



One year of European Action on Drugs, one year of success Preventing young people crossing a line



Finding the right words to reach the young: singer "While MC" at the EAD event

"It's great to get recognition at EU level", "it's interesting to hear what kinds of project there are in other countries", "I was unaware of some of the drug issues in other countries"... Just overhearing snippets of conversations between the participants reflected the high level of interest in the EAD first-anniversary gathering, held on 25 June 2010 in Brussels, Belgium. More than one hundred participants travelled from all over Europe to mark the first birthday of EAD on the fringes of [UN World Drugs Day](#). Personal testimonies, presentations of EAD commitments, the presence of senior EU officials and intensive networking between participants made this event on the prevention of juvenile drug-related crime a success. European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding thanked civil society efforts to engage in EAD in a [video message](#).

"When we think of young people in association with drugs, we think of what it does to their health, to their performance as free and responsible people. We don't tend to think of young people as potential criminals, at least I don't" said Jonathan Faull, European Commission (EC) Director-General for Justice, Freedom and Security, who took the opportunity to address the EAD audience before taking up a new challenge in July. Preventing juvenile drug-related crime features high on the agenda for EAD signatories such as [Responsible Young Drivers](#) (Belgium), the [Ernst Schering](#)



Jonathan Faull

[school](#) (Germany), the [Lendava primary school](#) (Slovenia) and a local EAD network in Italy – including hip hop singer [While MC](#), the [Spot Skate Park](#) and the [CFP Pasolini school](#). Further EAD presentations included those of [I Parchi Letterari](#) (Italy) and [Giving Hope](#) (UK).

Reaching young people through creative peers

Which girl wouldn't dream about a song being dedicated to her? Singer [Daniel Depienne](#) from Luxembourg set out his EAD commitment, to write a song for his first love – but with a serious story behind it (see text box p. 2). Especially composed for the EAD event, the new song "[Libero di vivere](#)" ("Free to live") (see text box) from Italian singer While MC was released to the public. Through their songs, singers like Depienne and While MC "will reach young people in a way that no formal, stuffy admonishment ever could" said Faull.

Introduction

Translating the EU action plan on drugs into real action at grassroots level was the main driver in setting up the [European Action on Drugs \(EAD\)](#) campaign a year ago on 26 June 2009. One year of EAD also equates to a year of success: more than 700 associations, public and private institutions and individuals have signed up to the campaign, each with different ideas and initiatives, depending on their capacities, but all of them united in the same goal: to raise drugs awareness. This newsletter provides information about the [EAD annual event](#) on the prevention of juvenile drug-related crimes and also tells the story of how a UK teacher dealt with the loss of her child, not by succumbing to bitterness, but by energetically helping others; then there is the tale of what happens to footballers who dream about playing in the World Cup, but who are already caught offside before their career has even started.

Getting through to young people

"Drugs get into your veins, life gets to your heart," is one of the lines in "[Libero di vivere](#)" ("Free to live"), the latest song from EAD signatory Alessandro Crifo, alias While MC. Together with fellow artist Laura Soul, While MC sings to raise awareness among young people about drugs. His infectious song is one that eases its way into your subconscious and then stays there.



Arm wrestler Ion Vlad Oncescu and singer Daniel Depienne

EAD signatories are picking up on what is happening at grassroots level

"You have a key role in implementing the EU action plan on drugs – organisations like yours are picking up on what is happening at grassroots level and we need that kind of information at policy level," said EU official Carel Edwards. During the EAD gathering, grassroots information was top on the agenda:



new EAD signatory [Sjakket Aktivitetcenter](#) from Denmark takes men from immigrant backgrounds on fishing trips to increase their self-esteem, foster integration and also reach out to their children through them. French railway company [SNCF](#) representative Sylvie Botrel told how a big undertaking goes about implementing its drug policy, while UK teacher Elizabeth Burton-Phillips spoke about her own story and her charity [Drug Fam](#) (see below). Reporting from the world of sports, Peter Kay from the [Sporting Chance Clinic](#) described the help and support it offers to sportspeople (see below), while Romanian arm wrestling champion Ion Vlad Oncescu testified about "little white pills that we took for our muscles, the trainers for their pride".

Getting back inside

Grown men crying, millions of people all over the world glued to their TV screens, kicking every ball with their team. Nothing is more emotional than football. No wonder that young people are so keen to enter the world of sport and make it as a professional. Founded by former Arsenal and England captain Tony Adams MBE after his own recovery from alcohol addiction, another new EAD signatory, the [Sporting Chance Clinic](#), helps sports people by offering support and counselling, raising awareness on drugs without passing judgement.

"Professional footballers gain their self-esteem through sport, what the media says and writes about them, and through popular acclaim," said Peter Kay, CEO at Sporting Chance. "When they stop playing, or when they are injured, they might look for something else that makes them feel good to ease the emotional pain.



Mr. Peter Kay from Sporting Chance Clinic receiving the EAD certificate from Mr. Jonathan Faul

Just like any other human being who faces a loss – such as losing your partner to someone else," he said. In top-level competition the players fear for the end of their careers as early as the age of 31 in what, according to Kay, is "a very macho, masculine environment – not a place where weakness is shown." Factors like these explain why sportsmen and women might need a helping hand, which is where the Sporting Chance Clinic comes in.

Reaching out to others

First time, first love – singer/songwriter [Daniel Depienne's](#) EAD commitment is all about love. The 30 year old saw his first love again after many years, but the girl he remembered as "gentle and creative" had turned to hard drugs and prostitution. He tried to help her find a way out by talking to mutual friends, but to no avail. For EAD he has pledged to write a song, yet although the tune already exists, "finding the right words to best reach out to a wide audience" is still work in progress for Daniel. "Music is about reaching out to others," he writes on his website. Fingers crossed, then, that it reaches out to his former true love.

Working for [EMCDDA](#), Gregor Burkhart set out risk factors for adolescent problem behaviour and how best to prevent juvenile drug-related crime among vulnerable groups. "There are bad kids from good homes, and good kids from bad homes," said one of the participants, summing up the mood at grassroots level. Polish journalist and author Max Cegielski told the story of his own drug addiction and how he subsequently developed a keen eye for drug issues through his travels – seeing it from a global scale right down to the drug dealers on Warsaw's streets. A signing ceremony for 23 new EAD commitments and networking initiatives rounded off the event before the EAD signatories headed off back to their homelands – and on back to the grass roots.

Words can change a life



Mrs. Burton-Phillips at the EAD conference

Eleven words changed her life forever. "Elizabeth, we are so sorry, but your son Nicholas is dead," said the police officer in the middle of a February night in 2004. One of her twin sons, both heroin addicts, took his own life at the age of 27. In her book, "Mum, can you lend me twenty quid? What drugs did to my family", Elizabeth Burton-Phillips traces back her story as an "ordinary middle-class mother" who "had never imagined that her twin sons, Nick and Simon, who had

been doing so well at school, would become involved in drugs".

"Life is an emotional rollercoaster of stigma, conflict, stress, fear, mistrust, disruption and decay," said Burton-Phillips while addressing the EAD audience, showing not a trace of bitterness, but bags of energy with which to help others. "I speak as an ambassador for all families whose lives are affected by drugs and addiction – we are the forgotten people," she said. No one to talk to, not knowing where to turn: her own experiences drove Burton-Phillips to set up the charity [DrugFam](#), aiming to support family members and people who are close to drug addicts, and to raise awareness about drugs – a mission which she will continue through her EAD commitment.

"I just need someone to talk to who won't judge me and who understands what it is doing to me and my family," is one of the most common phrases Burton-Phillips hears.

Words can change a life.

Events

Upcoming event: "European Action on Drugs" campaign in London, United Kingdom, 23rd September 2010.



New and old EAD signatories with Director General Jonathan Faul