



Fixpunkt Berlin, Germany

1. German Drug Policy

The German drug policy is described in the 'Action Plan on Drugs and Addiction' (2003) and is based on a '**balanced approach**' between law enforcement strategies and interventions to prevent, treat and reduce to a minimum the harm caused by drugs to the individual and to society.

Three main goals concerning drug consumers are described as following:

- to delay the start of consumption
- to reduce high-risk use patterns early
- to treat dependence with all available means

The focus on illicit drugs is placed on

- avoiding or reducing consumption (demand reduction)
- reducing the availability of illicit drugs and making access difficult (supply reduction)

The German drug policy consists of four pillars of drug and addiction policy

- prevention
- therapy/counseling
- survival assistance
- repression and supply reduction

2. Epidemiological Situation in Germany

The use of illegal drugs in Germany is widely spread. The life-time prevalence is about 25%, of course mostly cannabis (3.8 million have used during the last 12 months). There were about 400,000 consumers of cocaine during the last 12 months (often combined with heroine). In Germany there are an estimated current number of 76 - 161,000 problematic users of heroine. 64,500 of those users are on methadone treatment and 5,000 places in drug free treatment centers are offered. About 1,300 drug-related deaths occur in Germany each year.

In Germany there are about 60,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Each year about 3,000 infections are reported for the first time. The estimated HIV prevalence in IV drug users is about 2 - 14 percent (= 8,000 IV drug users, about 1,200 HIV infected IV drug users in Berlin).

In Germany about 500,000 people are chronically infected with Hepatitis C (HCV). Each year in Germany 6,000 – 7,000 Hepatitis C infections are reported for the first time (in Berlin: 750 cases in 2007). It is said that most HCV infections which happen in Germany today are related to IV drug use. The HCV prevalence in IV drug users is between 60 und 80 percent in Germany (EU-wide: 60 – 90 percent).

3. Drug Scene and Drug Support System in Berlin

There are approximately 8,000 IV drug users in Berlin. Around 3,500 of these are currently in methadone substitution treatment. For a large proportion of those in substitution treatment, the parallel use of cocaine, alcohol or prescription drugs must be assumed. Many users continue to have contact with the drug scene.

Berlin does not have one large public drug scene; rather in a number of locations in the city smaller scenes have become established in which dealing and, in some cases, consumption take place. A maximum of 50 drug users can be found in any one of these scenes just in one moment. The majority of users obtain drugs through the private/hidden drug scene. The mixed consumption of different drugs at same time (also ecstasy) is common, the misuse of alcohol in the group of heroin users /methadon patients has become a rising problem in the recent years. Another rising problem is the polydrug use (often combined with heroine) of young migrants from the former USSR.

The drug helping system in Berlin is well developed and differentiated, combining medical, social and psychotherapeutic elements like

- outpatient counseling units
- drug-free care (1,000 places outpatient, inpatient institutions)
- detox
- maintenance substitution (3,500 persons)
- rehabilitation
- harm reduction: low threshold contact facilities (cafés, mobile vans), needle/syringe-exchange, syringe vending machines, medically supervised drug consumption rooms)

4. Fixpunkt in General

Fixpunkt is a non-profit, non-governmental organization. The aims of Fixpunkt are:

- support of drug users to improve the conditions of health and social life, especially those who are infected by HIV or Hepatitis
- support self-help activities, self-control and survival strategies
- harm reduction, prevention of infections which are related to IV drug use
- offer various low threshold employment facilities

Fixpunkt currently runs several projects.

One project is „**Treffpunkt Druckausgleich**“. Druckausgleich is a low-threshold contact store which is situated in Neukölln – a Berlin district where many drug addicts live. People can meet at Druckausgleich, have a coffee and a nice breakfast. They can deliver used needles and get new needles and condoms. Druckausgleich offers information, social counseling and legal advice about all questions concerning living with drug addiction, harm reduction and health promotion and methadone maintenance treatment. They can use a washing machine or a personal computer. They can organize or participate in leisure activities like football, playing chess, visiting the cinema and so on. Drug addicts get the opportunity to work as volunteers, an opportunity which is financed by the department of labor (with an additional “expense allowance”) or in place of going into prison or paying fines. They can help in the café, prepare food and clean up.

The project is run together by three part time social workers and supported by several drug users undergoing substitution treatment who are working as volunteers or financed by the Berlin Department of Labor.

Another low-threshold facility is “**SKA**”, situated near Kottbusser Tor in Kreuzberg. SKA provides services similar to those offered by Druckausgleich. However, there is an additional drug consumption room (only for people injecting) integrated into the contact store. SKA focuses on migrant drug users, mostly from Southeastern Europe (Turkey, Arabian countries).

The project is run by two part-time social workers (one of them is of Turkish origin), a Persian speaking housekeeper, and is supported by nurses from the drug consumption-project staff (see page 5).

“**IdeFix – Everything a dog needs**” is a project that offers jobs and qualifying measures for drug addicts in methadone treatment. The main focus lies in supporting drug addicts in methadone treatment by encouraging self-help and self-organization. A welcomed effect is an increase in the general public’s acceptance of drug users because of a unifying factor; the shared affection for dogs typical in German society, especially in the local community where many drug users can be found.

A large proportion of drug users in methadone treatment have dogs and the responsibility for a dog plays a big role in their lives. The idea behind the project is to therefore simultaneously draw on and exchange the participants’ knowledge of dogs and dog care as well as to extend it. At the same time, the project aims to offer service, help and support for dog owners in dog training and general care, designed especially for those who are in methadone treatment.

IdeFix offers job training and employment on a part-time basis (from a few hours up to 30 hours weekly, financed by the Department of Labor). Because most of the drug addicts have an incomplete education (many of them dropped out of school before completion) and little or no work experience, it is important to offer differentiated job facilities and basic education/training which are adapted to the individual.

IdeFix offers:

- Qualification, training and education for drug users in MMT, involving participants in all parts of the project:
 - o becoming qualified for office jobs (PC, organization)
 - o production of treats and toys
 - o sales of dog supplies (treats, toys)
 - o information services for dog owners (law, care, education, hygiene)
- Communal activities: picking up sharps (used needles and syringes) in public places, watering plants, cleaning public places)

Idefix additionally organizes

- A meeting point for drug users who are dog owners
- Leisure activities together with dogs
- Dog sitting services
- Veterinarian counseling and vaccination

IdeFix started with minimal funding in the beginning of 2002. In 2003 and 2004 the project received funding from the foundation “Aktion Mensch”. Since the summer of 2005 Idefix has received funding from the European Social Fund. The project is run by three part-time social workers.

The health promotion projects **Mobilix, mobiles Drogenkonsumraum-Team (Mobile Drug Consumption Team), Aufsuchende Drogenhilfe (Drug Help Finds You) in Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf** and **Dental prophylaxis** have been established and operated in the public drug scenes during the last fifteen years. They provide:

- preventive measures and health promotion (such as syringe vending machines, needle exchange, condom distribution, safer-sex/safer-use-information, first-aid-training, provision of naloxone/Narcan® etc.),
- social support services
- basic medical services and dental prophylaxis
- basic dental medical services
- medically supervised consumption of drugs
- health promotion campaigns like one for hepatitis information and a vaccination campaign.

In addition, we have published and provided a lot of information material, for example, about safer sex and safer use, methadone treatment, overdose management and hygiene, which are also posted on our website www.fixpunkt.org. Fixpunkt has also produced three educational films: “Abgedrückt – First Aid in Case of Drug Emergencies” (2002), “Einwandfrei – Hepatitis C-Prevention and Hygiene in the Daily Life of Drug Users” (2004) and “Zähne zeigen”- Dental Health for Everbody (2008).

Fixpunkt’s work is carried out in vans and ambulances that are stationed in public drug scenes and in other support agencies who cooperate together with Fixpunkt. All of its medical services began as innovative model projects which underwent scientific evaluation. Emphasis is placed on an interdisciplinary approach (including social workers, nurses and physicians) and the incorporation of the drug user’s ability to develop self-management strategies.

Additionally, we are developing strategies to reach the so called hidden drug users (e. g. those who don’t appear at the public drug scenes and don’t contact low threshold or counseling units). Our strategies include:

- printing information on syringe/needle-boxes sold in our syringe vending machines
- internet communication
- cooperation with pharmacies which sell needles and syringes
- offering home counseling (“tupper parties”)
- cooperation with drug users who are acting as peers in drug user communities

5. Fixpunkt’s Health Promotion Projects in Detail

Now some details and data about our health promotion projects:

Syringe Machines, in operation since 1988

13 machines in six Berlin districts (Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain, Schöneberg, Tiergarten-Mitte-Wedding, Charlottenburg, Spandau, Neukölln).

The vending machines are run by a part time technician.

About 110,000 packages are sold each year (amount depends on the site, minimum 10, maximum 100 packages a day)

Packages contain: two needles, two syringes, two alc-pads OR two different condoms OR injection water (NaCl), ascorbin acid, skin care.

Additionally, we have 5 condom vending machines which are situated in public schools and youth leisure centers in the Berlin district Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf (since Dec. 2004).

“Mobilix” Prevention Van, in operation since 1991

Offers services in four Berlin districts (Kreuzberg, Schöneberg, Tiergarten, Mitte), 6 times, 4 days a week at 2 different sites

The vans is run by 3 part-time social workers, 1 national service worker and around 5 volunteers

Services offered include needle exchange, condoms, drinks, food, clothing, seats inside the vans, social information, counseling and safer use advice.

2007:

12,800 visits,

4,600 times needle-exchange (140,000 needles, 55,000 syringes, 80,000 alc-pads, 21,000 condoms)

more than 3,400 contacts/general conversations

more than 600 cases of counseling/social advice

“Mobilix” Basic Medical Health Care

Offers medical advice and basic medical treatment (especially drug related infections and diseases), wound management and refers patients to further medical treatment.

Two part-time nurses are on the permanent staff, supported by around 5 physicians

Health Van, in operation since 1993

Operated in three Berlin districts (Kreuzberg, Schöneberg, Charlottenburg), 4 times, 3 days a week, at 3 different sites

Home Visits

Once a week

2007

1,200 treatments

40 preventive home visits

Projects “Aufsuchende Drogenhilfe in Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf” and “mobiles Drogenkonsumraum-Team”

Charly-Prevention Van, in operation since 1996

Van operated in the Berlin district Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, 5 times, 5 days a week at 1 site, three times a week additional out reach work (since 2006)

The vans is run by 5 part-time social workers, 1 national service worker, around 5 volunteers and is supported by 6 peers (drug users)

Service offered include needle exchange, condoms, drinks, food, clothing, seats inside the vans, social information, counseling and safer use advice.

2007:

13,000 visits

6,250 needle-exchange (54,200 needles, 43,900 syringes, 43,000 alc-pads, 3,000 condoms)

more than 3,200 contacts/general conversations

more than 700 cases of counseling/social advice

24 clients in psychosocial care

Mobile Team for Supervised Drug Consumption Facilities (since Nov. 03) and Drug Emergency Project (since December 1998)

Drug Consumption Mobile (since November 03)

Five days a week at one site, open for five hour intervals

Additional flexible interventions (streetwork with/without mobile)

Drug Consumption Room Birkenstube (since February 04)

Five days a week, open for five hour intervals

Drug Consumption Room SKA (since February 04)

Five days a week, open for four hour intervals

Services offered include medically supervised consumption of opiates and cocaine, first aid in case of emergency, safer use counseling and referring clients to social counseling

1 part-time physician

6 part-time nurses, additional nurses on location

2007

Consumption mobile: 4,500 consumptions (3.4 per hour)

Drug consumption room Birkenstube: 12.035 consumptions (9 per hour)

Drug consumption room SKA: 3.100 consumptions (3.1 per hour)

First Aid Trainings, Prescription of Naloxone

Goals: to support the capabilities of drug users in life threatening situations, encourage peer support and explore the chances of Naloxone distribution

2007

31 courses with 238 participants. 62 new participants in the Naloxone project.

Project "Dental Prophylaxis"

Since January 2002 dental care, since January 2006, dental prophylaxis

Offered twice a week at one site providing:

- dental check-ups and treatment of toothaches/dental pain
- information about tooth and gum care and dental cleaning
- necessary dental care supplies; and
- referrals to local dentists' offices

Additional courses held at different sites (drug scene, counseling units)

2007

745 individual contacts (including 302 dental check ups, 269 medical treatments)
37 courses with 408 participants

2 dentist assistants (prophylaxis)
4 dentists on free-lance basis (check ups and treatments)

CONTACT

Fixpunkt (WEBSITE: www.fixpunkt.org)

Mobilix

Duckausgleich

IdeFix

SKA

**Aufsuchende
Drogenhilfe
in Charl. Wilmersdorf**

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