

World Forum Against Drugs
Stockholm, May 2010

**Intervention by Manuel De Sampaio Piementel, Lawyer and City
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I would like to start this intervention of mine with an expression of gratitude, a clarification and an alert.

The gratitude goes, quite naturally, to the organization of these important events of reflection, particularly to Mr. Per Johanson for giving me the opportunity of transmitting to you that which is my opinion on the moment we are living in Portugal right now. Also, I cannot forget Mr. Manuel Pinto Coelho, since it was he who, with a noteworthy boldness, suggested my name to the organization and who is a man whose opinion Portugal has come to respect. I shall also try not to disappoint him. It is indeed an enormous honour to be able to be here.

Secondly, the clarification; it has to do with the fact that I am not a professional in the addiction/narcotics field: I am not a doctor, I am not a researcher and I do not work directly with this phenomenon. It is true that the topic of drug addiction and public policies aiming at its eradication has interested me for a long time. It is also true that the public offices I have been holding over the last few years have given me the opportunity of not only having a more comprehensive vision of the topic, but have also given me the possibility of influencing, even if but tentatively, some decisions in this field.

Thirdly, the alert. This one, though simple and quick, ought to be conveyed as soon as possible: I am not politically correct nor orthodox regarding the assessment I make of the Human Condition, let alone of the complex relationships resulting from it, namely those connected to the topic we are dealing with here. In my opinion, we must exercise open-mindedness in the analysis, flexibility in the diagnosis and be absolutely resolute in deciding and the respective execution.

I am a law graduate by training and, since 2005, a Councillor at the Porto City Hall. I represent a party from the European Christian Democrat family and within it, a more liberal trend rather than the 'au transe' defence of the Social Doctrine of the Church. This is at a Market and Economy level since regarding habits, principles and values I am not uncomfortable with a conservative label.

A Conservative in terms of principles, a liberal in Economy and inoculated with the Christian Humanism virus in terms of world view.

As you all surely know, Portugal is currently going through a major financial crisis, which is neither the source nor the end result. By this I mean that there are reasons that, upstream, justify the current crisis – structural problems – and others that, downstream, make us fear a crisis threshold that is more difficult, more dangerous and perhaps more prolonged in time, to such an extent that it may jeopardise the quality of life of future generations.

Portugal is facing a situation of structural economic crisis which is dragging us into a financial crisis – the primary and secondary sectors practically do not exist and the tertiary sector is of very low qualifications, which therefore makes competitiveness very weak. We import much more than we export, we have got used to living not on the money we had earned the month before, but on the credit of the money that, predictably, we might come to earn the following month. The result can be easily guessed: we spend increasingly more money than what we are able to produce. We owe more and more. We are increasingly dependent on the outside. Portugal is currently facing a problem which is, it too, one of dependence.

With a structural economic problem and a financial crisis which itself may become more than merely a state of affairs, the next step in the crisis is the one of political nature. The model is questioned, the policies and politicians are questioned and, who knows, the regime itself. Finally, and when the Economy, the Finances and the Politics don't have the key to the problem, the social crisis erupts and the model of society is put into question. We saw it happen in Greece and it won't be considered

pessimistic, much less guesswork, to predict that it will happen in other European countries, namely in Portugal.

And although I am touching upon the topic of the current Portuguese crisis, even though only slightly, it is because in my opinion, it is based above all on an enormous crisis of values. Such crisis has swept most of the Old Continent and started with the theories that led to the desegregation and devaluing of the fundamental cell of society – the family – and that make the European people nowadays the most aged people in the World. Thus, it continued to instigate the confusion between individual freedom and the absence of acknowledging the Other and which received the final blow, in my opinion, upon the relativization of values such as Good and Evil.

The result is forsaking life in community, worshipping accompanied loneliness and the abandonment of Human Dignity in its fullness. Selfishness raised to the 15th power. From this point on, everything is possible.

Within the field which brings us together here, a sign of what I have just mentioned, perhaps the most important one of the last few years, was given in Portugal by decriminalizing the consumption of some narcotics. Equally, in other areas such as decriminalizing abortion and who knows, sooner rather than later, the legalization of euthanasia. These signs, all defensible from a political-ideological point of view, have far-reaching consequences in the life and daily activity of a society, making them hard to sustain in practice.

In Portugal, health policies are the competence of the Central Administration and in most cases, do not take into account the regional or local specificities and end up being unadjusted. Without trying to play the undertaker regarding the policies that have been followed over the more recent years in Portugal, but nevertheless unafraid to disagree with them radically, I would like my passage through this room to be lined by some examples, some signs that all is not lost in Portugal.

I will therefore give you three examples promoted by the Porto City Hall which, in the field of addiction, yielded very positive results.

The first example deals with a very comprehensive cycle of debates and public discussion, promoted by our municipality when the Drugs and Drug Addiction Institute (IDT) suggested setting up ‘injection rooms’ in the city. The Mayor and Councillors listened to advocates of the idea and people who opposed it and in the end, opted not to set up the mentioned rooms.

This decision was based on the fact that, on the one hand, by analyzing similar experiences in other cities, the results are not linear, except the one pointing towards greater comfort in the area surrounding the ‘rooms’, which means the average citizen does not see the ‘trip’ in the open air (human beings in dire need of help are swept under the carpet, giving the streets where they inject themselves a healthy and aesthetically more attractive look, and getting rid of that miserable spectacle for their users). From the analysis done with comparative experiences, we could not however, withdraw unequivocal evidence demonstrating that setting up injection rooms managed to reduce drug addiction of their users, the mortality and morbidity associated to it, blood transmitted diseases or criminality in the surroundings.

For all this, we said no to the injection rooms; but in my opinion, also due to a question of Justice and Equity: what would someone say who waited endlessly for surgery, witnessing firsthand the inefficiency of the National Health System, or the elderly man who contributed all his life and very often sees that his retirement is insufficient to cover his most basic needs, or even the diabetic patients who until very recently had to pay for their syringe – unlike what happens among us with drug addicts, who have been getting them for free from the State for many years now – what will all these say about diverting millions of Euros to a project whose known results point to, at the very least, a big question mark?

On one hand, creating injection rooms could facilitate, aid and give more comfort to all those who wanted to inject themselves, but on the other hand we would transmit the false notion that there is no remedy for drug addiction. We could, in the end, be transmitting to the drug addict the idea that we consider him or her to be a lost case, yielding to the temptation of satisfying and paying their desire, which could be their last ‘trip’, or their last ‘score’.

The second example I would like to share with you deals with alcohol intake by the Porto City Hall employees. Just for information, the municipality employs approximately 3,000 people.

In 2005, the year I took office for the first time as Councillor, I got the news of the death of an employee due to alcoholic intake. We took it on as our obligation to ensure that cases such as these never happened again.

Therefore, we approved regulation in 2006 with a triple aim: Prevent, Treat and Rehabilitate/Reinsert. It was not our intention to punish or repress instantly. We associated other bodies outside the municipality and we started a wide campaign of information, awareness raising and prevention. It is here, it is during this phase, it is in the beginning that one must invest more, because it is by investing in this phase that one obtains the best results. We like to remedy in Portugal, when the harm has been done, cutting the damages, when we allow them to exist, spending instead of investing.

We set up a multidisciplinary team, comprising doctors, psychologists, nurses and social workers who not only worked on the cases detected but also welcomed all those who went to them voluntarily. And they were many.

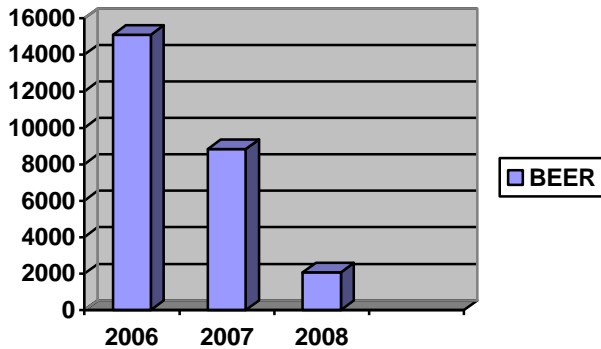
The second aim, the one meant to detect and then treat the problematic cases, would be initiated with a random draw of employees who would have to blow the breathalyzer. Besides this draw, we would welcome – as I have just mentioned – people who would ask for help voluntarily and also, treat all those who were pointed out by the management as having issues.

We carried out more than 1,500 tests, served many people and managed to get, in terms of on-premise consumption, an extreme reduction without changing behaviour.

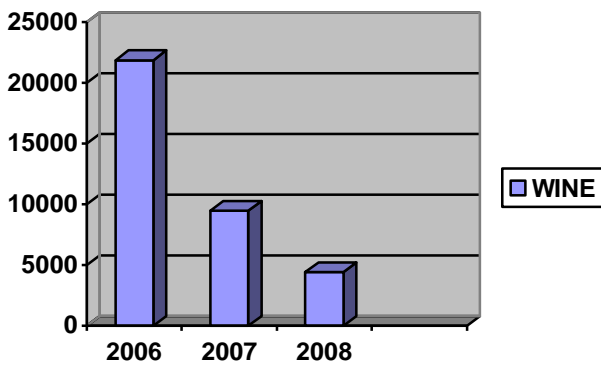
In the first year, we removed from the social meal – a meal whose cost is largely subsidized by the City Hall – all the alcoholic beverages (330 ml beer bottles and half-bottles of wine) that were part of the menu. We did, however, keep the mentioned beverages in the canteen but at market prices. As you can observe by the chart, consumption fell over the two following years. In 2009, we removed all alcoholic beverages from Municipal canteens.

Litres of alcohol intake:

BEER	2006	2007	2008
TOTAL	15,085	8,833	2,057



WINE	2006	2007	2008
TOTAL	21,878	9,465	4,415



A relevant datum: the number of meals served did not suffer any significant change!

Unfortunately, I have to say that the regulation was suspended last year, since the Left Bloc party – which congregates the Maoist and Communist currents – filed legal action for that purpose, alleging that the regulation did not properly protect confidential personal data, such as positive breathalyzer tests.

In spite of not having had a single complaint by the employees, in spite of the encouraging results, in spite of having people asking us for help and having people who were recovered, the court forced us to suspend the application of the regulation.

Quite frankly, I hope I do not receive the news once again of an employee dying due to alcohol intake.

Lastly, the third example, perhaps the most important one. This is a project with partners such as the City Hall, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and which emerged following a question made by the then candidate for Mayor and currently the Mayor: what is the largest social problem in Porto? The question was put to professionals – Psychologists, Sociologists, Psychiatrists, Social Workers, Criminologists, etc, etc – who scrutinized the city, promoted surveys and made diagnosis. The Porto inhabitants identified the ‘parking bums’ as the primary social problem(those people who ask money when one is parking his car). At the time, approximately 1,000 were identified, 92% of whom were drug addicts.

Multidisciplinary teams were set up, who went to the field to observe the phenomenon for six months, after which they started the intervention.



The Project was anchored on the properties of an institutional network guided and committed not only to detect and treat marginalized people with various problems but, above all, to resolve what had been previously detected as a social problem. With that perspective, the Programa Porto Feliz – what the programme was called [The Merry Porto Programme] – contacted not only the parking bums but many other people with social exclusion issues, totalling 2,497.

In a brief description of the ‘Porto Feliz’ programme Philosophy, one can state that it was a Programme:

- i) aimed at individuals in a situation of extreme social exclusion;
- ii) with huge pro-activity in its accomplishment: it met the phenomenon on the streets, in a daily search (night and day) of its potential users;
- iii) that was Drug Free – after observation on the streets and contact by the users, they could join the drug free programme;
- iv) that aimed for the full inclusion of the individual, taking them from the streets and giving them an integrated treatment of rehabilitation allowing them an effective professional integration and/or access to vocational training. A holistic approach of the individual was carried out, treating their clinical pathologies and likewise, working on their rehabilitation at various levels: medical, psychic, social, professional, etc;

And also the following:

- v) Each individual was seen as rehabilitative and re-integrable: it intervened in a way aimed at the effective rehabilitation of the individuals;
- vi) Intervention with a scientific basis: all the intervention was preceded by a study/behavioural observation phase of the individuals in an extreme situation of social exclusion, in their *habitat* (streets), which could last days and even months, with the aim of acquiring a deep understanding of the phenomenon;

And because it is important to monitor the programmes and measure results, let me also briefly give you 3 of those that I believe to be the most important ones:

1. More than **2,497** individuals were contacted by *Porto Feliz*, **679** of whom joined the programme, integrating the UPI (Inclusion Promotion Unit), starting a fully drug free treatment.
2. Of the **679** users followed up by the Drug Free unit – *Porto Feliz* (UPI), **334** users reached the job seeking and/or vocational training stage and **236** users are perfectly included, having accomplished their professional integration and/or vocational training.
3. More than **250,000** meals were served and approximately **120,000** beds made available to users throughout the programme duration.

Should you be interested, I can make available a scientific article in which one of the mentors of the Project – Professor Marques Teixeira – details the whole philosophy of the Porto Feliz Programme.

In case you noticed, the tense I used was the past and I did so for a rather demeaning reason regarding the Portuguese Central Administration, namely the Ministry of Health and the IDT.

In fact, the Socialist Party Government – which is currently in charge of Portugal's fate – has cut off funding for the programme in a not very decent way, thereby bringing about its end.

On the contrary, the IDT opted for the so-called Drug Rehab Treatment Centres (CAT), which bear significant differences in philosophy compared to 'Porto Feliz'.

Right from the start because:

- a) they are centres aimed only at drug addicts, where service is carried out according to their geographic area of residence, they are not concerned about the individual's social tissue background;
- b) they have a reactive philosophy of a simple minimization of damages and risk reduction;
- c) because substitution treatment comprises the basis of its action; and also because
- d) its action is not aimed (concerned) with the effective reintegration (inclusion) of the individual.

Once again, the Central Administration, having no knowledge of the specific reality of what is local/regional, made a decision in an irresponsible way, eliminating a successful programme, especially for those who needed it the most: the excluded.

To finish off and turning to the beginning of my intervention: Portugal and, to a large extent, Europe are facing an intense crisis of values. In my country, the reigning socialism that hygienises consciences and behaviours by adhering to the politically correct is winning the battle against humanism, which defends Man in its fullness – with a conscience, a will, freedom and responsibility.

It is the lax and facilitative culture that seeks neither wars nor conflicts, preferring concessions that in reality, do no more than wound the heart of what it means to be a Man.

In my perspective, when we look at Portugal, we should have one concern and give one advice:

The concern deals with the figures given to us by only one entity, which is not independent, since it is itself practically a monopolist in its field of action. It is, as we say in Portugal, a Judge in its own cause.

It would be interesting to carry out a detailed audit promoted by an independent, impartial and preferably international authority on the figures and the work presented over the last few years by the IDT. It is because, as remotely as 2004, a study promoted by an independent entity – the National Institute for Administration – dealt severe blows to the strategy taken in public policies in the fight against drug addiction, namely regarding the results obtained by decriminalizing consumption.

In my opinion, the time is ripe to once again, detail the work done and put to the test – in the sense of questioning, including in a scientific way – the figures that up to the moment have comprised the monopoly of a single entity, which is understandably not impartial.

The advice is that, in order to understand the activity of public agents in this field, we must presume that they consider the responsibilities of fighting drug addiction as costs rather than investments. Only this way do we understand that they do not ‘attack’ prevention in a larger scale and are excessively concerned with reducing damages.

What we must do is try to eliminate the damages and that task is inherently tied to prevention. And then, making accountable all those who cross the line.

The message we send by decriminalizing consumption and with the damage reduction policy, together with the subsequent availability of conditions to make it more comfortable and almost socially acceptable, is that we have given up the fight against a phenomenon that undermines life within society.

Regarding drug addicts, our accountability is to sell health – what they need indeed – and not make all of us pay for the consumption they are given freely by the State. In Portugal, a drug addict is ‘offered’ everything and we see situations of people living with enormous difficulties and to whom the State, pure and simple, does not offer any aid.

I know very well that the question might seem very cruel but it seems pertinent to ask it at this forum: why is it that the rehabilitation and social reinsertion of a drug

addict has more support than the rehabilitation of any given patient or than the social reinsertion of someone who, having always complied with their obligations to society, had a spout of bad luck in life and lost their job, for instance?

The battle being fought is between defending the whole and absolute Man in his dignity against the object Man, with no will and devoid of his freedom. It is a struggle for the definition or redefinition of the actual concept of being Man. Of the Man we want to have in the future.

I am going to end off now by reading an excerpt from the humour section of one of the leading Portuguese newspapers. There was a Latin proverb something like this: 'It is by laughing that habits are punished'. In fact, we very often need a look at caricatures to have the notion of what is not right, what is excessive, what is, inclusively, beyond morale.

The humoristic undertone portrays the current situation in the Country concerning the decriminalization of consumption and the consequences it can reflect in terms of extenuating certain behaviour.

Here goes:

'CRIMINAL POLICE SEIZES 200 KILOGRAMS OF COCAIN ON AMY WINEHOUSE'S YACHT BUT SHE SAYS IT WAS FOR PERSONAL USE

Singer Amy Winehouse, whose body is like Popeye's girlfriend, Olive Oyl, with Gloomy the mechanic's face – Mickey and Goofy's friend – and boobs like Pamela Anderson's, visited the Azores where she anchored her yacht 'Janis Joplin' at the port of Horta. However, the Criminal Police (PJ) carried out a surprise raid on her boat, having seized approximately 200 kilograms of cocaine which, according to Amy, was for personal use. Nevertheless, the police found another 500 kilograms of cocaine and 100 kilograms of heroin in one of the rooms, but took a rest when they discovered that they belonged to Peter Doherty, lead singer of the Libertines and Babyshambles, who was also travelling on the boat accompanied by Kate Moss, who in turn explained to the Criminal Police that the 15,000 ecstasy pills were also for personal use.'

Thank you very much for your attention.