

Mainline @LEPH Conference in Amsterdam

Mainline attended the Third International Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health that was held 2-5 October in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The team alternated days. We were also present at the International Consultation on Policing, Public Health and Vulnerable Populations that preceded the conference on 1 October.

Some reactions from the team:

Mac

" The pre-consultation stirred interesting discussions. We addressed topics that ranged from police performance measurement to police training – from relationships between vulnerable communities and the local police to the importance of an open (police) mind to vulnerable groups –and from positive incentives that counter corruption or prevent target-driven bribes to the effective use of discretionary powers. The consultation was very instrumental to understand law enforcement perspectives. "

Monica

" The backlash of the 'War on Drugs' against people who use drugs is still being felt to a large degree. PWUD are criminalised and punished. Although there is a growing sentiment of Restorative Justice (treatment/rehabilitation as an alternative to punishment), the police are overburdened with a myriad of tasks which fall out of their skill set. "

Nick

" It was very interesting to learn more on how to engage with law enforcement officials in harm reduction programmes. I believe that, next to maintaining the public order, the police can play a major role in improving public health of citizens. However, we must ensure that the law on the books will meet the law on the streets, both nationally and internationally. If we engage them in a participative way and know how practices are reinforced institutionally and in daily practices, good policing can facilitate harm reduction to improve the rights and health of people who use drugs in the community and in other closed settings. "

Hatun

" Several problems and challenges in the field of harm reduction and law enforcement by police were discussed during the conference. However the overarching message was that police officers actually can like the idea of harm reduction.

Police understand the idea of harm reduction principles quickly", according Professor Pat O'Hare. "They are pragmatic because they don't always have an ideological opinion about drug use. Harm reduction makes their work easier. "