

Frankfurt Principles on Drug Law Enforcement

Remembering the Rio Declaration of 2011 that acknowledged the limited efficacy that repressive law enforcement policies have on the trade and use of illegal drugs.

Calling on the police to develop smarter drug enforcement strategies in collaboration with other government sectors and society members.

Based on the discussions at the 2013 International Conference on Drug Policy and Policing, we propose the following principles of drug law enforcement practice:

Work collaboratively at all levels within the police organization to establish locally tailored policies and procedures that emphasize a harm reduction¹ approach to narcotics enforcement.

Recognize that public safety incorporates crime prevention, law enforcement and public health. Therefore, law enforcement should not use health protection (e.g. possession of sterile injecting equipment, use of a methadone clinic and overdose interventions) as grounds for harassment or arrest.

Utilize discretion to prioritize enforcement on violence and criminal enterprise rather than on low-level drug users. For drug-dependent individuals this may mean diversion at point of arrest to health and social services. For occasional users, this may simply involve providing information on the health implications of drug use.

Understand that prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and repression need to be balanced in a way that minimizes harm to individuals and society.

Examine key performance indicators to ensure that they are aligned with principles of harm reduction.

Cooperate and coordinate with stakeholders at various levels (e.g. public health, prosecutor's office, business, non-governmental organizations, affected communities etc.) for a genuinely collaborative approach to provide for public safety.

Engage in fair and transparent policing with mechanisms in place to reduce corruption.

Training should incorporate best practice and developments on progressive drug law enforcement that embody the foregoing principles.

¹ Harm reduction broadly means laws, policies, programs and practices that aim primarily to reduce the adverse health, social and economic harms experienced by people who use drugs, their families and the communities in which they live.

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ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

The International Conference on Drug Policy and Policing took place on 14 and 15 November 2013 in Frankfurt on the Main, Germany. It brought together high-level police officials from 17 countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, India, Kyrgyzstan, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Scotland, Switzerland, Tanzania, United Kingdom, USA) who shared their experiences on policing the drug trade.

The conference received the support of the Frankfurt Police Department and Frankfurt Municipal Drug Policy Coordination Office. It was opened by the Minister of the Interior of the State of Hessen, Mr. Boris Rhein.

The first conference on Drug Policy and Policing took place in Rio de Janeiro in 2011. The outcome of this conference was a call to action for more local partnerships, to meet the needs of drug users and to improve public safety. The [Rio Declaration](#) affirmed that any drug policy reforms would require the expertise of law enforcement and that local authorities have a particular capacity to try out new collaborative ventures.

The host city of 2013 conference, Frankfurt, is well-known domestically and internationally for its innovative and effective drug law enforcement strategies where police have worked in partnership with drug-services, health administrators and media to balance social order with services for the most vulnerable. The so-called 'Frankfurt Way' served as an example for participants to discuss and consider whether it is applicable to their own countries.

Those who pioneered the Frankfurt Way in the early 80s recognized quite early that the problem of drug use could not be solved through arrests and prosecutions alone. Police and city officials tread a new path for cooperation between multiple public sectors engaged in health and safety.

The Frankfurt Principles were adopted at the conference, and are intended to serve as the guiding principles for police drug law enforcement practice.

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