to ensure further support for the establishment of HR services in Europe.

I, the undersigned, Dr Milka Sokolović, Director General of EPHA, hereby declare my support for the further establishment of drug and alcohol use specific services and their improvement according to the HR approach in Europe, especially with regards to people who use drugs / alcohol in situation of homelessness.

More specifically, I will promote and support

1. the establishment of service provision which is based on the **HR approach** and on **existing evidence**;
2. the establishment of services which effectively address **user needs**, interventions which are **human-rights and public health-based**;
3. the further **integration of drug and alcohol specialist services** into the mainstream health care system;
4. the active **involvement of people who use drugs or alcohol** as key stakeholders for the set-up and design of support services;
5. the development and implementation of **policies** which support the establishment of HR services.
6. I will encourage European decision and policy makers as well as the EU Member States to ensure sufficient HR service provision for people in situation of homelessness.
7. Furthermore, I will support efforts for making sufficient **European funding available for transnational knowledge and best practice sharing**, for instance through European projects, to improve service provision for people who use drugs/alcohol in situation of homelessness, particularly in the framework of the European Health Programme.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Milka Sokolović".

July 13, 2021, Brussels

¹ For instance, the FEANTSA Position Paper '[Good Practice Guidance for Working with People Who Are Homeless and Use Drugs](#)', 2017, research by [Glynn et al.](#) (2017) for the Netherlands, by [Csak / Sarosi](#) (2017) for Hungary and by [Benjaminsen](#) (2015) for Denmark. ,