



Better Treatment
for Ageing Drug User



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Newsletter 2 June 2017

Introduction

We are proud to tell you about one of our newest projects funded by the Erasmus + program: **BETRAD**.

Together with 6 different organizations, this project aims provide adult trainers and organizations with the tools needed to establish and improve the services for aging drug users.

Want to learn more?

Please check our website:
www.betrad.eu

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What are aging drug user?

Given that existing literature uses varying age criteria when speaking of 'aging drug users', we have decided to define this target group for the project as follows: 'Drug users of at least one illicit substance, in and out of drug treatment, of at least 40 years of age'

Why?

The EMCDDA (2010) described the situation as follows: "Many of aging drug user with a long and severe history of drug dependence are socially isolated and marginalised. High levels of unemployment, and many of them live alone. Family ties have probably been severed during their long drug using career. Their social networks diminish as they age and as older drug using friends die. Older drug users are also likely to experience the detrimental and cumulative effects of long-term drug use on their physical and mental health. Many develop a range of chronic and life-threatening conditions resulting in premature ageing. And, there are indications of certain types of deaths not related to drug use being disproportionately high among this group compared to younger drug users or same age non-drug using individuals."

To summarize:

Older users have

- history of poor health, long-term drug taking, chronic tobacco and alcohol use,
- and age-related deterioration of the immune system,
- chronic health problems, such as cardiovascular and lung conditions.
- long-term heroin users also report chronic pain, while infection with one of the hepatitis viruses can place them at increased risk of cirrhosis and other liver problems.

What we are doing about?

Sharing experiences and methods: the best practice collection

To inform stakeholders and to share experiences, BETRAD collected 113 questionnaires from 27 countries to identify best practices in regard of providing services for aging people who use drugs.

The questions were about the example service's characteristics, such as: whether the target group is eligible for care/treatment, whether they offer them specific services separately, the number of employees, which disciplines (types of professionals, peers, volunteers) the workforce consists of and which criteria were used for in- and exclusion of clients. Additionally, the open questions focused on having respondents describe their service's objectives, methodologies and which barriers or problems they face dealing with



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our target group.

After a selection procedure, we brought down the number of examples to about 30. In an additional round, we brought the number of top examples down to 20, following the characteristics of: (1) most integrative offer of services, (2) involved in training/educating, (3) work under particular circumstances, (4) most comprehensive and well-elaborated methods and (5) offering specific services for the target group.

After the final selection has been made, the selected examples will be approached again to gather additional information and answer any additional questions that were drafted by project partners during the evaluation process. This and all previously acquired information will be the basis for the written manual of best practice collection, which will be available through the Resource Centre in 2018.

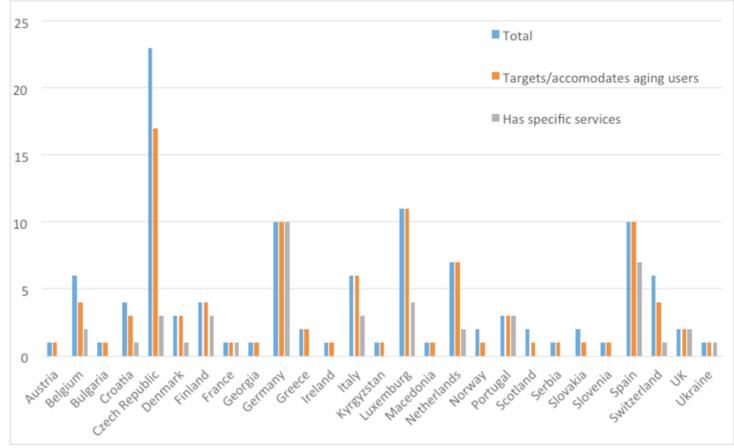


Figure 1: Number of collected examples who accommodate and/or target ageing drug users by country, (N = 113, 27 countries).

So far we can conclude that specialised treatment and care programmes for older drug users are rare in Europe. The needs of older drug users are generally addressed within existing drug treatment services, and interventions tend to be tailored to the needs of individuals. A small number of treatment providers have specialised in addressing the needs of older drug users, in response to the ageing of their clientele; however, some agencies have concrete plans to develop specific services for the present and future ageing cohorts of problem drug users.

More results will be presented soon in detail in our reports.

Want to learn more?

Please check our website: www.betrad.eu



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BeTrAD

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What's next?

BeTrAD-Summer School June 2018

In June 2018, BETRAD will organise a 5 day summer school in Frankfurt. The programme currently is under development but will contain the following modules:

- 1st Module:** Substances and substitution treatment
- 2nd Module:** Age-related diseases /ageing process
- 3rd Module:** Humane principles working with ageing drug users
- 4th Module:** Environment and social network of ageing drug users
- 5th Module:** Hygiene and infection prophylaxis
- 6th Module:** Cooperation among addiction services and health care sector

More info and registration will be provided on the website in time.

Meeting Barcelona

On the 2nd project meeting in Barcelona, the project partners discussed the progress made so far and agreed on the steps to undertake in the next project phase. In particular, the assessment report and the criteria for the best practice selection were agreed on.

Joan Colom, head of the Health Department of Catalonia, and Francisco Babin, Head of the National Plan on Drugs of the Ministry of Health, joined the meeting and addressed the importance to work on that issue.



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Sananim, Prague

Fundación Salud y Comunidad,
Barcelona

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Correlation Network, Amsterdam

Frankfurt University of Applied
Sciences, Institute of Addiction
Research, Frankfurt

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