

**OSCE-wide Conference on Combating the Threat of Illicit Drugs
and the Diversion of Chemical Precursors
“Strengthening Effective Prevention of Drug Use among Youth
through Community Policing”**

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CONCEPT PAPER

I - Background and Rationale

The use of drugs and other psychoactive substances are major public health problems globally. Substance use is associated with a wide range of negative consequences for health: accidents, violence, stigma, chronic health conditions such as dependence, cardiovascular and infectious diseases, cancers, and much more. These challenges should be addressed in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with full respect for all human rights, fundamental freedoms, the inherent dignity of all individuals and the principles of equal rights and mutual respect among States.

Substance use and its negative consequences can have a profound damaging impact on the development of youth, and compromise their educational paths, work life and contribution to society. Substance use most generally begins in adolescence, and young women and men are globally the most common target group for the efforts to **prevent** substance use.¹

Police alone cannot provide the sole solution to the drug problems our communities face. The community, state and local government agencies, as well as the private sector all have to be involved. Co-operation and co-ordination between the police, the public and private sector, and civil society lie at the heart of the community policing approach. Strong partnerships complement traditional drug law enforcement and strengthen effective measures to **prevent** and reduce drug problems in the long-term.

The best way to fight against the use of illicit drugs by young people is to prevent it. Community policing is about creating and building a bond of trust between the public and the police. While traditional policing focuses on supply reduction and increasing the cost of drug use, community policing can embrace a broader, more effective approach that links supply

¹ UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Sixty-third session, Vienna, 2–6 March 2020, E/CN.7/2020/CRP.12

and demand reduction by including prevention and treatment efforts. Therefore, community policing is a significant tool for **crime prevention** and an important component of local efforts to **prevent young people from using illicit drugs**. It aims at establishing close interactive relationships and trust between community members and the police to ensure that interventions occur at the earliest sign of emerging drug-related activities. It helps to develop a broad range of alternative youth activities that **prevent** youth involvement in illicit drugs. It also helps to co-ordinate the work of criminal justice and local government agencies with police departments to ensure that drug offenders are held responsible, that treatment is available to those in need, and that safer environments are created to foster drug-free communities.²

Community policing is an excellent vehicle for implementing a comprehensive drug control strategy on the community level. Since community policing combines prevention and enforcement efforts, it remains an important and effective tool to better recognize the underlying conditions, drivers and challenges of drug use and drug trafficking as a means to develop and advance long-term strategic approach to counter the threats and challenges posed by drugs. Through such comprehensive and interlinked measures, community policing can make a difference on the ground and support long-term efforts to break the cycle of drug use and drug trafficking by complementing law enforcement activities with measures to address root causes in local communities, including by working with and treating addicted offenders.

Most recently, the international community through the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs highlighted that drugs and substance use, and its negative consequences, can be prevented. The primary objective of drug prevention is to help people, particularly young people, to avoid initiation into the use of drugs, or, if they have started already, to mitigate health risks and other negative consequences. Prevention also has a broader purpose, which is to support the development of children and youth allowing them to realize their talents and potential³. The 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem in its outcome document (A/RES/S-30/1) called the UN Member States to take effective and practical **prevention** measures to protect people, in particular children and youth, from drug use initiation by providing them with accurate information about the risks of drug abuse, by promoting skills and opportunities to choose healthy lifestyles and develop supportive parenting and healthy social environments. It also called to consider enhancing co-operation between public health, education and law enforcement authorities when developing **prevention** initiatives.⁴

OSCE participating States in the 2012 OSCE Concept for Combating the Threat of Illicit Drugs and the Diversion of Chemical Precursors assigned priority to **preventive action** against drug-related crimes, as well as **preventive measures** aimed at reducing drug abuse

² Community policing a powerful tool for building drug-free neighbourhoods. Heike P. Gramckow, Ph.D., 1997, National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)

³ UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Sixty-third session, Vienna, 2–6 March 2020, E/CN.7/2020/CRP.12

⁴ <https://www.unodc.org/documents/postungass2016/outcome/V1603301-E.pdf>, pg. 4-5.

and dependence, and drug-related harm to health and society, **especially to children and young people.**⁵

II – Objective and Focus

The 2020 OSCE-wide conference on combating the Threat of Illicit Drugs and the Diversion of Chemical Precursors convened by the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship will build upon the 2012 and 2015 OSCE conferences on drugs, youth and prevention and will provide a platform for experts of the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation to discuss collective measures and exchange best practices and lessons learned in order to advance effective **drug prevention** efforts with a specific focus on the role of young women and men in preventing drug use and abuse, as well as recruitment into criminal networks engaged in drug trafficking, supply and/or distribution.

Participants will review efforts of law enforcement and relevant agencies to build community partnerships to develop and implement more inclusive and effective drug prevention and control strategies at the national and international levels that emphasize initiatives aimed at reducing drug abuse among young people and to avert recidivism. They will discuss how to promote and use community policing to create and maintain the environment in which communities can successfully stand against illicit drugs over time, including by identifying and addressing drivers of drug abuse. Participants will examine ways to foster partnerships between public institutions/agencies/authorities and youth, including by strengthening the participation of youth organizations, in informing and developing more responsive and effective demand reduction and prevention programs, as well as campaigns to raise awareness on the dangers and impacts of drugs and organized crime. The conference will also highlight the importance of upholding human rights as an essential part of drug prevention, reduction and control policies and will examine ways to better identify needs of those exposed to the risks of drug abuse and criminality. The discussion will put emphasis on gender mainstreaming as a prerequisite to conduct more effective and responsive rehabilitation and reintegration efforts, including by assessing the role of support networks and identifying ways to deliver more tailored support to affected communities.

The conference is expected to facilitate dialogue on:

- Enhancing the sharing of drug-related information in the OSCE area and the exchange of good practices and solutions to enhance effective and comprehensive drug prevention;
- Strengthening the role of community policing to develop and implement sustainable drug prevention, reduction and control efforts in partnership with young women and men;
- Focusing on coherent approaches to avoid overlaps in activities and verified practical proposals on future co-operation;
- More streamlining actions in implementing established policies and measures;

⁵ <https://www.osce.org/pc/92557?download=true>

- Increasing co-operation between the OSCE and UNODC, as well as with other international and regional actors and stakeholders to advance joint implementation of global commitments and make use of comparative advantages.

III – Structure

The conference will be divided into three working sessions:

- **The first session** on “Preventing youth narcotism and recidivism through community policing and collective partnerships” will review efforts of law enforcement and other relevant agencies to build community partnerships and consider pertinent support measures. Participants will discuss community policing as a tool to create and maintain the drug free environment.
- **The second session** “Networking and partnering with youth against drugs” will foster youth’s understanding and awareness of the dangers and impacts of drugs and organized crime, as well as to identify those who need rehabilitation and reintegration.
- **The third session** on “Youth, gender and human rights initiatives to tackle the world drug problem“ will consider pertinent implications in addressing the world drug problem. It will review protective measures, including for children and youth, and discuss human rights issues in the implementation of balanced drug control policies.

The key findings and outcomes of the conference will be compiled in a final document, which will serve as a basis for further discussions on this topic for the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, as well as a guidance for the OSCE executive structures when providing technical assistance to the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

IV – Audience/Format

The conference is targeted at experts from national drug control structures, representatives of relevant international and regional organizations, as well as civil society, including youth. Practitioners from pertinent government ministries, such as ministries of Interior, Justice, Health and Foreign Affairs, as well as local institutions are especially encouraged to participate. They are invited to share concrete examples, best practices and lessons learned as outlined in the draft agenda. Participants are encouraged to discuss and share experiences and to identify specific needs and proposal for possible improvement of the OSCE drug-related activities in line with its pertinent mandate built on agreed frameworks and shared responsibility.

In order to better promote interactive discussion and productive exchanges among participants, formal statements and interventions in response to speakers are expected to be as concise as possible, not exceeding three minutes. Interventions should focus on the actual topic of the conference through concrete examples, lessons learned and recommendations; they should lead to follow-up actions directly related to the subject of the session.

Delegations, international and regional organizations, as well as NGOs are invited to pre-register to make short statements.