



To whom it may concern

Zürich, September 26th 2013

Blue Point Foundation, a partner Organization in Budapest

Dear Madam, dear Sir

The city of Zurich provides social and medical services for drug users such as needle exchange programs, HIV prevention and social work since more than 20 years. Last year I visited the Blue Point Foundation, our partner organization in Budapest's 8th district. I was impressed by the commitment and the professionalism of the organization compared to its limited financial means.

The Blue Point Foundation have been operating a needle exchange program since 2006 in the 8th district of Budapest, and it became the largest service in Hungary. Right now the program has more than 3200 registered users, and 100-150 clients enters the programme every day, more than 60% of them are local residents, coming from the 8th district. Clients of the NEP are socially disadvantaged, with low educational attainment, poor labour market situation, and predominantly of Roma origin – being an injecting drug user on top of these, the NEP provides health and harm reduction service for one of the most excluded social group in Hungary.

On the 18th of September 2013, the municipality of Budapest's 8th district decided to terminate the cooperation agreement with the Blue Point Foundation – the service provider who operates the only needle exchange program and an outpatient center there.

According to the last available epidemiological data more than 70% percent of the clients of the NEP are HCV positive. In addition to that, with the emergence of the new psychoactive substances the injected substances changed dramatically in the past years. The clients switched from the traditional drugs to these new substances (mainly synthetic cathinones like mephedrone, MDPV, pentedrone, etc.). The effect of these substances last for a shorter period of time than heroin or amphetamine, which means more injections – even 10-15 injections per day. Therefore more sterile injecting equipment would be needed, not less.

The needle and syringe programs are essential part of an effective intervention to control and prevent infectious diseases. Unaddressed, these infections result in a large burden on the health system, significant individual suffering, as well as high treatment costs.



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Therefore I sincerely do regret that the Blue Point Foundation might be forced to close its needle exchange program and an outpatient center in Budapest. And I do recommend the cooperation with the Blue Point Foundation to any person or organization willing to contribute to the funding of harm reduction programs. In case of any possible questions concerning the effect or the setting of such programs I would be glad to offer my knowledge and experience.

Michael Herzig
Stv. Direktor