

Report training workshop Porto
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The highly successful peer training workshop on hepatitis C and drug use held in Porto from 30th September to 1st October was part of the '[European Initiative on hepatitis C and Drug Use](#)'.

The event which was jointly organized by the International Network of People who Use Drugs, the Swedish Drug Users' Union, and the Correlation Network, had as its local hosts APDES and the local drug users' union CASO.

The aim of the workshop was to support local peer based activist initiatives on HCV and was attended by 30 drug user activists from 13 European countries. The workshop kicked off with a shocking overview of the state of hepatitis C prevention, treatment and care across Europe in the form of case studies from each of the countries represented. It became clear that in many countries access to HCV treatment is denied to those who are currently using illegal drugs (in the case of Sweden it was shown that in order to access HCV treatment you have to demonstrate via weekly urine testing that you haven't used illegal drugs for two years), this in and of itself is a flagrant violation of the human right to the highest possible attainable standard of health and is one that desperately needs to be highlighted at the European Court of Human Rights. Other trends showed a desperate lack of access to adequate harm reduction provision across the continent and an ever diminishing lack of investment in the provision of user friendly needle and syringe exchange programs as the recovery agenda becomes more prominent, this was most notable in the UK. From Greece it was clear that there is a massive lack of investment in harm reduction programming, and very often a seven year wait for access to methadone provision.

Whilst the presentations given by the national activists were all extremely detailed, they underpinned the fact that within the community there is generally a low level of awareness about HCV, that combined with the poor provision of quality harm reduction services, and a high overall degree of criminalization have conspired to push average prevalence rates across the continent to between 50 and 60% of the injecting community. In some countries that rate is far higher, in Sweden, for example a country which has only three government run needle and syringe programs, prevalence is as high as 90%.

The next days of the workshop covered HCV epidemiology, prevention, testing, treatment and 'Living with HCV' with the participants contributing

an enormous amount to the training manual which is in the process of being produced.

One of the highlights of the workshop was the showing of the SDUU produced film '[The Hidden and Forgotten Plague - a film about hepatitis](#)'.