

Conférence
« Echange de seringues et autres mesures de réduction de risque en milieu carcéral »
(29 et 30 juin 2017)

Lieu : Hotel IBIS Aéroport Luxembourg Findel

Discours d'ouverture de
Madame la Ministre Lydia Mutsch
(29.06.2017 , 11 :00)

Ladies and gentlemen,

As minister of health of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, it is my great pleasure to welcome you all in Luxembourg for the conference “**Needle exchange and other harm reduction measures in prison settings**” which is organized within the frame of the **Joint Action HA-REACT**.

As you know, the **Joint Action** is **co-financed by the European Commission** and focuses especially on the **Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland**. Today, we welcome delegates from 14 countries all over Europe, from **DG Sante, ECDC, EMCDDA** and responsible persons from the **Joint Action HA-REACT**.

The topic chosen for this conference is the **harm reduction measures in prison settings** – a topic which Luxembourg is very much interested in and on which we **are able to exchange relevant practices and expertise** with you.

Prisoners are known to be a **high risk group** especially as regards **HIV / AIDS infections, Hepatitis, sexually transmittable diseases and tuberculosis**.

In our prisons, the **prevalence of Hepatitis C** was **15,2%** on 31 December 2016, **2 %** for **contagious Hepatitis B** and **2,2 % for HIV**. These figures are highly preoccupying and they show the importance for the implementation of **efficient harm reduction measures in prison settings**.

Our measures are based on the firm belief that the spread of these diseases can be stopped by **several harm reduction measures** including

- **needle and syringe exchange,**
- **condom provision,**
- **opioid substitution treatment and**
- **treatment as prevention.**

These measures are already often used for the benefit of the **general public**. We are convinced that they can and should also be used inside prisons, following the principle “**Prison Health is Public Health**”.

Prison walls should **not be a barrier** to the **implementation of the same public health measures** inside as well as outside the prison!

We should not forget either that **harm reduction measures** do not only **protect** the **people directly involved** but also **those who work with this people**. For the specific issue of the prison, we are talking about correctional officers, educational and medical staff and other persons in direct contact with the prisoners.

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

By **working together at European level** on the basis of the **same evidence-based measures** on a **common approach** towards stigmatized populations such as prisoners, we can **reach positive repercussions** in the spread or the elimination of the different diseases!

It is this common approach that, I hope, will be facilitated by the **Joint Action HA-REACT !**

During this conference, different **specialists from Luxembourg** and **ECDC** will inform you on the good practices currently in place, inside as well as outside prisons.

I am convinced that this conference will show you how much the **Luxembourg authorities** are **dedicated** to **harm reduction inside prison settings**.

Before closing off, I would like to thank my services (departments) for the organization of this conference. Special thanks go to our partners which are the **Ministry of Justice** as well as the **prison of Schrassig**, the **Centre Hospitalier of Luxembourg** and the **Neuropsychiatric Hospital of Ettelbruck**, which are both in charge of the **organization of the medical service** of the Luxembourg prison, as well as the **different speakers from the Jugend- an Drogenhëllef** and the **HIV Berodung** who will address you during the conference. I do not want to forget to thank the **European Commission**, who **co-finances the Joint Action** as well as the **responsible people** from the Joint Action.

I wish you an interesting conference and fruitful discussions during the next two days and a pleasant stay in Luxembourg.