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Combating Drug Addictions

Report 2 by Sturla Bjerkaker

Also in Norway, many people do not understand why people become addicted to alcohol or drugs or how drugs change the brain to foster compulsive drug abuse. They mistakenly view drug abuse and addiction as strictly a social problem and may characterize those who take drugs as morally weak. One very common belief is that drug abusers should be able to just stop taking drugs if they are only willing to change their behaviour.

The Norwegian policy for drug addiction is not built on this view, but more on the following definition and understanding. **"Drug addiction" has many definitions. From a Norwegian cultural and public health perspective, I think this definition covers quite well:**

Drug addiction is a chronic, often relapsing brain disease that causes compulsive **drug** seeking and use, despite harmful consequences to the **drug** addict and those around them. **Drug addiction** is a brain disease because the abuse of **drugs** leads to changes in the structure and function of the brain.

The Norwegian Minister of the Ministry of Health and Care Services, Bent Høie, said the following at the UN gathering in New York during the UN's Special Session on drugs (UNGASS2016), to discuss the way forward on drug policy:

Drug use is a health issue

- Norway's priority during the negotiations is to strengthen the health perspective, so that persons addicted to drugs are given health care. We will work to ensure that human rights are respected and show clear opposition to the use of the death penalty. During UNGASS2016, an outcome document

will be adopted on the status of the world drug problem and the remaining challenges leading up to 2019, when a new plan of action will be negotiated.

- This is an important meeting for the development of world drug policy. Norway will work to improve the balance between control and care by strengthening the health perspective in world drug policy, where the main objective will be to safeguard health and welfare. There are currently many countries that disproportionately emphasize control and strict punishment for drug-related crimes, including the death penalty.

"To improve the balance between control and care" by strengthening the health perspective in drug policy is a main perspective for drug addiction policy in Norway. Most of the work is done in line of this perspective.

As for health care, this field also has a shared responsibility between several partners. The public sector – state, county and municipality – has an overall responsibility for handling the problems and challenges in meeting drug addictions. Norway has several institutions to handle the risks. The pubic health care system, the local and regional hospitals, public institutions for recovery etc. In addition to this, the voluntary sector plays a crucial and very important role in this field, not least organisations and institutions established by and connected to the church.

Run by the public sector:

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (Folkehelseinstituttet)

The Institute work on abroad scale with public health, which drugs is a part of it. In a report published in 2016, the Institute conclude:

- After alcohol, cannabis and amphetamines are the most commonly used drugs in Norway. On average, Norwegians aged over 15 years drink about 8 litres of pure alcohol per year. The following link compare the Norwegian level with other countries: https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/2014/05/15/199795/who-rapport-disse-landene-drikker-mest-alkohol
- Since the early 1990s, the consumption of alcohol has increased by approximately 40 per cent, mostly among women and the elderly.
- New synthetic drugs have unknown effects and are a challenge for the health service.
- The number of drivers arrested for driving under the influence of cannabis or methamphetamine has increased sharply over the last five years.

The Health Regions

There are seven regional drug and alcohol competence centres in Norway responsible for carrying out a broad range of activities. These include assisting municipalities and specialist health services with professional development, and initiating measures in conjunction with county governors to facilitate improvements in quality standards. The regional centres are responsible for implementing national and professional guidelines relating to drugs and alcohol.

These competence centres are also running clinics, often in cooperation with other providers/NGOs.

The NGOs and drug addictions

We have in Norway a wide and large range of voluntary and private organisations running institutions and centres offering rehabilitation programmes for drug addicts. Some of them are focusing on preventing addictions, some of them on taking care for drug addicts, some of them on repairing, some of them on recovery and empowerment.

As drug addiction, often is mixed with other problems, as criminality (possession and use of illegal drugs is criminalised in Norway), being a prisoner, psychical health, poverty etc, the institutions can be specialized on one or more problems.

Some of the NGOs and private institutions for preventing and treatment of drug addiction and combined diagnoses are:

Tyrilistiftelsen

Tyrili is a voluntary, ideal organisation which offers treatment and recovery follow up for persons from 18 years and up with serious drug addictions. The patients, or students as they are called at Tyrili, often have additionally problems connected to social relations, psychical and physical health. Tyrili has permanent appointments with the public health care institutions in the regions and offers individual and group treatment.

Vangseter

Vangseter is a private institution for treatment of drug addiction and related problems and challenges. It is sited in Jevnaker outside Oslo for long lasting treatments, and has a day centre in Oslo.

The Oslo Centre offers treatment through dialogue based therapy for the one who has concluded that drug addiction takes more and more space in life and has as such grown to a real problem. Vanseter has a holistic view on human beings, not only the drug addiction. An important part of the work is to treat problems hidden behind the addiction.

Vangseter wish that the clients can adapt knowledge and «tools» which they can bring with them further in their lives.

Blå Kors

Blue Cross Norway, established 1906, is a diaconal and inter-denominational organization working in the field of treatment and prevention of alcohol and drug problems. The Blue Cross has 50 local institutions in Norway offering treatment, education, housing services, job training, counselling and social networks. Blue Cross also engage in different forms of prevention work and have its own youth department.

Actis - Norwegian Policy Network on Alcohol and Drugs -

is a Norwegian umbrella organization for NGOs in the alcohol and drug field. Actis represent 29 different organisations that work to reduce harm caused by alcohol, drugs and gambling. The member organisations work in the field of alcohol and drug policy, prevention, treatment and follow-up of people who have or have had an addiction problem. Actis' role is to advocate for alcohol-, drug- and gambling policies that protect the health and well-being of individuals and communities. One goal is to provide information, analysis and knowledge about alcohol, drug and gambling policies to decision-makers and the media. Actis was launched in 2003.

Main goals for Actis are:

- To reduce health and social harms from alcohol, drugs and gambling
- Be an advocacy organisation: target the media, politicians and other decision makers

- Organise seminars and conferences, produce reports, take part in hearings and political processes, participate in the public debate and in the media

Musikkens Studieforbund – the Study Association for Music

This association is one of the largest providers of non-formal and cultural based adult learning and education in Norway. They organize and promote learning in all forms of song and music. The association has for many years run a project called "Music in prison and freedom". This is bands consisting of present and/or previous prisoners, creating their own music, learning to play instruments, learning to present for an audience etc. By this, they also learn cooperation and management.

= OSLO

= Oslo is the first street magazine in Norway, established in 2005. It is published monthly and is a spokes place for social outcasts, poor, drug addicts and others in trouble.

The purpose of the Magazine project is that the "clients" themselves are the sellers, and keep half of the prize while selling it. (It costs 100 NOK – like 10 Euro - and they keep 50 NOK) Some of the "clients" also write poems etc for the Magazine.



Sagatun Brukerstyrt Senter, Hamar

It is about recovery and empowerment: Sagatun Brukerstyrt Senter runs e.g. the «Kom Ut»-project together with Gjøvik Fengsel (Gjoevik Prison) which is a follow up program for previous prisoners. Dialogue therapy is the main method. They also offer courses for "self-empowerment training".

Kirkens Bymisjon (The Church City Mission)

Is an open and inclusive voluntary and ideal organisation working in towns and cities all over Norway among people struggling with their daily life in different ways. The vision is that all city inhabitants must gain respect, justice and care. KB has 1800 employed people, 4500 voluntary workers and are present in 40 places.

"Room for all" is a slogan for the Church City Mission.

Mental Health Norway

Mental Health Norway is a member based NGO for all women and men suffering from psychical health problems and their families and others with a special interest in the field of mental health. Through political lobbying, popular enlightenment and communicating experiences from the members and clients, Mental Health are working for and promoting more and better openness, prevention and treatment of mental health problems. The vision is that all have a right to have a meaningful life and a feeling of self-empowerment.

Mental Helse arbeider for økt åpenhet, forebygging av psykiske helseplager og et bedre helsetilbud. Brukere og pårørende har erfaring og kunnskap om psykisk helse som vi vil formidle til offentlige myndigheter, fagmiljøer, organisasjoner og enkeltpersoner.

The Church' Social Service

The Church' Social Service – CRUX – is a national wide diaconal and ideal institution offering service in the health- and social field in Norway. CRUX' work is value based and knowledge based and the working methods are strongly influenced by quality and learning. The main office is in Oslo, but CRUX has services all over the country. E.g. it is running "Værestedet Arbeideren" in Hamar, which is a low threshold working centre for people with alcohol and drug addictions.

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