

JES Bundesverband

„Junkies, Ex-User, Substituierte (JES) is a relatively old organisation, founded in 1989.

We are a National Association of drug users, former users and people in opiate substitution treatment. It was during the middle of the HIV epidemic among drug users, when the organisation, together with the Deutsche Aids Hilfe (DAH), started to conduct workshops and seminars on prevention measures and safer drug use. We saw ourselves as representatives of the interests of people who use drugs, and of former users who live in Germany. Overall, JES covers a network of 15 regional groups that include around 200 activists. JES is special because all users are considered equal: no matter if people are currently using, have quit, or are currently in treatment. However, there are series of common aspects and common principles all of us stand for: 'For a life of human dignity with drugs'.

The German drug policy at the time we started was purely based on prohibition, prosecution, imprisonment and illegality. JES opposed this policy and fought for new comprehensive policies that also included harm

reduction. Finally, by the year 2000 the government formally included harm reduction in the national drug policy and started supporting the implementation of low threshold services, e.g. drug consumption rooms. The number of people in OST also increased from 30.000 to 75.000, and because of that the number of drug related deaths decreased from 2000 annually to 1000. The HIV prevalence rates also dropped to 4% among current injectors.

As of 2000 the national JES coordinator was paid by DAH and presently the federal JES office is under the roof of DAH in Berlin. DAH provides JES financial, structural and organisational support with directing JES. Furthermore JES works closely in cooperation with AKZEPT a major harm reduction network in Germany.

Currently the government considers us a respected actor. JES was for instance part of the development and implementation of working groups for the heroin programme, drug consumption rooms and on hepatitis C services. The

'Action group for HCV and drug use' just developed the first German manual on HCV prevention, treatment and rights. The manual has already been requested 800



25 years of building alliances

without losing ideals



times. Hepatitis C (HCV) is a big problem in Germany. 8 out of 10 drug injectors are infected and only a few have access to treatment. That's gonna be our next target, to increase access to HCV treatments

Other planned activities include: client surveys (for instance on HAV and HBV vaccination and treatment). Our drug user magazine called "DROGENKURIER" (drug trafficker), has been available 4 times a year since 1989; and also our flyers like "Safe storage of opiate medication in domestic environment."

Despite all these results, our main success is that JES still exists after 25 years. JES has changed from a radical opposition group into an independent national association, capable of and willing to form alliances without losing our goals and ideals.

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