

**Address by the Mayor of Aglantzia A. Petrou
At the 18th Conference of European Cities against Drugs (ECAD)
which will take place at Varna in Bulgaria
12- 13 May 2011**

Dear Participants,

I extend the warm greetings of Aglantzia Municipal Council and offer our best wishes for the success of our conference, aiming at Europe without Drugs.

Allow me first to introduce our municipality of Aglantzia:

Aglantzia is located to the east of Nicosia and is one of the city's seven municipalities. It has a population of 25,000, of whom 7,500 are refugees from 43 Cypriot towns and villages still under Turkish occupation. The municipality covers an area of 31 square kilometres of which 14 square kilometres, i.e. 47%, are inaccessible due the Turkish army.

We consider Aglantzia as a beautiful city, a combination of the new and the old surrounded by Athalassa Park, the city's only major green area covering 863 hectares. Aglantzia hosts a number of state services, including the Police and National Guard Headquarters, the Agricultural Research Institute, the Productivity Centre, the Cyprus

Broadcasting Corporation, and others. Aglantzia also hosts the International Conference Center where most of the meetings of the Cyprus E.E. pressings will take place.

Our city is also the proud host of the centre of knowledge and learning: Cyprus University. Aglantzia Municipality is considered to be one of the most progressive in Cyprus, with over sixty infrastructural and development projects in the past 20 years.

THE PROBLEM OF DRUGS

We are all aware that the problem of drugs and addictive substances in general is an international problem which, to lesser or greater extents, impacts on all countries.

That is why, as members of European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD), we are here today to talk about our experiences, exchange views, and, in a spirit of cooperation and understanding, to find ways and means to put an end to the terrible consequences brought about by drug use, particularly among our youth.

It is for this reason that the slogan "Europe without Drugs" is particularly apt.

The drugs problem does exist in Cyprus, just as it exists in all other countries. In order to give you an idea of the magnitude, I present the results of the second island-wide general population survey on smoking, alcohol and other psycho-active substances, carried out by the Cyprus National Focal Point on drugs.

Users of illicit substances once in life 2006 - 2009

Aged 15 – 64

Cannabis	11.5%
Ecstasy	2%
Amphetamines	0.7%
Cocaine	3%
Heroin	0.4%
LSD	1.3%

Smoking in the last month among the youth and the general population

Ages 15 – 24	43.1%
Ages 15 – 64	39.4%

Alcohol consumption in the last month among the youth and the general population

Ages 15 – 24	63.4%
Ages 15 – 64	55.5%

Recent use of cannabis per age group

Ages 15 – 34	7.5 – 8.5 %
Ages 35 – 64	1.8 – 2.2%

Recent use of heroin

0.3%

A specific strategy has been set in place in order to tackle the problem of drug use and the State and NGOs are undertaking serious efforts to implement this strategy.

Without a doubt, a major aspect of the general measures to be implemented falls on the shoulders of the Local Authorities, and this is the part that concerns prevention.

Let us see what Aglantzia Municipality is doing in this important area of prevention.

Bearing in mind that sport is a social institution that impacts on all young people, helping them to develop team work, to communicate within a multicultural environment, to be creative, and to take initiatives - all of which serve to protect young men and women from falling into bad and dangerous habits - Aglantzia Municipality has given particular importance to sport and has designed and implemented infrastructure and programmes as follows:

1. Aglantzia Municipal Sports Centre
2. Futsal Grounds
3. Public Swimming Pool

4. 7 Basketball Courts
5. Municipal Park and 50 regional parks
6. Court for the French game Petanque
7. 34 kilometre long bicycle road/pedestrian walk;

We have pioneered in the introduction of the first bike sharing system in Cyprus to cover the entire Nicosia area.

This year saw the decision and planning of the first skateboard park on the island to be constructed in Aglantzia.

We thus aim to channel youth energy to a healthier lifestyle

Culture is another tool we believe helps in preventing the use of drugs. We have therefore created and maintained a number of venues and events like

1. Public Library
2. Unique multi-use Cultural Centre "Skali"
3. The annual cultural festival
4. The annual Jazz festival
5. A number of various other events

In addition to the above infrastructure works, Aglantzia Municipality has established the following organisations that relate to young people directly. These include:

1. Establishment of the first Youth Council in Cyprus 15 years ago
2. Establishment of its own Nautical Club and
3. Council for the Prevention of Deviant Behaviour

Each of these organisations has its own annual programmes as follows:

Programme of Youth Council and Council for the Prevention of Deviant Behaviour

1. Youth excursion in March each year
2. 4 Futsal tournaments – 2 for primary school children and 2 for high schools of our municipality
3. Two-day "Sound of Youth" Music Festival
4. Olympic Day Celebrations – Awards to Athletes
5. Performances of plays at high schools
6. Lectures at schools on deviant behaviour
7. Camps for children
8. Cycling trips
9. Participation in the state programmes "Sport for All", and others

The Mayor of Aglantzia is one of the founding members and member of the Board of KENTHEA (Centre for Education about Drugs and Therapy of Drug-Addicted Persons).

Nautical Club Programmes

1. Swimming Team composed of 70 children

2. Summer swimming lessons for 400 children and young people
3. Annual international inter-municipal swimming championship

The Aglantzia counselling centre was also introduced in 2011 aiming to provide “first aid” support to drug users. We plan to hire a psychologist that together with our trained staff will, we believe, make a positive impact.

Aglantzia also implemented the internationally acknowledged programme “Communities that care” for 11-14 year olds. After an initial high school survey we started our intervention forming teenage groups that will use play to address various behavioural issues aiming to reduce illicit drug use.

This is the contribution of the Aglantzia Local Authority to the war against drugs.