

Svenska Brukarföreningen (SBF) Sweden

Sweden is well-known in Europe for their position on drug use. The existing moralism, rooted in the post-war progressive social-democratic traditions, considers all drug use as deviant behavior and sees users as sick, mad or criminal individuals. There are criminal sanctions on drug use, even usage of drugs, coercive testing and treatment are utilized and there is national refusal to subscribe to harm reduction. The few existing health care for drug users are local and do by no means provide any adequate coverage of services.

In this moral climate and hostile the Swedish Drug Users' Union (SDUU), known in Swedish as Svenska Brukarföreningen (SBF) has become an example of an outstanding peer initiative. The organization was founded in 2002 by Berne Stahlenkranz out of dissatisfaction with the stigma and discrimination and the lack of access for drug users to proper health systems: "And by the lack of having any kind of peer organization that could represent active users. The existing agencies were consisting of family members of users, ex-users, but no active users. And all of them were speaking on our behalf. That's a mistake: they are no users. We are users. So that's why we organized ourselves. And we took the motto from the Vancouver-declaration of the establishment of INPUD: 'Nothing about us, without us'."

From the moment of establishment the organisation grew and expanded. There are local branches in more than 10 cities with in total more than 1500 members and the organization has become the main actor in Sweden urging for better and more inclusive policies. The organization represents the users in



various governmental platforms and urges in all these for a for better drug policies which are based on public health and human rights. Also on international fora the SBF criticized the Swedish policies. SBF's work includes appeals, complaints, support users with different matters such as: apply for maintenance treatment, advocate for patient rights and to convince the healthcare and social workers to see and understand things from the users perspective. They also write op-eds and carry out lobbying.

Networking, advocacy and bridge building champions



The straight-forward work on community engagement and activism is recognized among many stakeholders in the country. The annual SBF conference is visited by over 200 participants from various professional and experiential backgrounds; varying from politicians and parliamentarians to peers and professionals from many agencies. SBF's continuous advocacy and bridge building makes them an extraordinary example of peer involvement. According to the SBF is collaboration by drug services and community groups essential in creating the best policy.

One of their last successes has been the production of a 50 minute documentary on hepatitis C: „The Hidden and Forgotten Plague“. The documentary is one of the activities in a wide range of HCV information and advocacy events that the organization is organizing. The work on hepatitis C among people using drugs, as can be seen on the portal <http://www.hepatitportalen.se/>, is ground-breaking and an inspiration for many other agencies and communities in Europe.

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