



European Drugs and Gender
Group



FINAL
DPROGRAMME

Women, drugs, prison: a global perspective

LX Addictions conference: Side event organised by Health Without Barriers (HWB) and European Drugs and Gender Group (EDG)

**21 October 2024
Lisbon Congress Centre**

Background

Globally, the number of women and girls in prison represent between 5% and 10% of the global prison population, although their number has increased between 2000 and 2017 by more than 50 %, compared to a 20 % increase in men in prison.

The lower figures for women compared to men in prison reflect the fact that women tend to commit fewer and different types of crimes than men, and mainly non-violent crimes. Drug related crimes, including offences for personal use, for trafficking and acquisitive crimes are among the most frequently reported crimes leading to women's incarceration.

Although few in number, women who are in prison are very vulnerable and have very complex social and health profiles. Compared to men and to general female population, women living in prison report higher rates of infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and syphilis, due to the high exposure to risky behaviours, including sex work and injecting drug use.

Drug use disorders are highly prevalent among people living in prison, particularly among women. Substance use often represent a way to alleviate a past of traumas and abuse. Many have experienced multiple traumas since childhood, including sexual abuse.

Compared with women in the general population and with men who use drugs in prison, women in prison report higher rates of self-harm inside prison and of suicide as the prevalence of mental health problems in high among women in prison, often deriving from past traumas including gender-based violence. Women who use drugs and have been in prison also are at a high risk of drug-related death after release from prison.

The impact of imprisonment on women may be especially damaging for women, both during imprisonment and after release. A big issue for women during incarceration is the isolation and separation from children for whom they are still the main carers. They are more subject to stigma and have more difficulties in social reintegration.

Gender related factors play an important role and may overcome geographical differences, although differences exist between regions and countries. Gender responsive interventions should be implemented to address the need of women during imprisonment and after incarceration.

Purpose of the event:

The purpose of the event is to discuss, better understand and give visibility to the key issues surrounding women in prison, their health and their problems related to drug use and trafficking in different regions of the world. This would be useful to identify their needs and support the health and social services in prison and after release.

Objectives of the symposium

- Highlight and discuss the key issues regarding women in prison, with a focus on drug problems.
- Describe the situation of women in prison and the specific key issues they need to address in different regions of the world.
- Support the promotion of gender responsive interventions for women in prison inside and after prison release.

Target audience:

Health care professionals in prison, social workers, prison administrations, researchers in the field of drugs, gender and prison, governmental officials, NGOs staff.

Structure

The event is organised in three sessions discussing key issues surrounding women in prison, with a special focus on drug problems in different regions of the world; a direct experience of a women who had used drugs and is currently living in prison will conclude the event.

Practical information

The event will be held in person at Lisbon Congress Centre ([Praça das Indústrias, 1300-307 Lisboa](#)) on 21 October 2024 from 14.30 to 17.30 – same place as HWB conference .

Speakers are requested to arrive 1 hour before the event starts in order to have the time to upload their presentation.

More info. can be found here: [speakers-corner](#). Coffee breaks and light lunch will be offered.

WOMEN, DRUGS, PRISON: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

(Auditorium III and IV)

SESSION 1 – Key issues for women in prison, with a focus on drug related problems: Europe, Latin America and Middle East

Chair: Fadi Meroueh, Health Without Barriers (HWB) and Linda Montanari, EUDA - European Drugs and Gender Group (EDG)

14.30-15.30	Welcome and introduction – Fadi Meroueh <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women, drugs, prison: key issues, from a European perspective, Linda Montanari, EUDA• Drug trafficking in female prison population in Latin American countries, Corina Giacomello, Autonomous University of Chiapas, Mexico.• Harm Reduction Services in Female Prisons: exploring the situation in the MENA Region, Elie Aaraj, Executive Director, MENAHRA (Middle East & North Africa Harm Reduction Association)
15.30-16.00	<i>Coffee break</i>

SESSIONS 2 - Key issues for women in prison, with a focus on drug related problems: Africa, North America, and Australia

Chair: Elena Leclerc, ICRC and Liesbeth Vandam, EUDA

16.00-17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender based violence and women in prison using drugs in Africa, Fatou Kine Dieng, Médecin Légiste, Médecin chef Administration Pénitentiaire, Sénégal• Addressing drug use and motherhood among women in prison in North America, Hendrée E. Jones, University of North Carolina, United States• Ethnic minorities women in prison for drug related crimes in Australia, Jillian Roberts, Australia
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SESSIONS 3 – Testimonials: learning from direct experience

Chair: Sofia Ribeiro, EUDA

17.00-17.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Julia Sheehan, The Hepatitis C Trust
17.30	<i>Conclusions, Sofia Ribeiro, EUDA</i>