

Intervention Dianova “Beijing +25: Realizing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls” – Joint CND and CCPCJ Event, 12 June 2020, from 15-17pm

Good afternoon, my name is Gisela Hansen and I am a psychologist specializing in gender issues and working for Dianova, Spain, in a therapeutic community. I would like to thank the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

Dianova is a network of organizations operating in 19 countries and 4 continents in the health and social sectors. For over 40 years, Dianova has been implementing addiction treatment and prevention programs and is an advocate of the development of gender-sensitive programs.

It is important to know the impact of the pandemic on gender in order to incorporate it in the responses to this crisis. In the field of addiction, from a gender perspective, we observe that, even though people who use drugs are a group which is especially vulnerable, women in treatment have been affected even more severely. Women who use drugs have a higher prevalence of gender-based violence as compared to the general population, especially sexual violence and intimate partner violence¹. In addition, the extended period of lockdown has worsened the situation, with increased domestic violence and abuse against women and girls during the pandemic², combined with the fact that women who use drugs face additional problems for accessing the services they need³.

Gender barriers to access and remain in drug addiction treatment services have heightened with COVID⁴. Furthermore, given their traditional care-giver role, women in treatment have been coerced by their families to drop out residential treatments in order to carry out domestic chores and to care for their relatives in their homes.

¹ Pompidou Group, Council of Europe. “[Improving the management of violence experienced by women who use psychoactive substances](#)”. March 2016.

² Un Women. “[COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls](#)”, 2020.

³ Fundación Atenea. “[La atención a la problemática conjunta de drogodependencia y violencia de género en la población de mujeres](#)”. Junio 2009.

⁴ Spain Equality Ministry, Woman Institute. “[La perspectiva de género, esencial en la respuesta al COVID-19-Instituto de la mujer y ministerio de igualdad](#)”. May 2020.

According to preliminary data, women facing violence at home and emotional overload have had higher relapse rates during lockdown⁵.

Treatment services should ensure that the responses to COVID-19 do not reproduce or perpetuate harmful gender norms, discriminatory practices and inequalities. It is important to recognize that social, cultural, and gender norms, roles, and relationships influence the rights of women to access and remain in treatment. Much attention needs to be paid to health, and sexual and reproductive rights. Furthermore, governments should consider the effects of the pandemic according to age, sex and gender. Lastly, the risks of violence faced by women who use drugs cannot be ignored.

There is an urgent need to address the specific needs of women with substance use disorders to achieve the full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda. It is a question of human rights, public health and social justice.

⁵ Survey conducted by the Catalan Federation of Addictions, which encompasses drug-services provided in the field of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and reintegration in the Spanish region of Catalonia. May, 2020.