

## LIFE SET FREE



TOWARDS A DRUG - FREE SOCIETY:  
CORNERSTONES OF SWEDEN'S SUCCESSFUL DRUG POLICY



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### Background

Drug use in Europe has been expanding over the past three decades. More people experiment with drugs and more people become regular users, with all the problems this entails for already strained national health systems. There are thus suggestions, at the European level, that drug policies have failed to contain a widespread problem.

**Sweden is a notable exception.**

- Drug use levels among students are lower than in the early 1970s
- Life-time prevalence and regular drug use among students are considerably lower than in the rest of Europe
- Life-time prevalence and regular drug use among the general population are considerably lower than in the rest of Europe
- Drug abuse is ever decreasing in Sweden contrary to the European trend

### The Swedish vision

Swedish drug control policy is guided by the vision and the ultimate goal of achieving a drug-free society and the unequivocal rejection of drugs, their trafficking and abuse. Swedish drug control policy is guided by solidarity with disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society. People are entitled to a life of dignity and a society, which safeguards health, prosperity, security and safety of the individual, family and community. Therefore the vision is that of a society free from narcotic drugs.

### Overriding task

The overriding task of Swedish drug policy is to prevent abuse.

Preventive measures shall strengthen the determination and ability of the individual to refrain from drugs.



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## International context

The Swedish drug policy is fully in line with the three United Nations Conventions on drugs:

- 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs,
- 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances
- 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic

### Substances

The International Narcotics Control Board carried out a mission to Sweden in 2004 and commended the Government for its commitment and efforts in the fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking, in line with the international drug control treaties

Sweden has shown that it is possible to combine a modern welfare state with effective methods to prevent non-medical drug use.

### Widespread Public support

Public opinion: strong political consensus and support from the public for a comprehensive and restrictive drug policy based on the UN conventions, which include both supply- and demand reduction

## The Swedish context

4 contextual factors for successful drug policy

### 1) Distribution of prosperity:

Income inequalities, which often go hand in hand with criminal activities including drug trafficking, are low.

### 2) Health literacy:

International surveys show that the Swedish population is particularly health-conscious, therefore less prone to large-scale drug use and inclined to lifestyle choices that promote health and well-being.

### 3) Employment rates:

Unemployment, including youth unemployment, is below the European average. This reduces the risks of substance abuse.

### 4) Political commitment and political will:

There's widespread consensus across political parties, civil society, labour unions and the business sector on Sweden's political commitment to a society free from drugs; political leaders continuously express that political will to prevent and reduce harm caused by narcotic drugs remains very strong from both the Parliament and the Government.

## Some Cornerstones

The ANDT Strategy, covering the years 2011 to 2015, was adopted by the Swedish Parliament in 2011.

### 1) Restriction, not repression:

The Swedish approach to drug policy has been restrictive but not repressive. The prison population rate (prisoners per 100 000 inhabitants) is 74, which is well below the median rate for western and southern Europe at 95. The rate for The Netherlands is 100, a big discrepancy compared to Sweden, showing the effectiveness of the restriction not repression approach.

Children, young people and parents are particularly prioritised target groups. The Government allocated almost SEK 260 million a year for 2008, 2009 and 2010 for work against alcohol and other drugs.

### 2) The best interest of the child

Protecting children against the harmful effects of alcohol, narcotic drugs, doping and tobacco:

- Fewer children born with harmful or disabling conditions caused by exposure to alcohol, illicit drugs, doping substances or tobacco
- Appropriate support for children in families where abuse, mental illness or mental disability is present
- Better knowledge of alcohol and tobacco marketing practices via digital media, and of the effect of digital marketing on consumption
- Gradually reducing the number of children and young people who initiate the use of tobacco, illicit drugs or doping substances or begin drinking alcohol early
- Reduced initiation of illicit drugs and doping abuse
- Development of methods for deterring children and young people from starting to use tobacco products
- Wider use of available, effective means of postponing alcohol debuts and reducing alcohol consumption
- Emphasis on health promotion in schools
- Greater participation by parents, non-governmental organisations and the business community in preventive work



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Up to 20% (ca. 400.000) of all children grow up in families with at least one parent with substance use problems

Interventions are offered to children living in families where one or both parents are addicted to either alcohol or narcotics in Swedish municipalities in different settings, often in cooperation with NGOs.

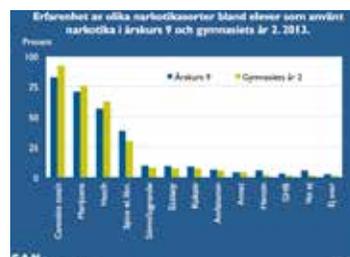
- Ca. 65% of the municipalities offer some group-based activities for these children
- About 80% of municipalities reported interventions for families with addicted parents
- 65% reported interventions for families where violence occurs
- 55% reported interventions for families with parents with mental disorders .

### 3) Young people's attitudes

The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN) annually conducts national studies of the alcohol and drug habits of school children.

Approach today: necessary to convince every generation and keep the momentum going.

- National, representative surveys among school pupils' of 9th grade are conducted annually since 1971 – one of the longest on-going surveys in the world
- 2013 findings: historic lows in alcohol and tobacco use and stable level of narcotic drug use



### 4) Family support

- Increasing number of municipalities report activities for parents in drug prevention work
- 2009: Government set up a national strategy for developing parental support. The aim of the strategy is to encourage local collaboration on support and assistance to parents in their parenting.
- Community Parent Education (COPE) is one of several prevention methods focused on parents, and the method was applied in about a third of the municipalities in 2011

## What we do

Civil society contribution to prevention and reduction of harm caused by narcotic drugs

Junis, the IOGT-NTO movement's junior organization: [www.junis.org](http://www.junis.org)

- Annual report mapping country-wide municipal support for children from families at risk
- 91% of respondents report support activities for children from at-risk families
- 9% of municipalities do not offer any support at all
- only 1.9% of children are reached by the support they need and have a right to

IOGT-NTO: [www.iogt.se](http://www.iogt.se)

- Running of treatment center (Dagöholm) for treatment and rehabilitation
- Several Social Enterprises for former addicts to foster rehabilitation and reintegration
- Mutual help groups across the country
- Annual White Christmas campaign with the entire IOGT-NTO movement



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NSF, the IOGT-NTO movement's scout organization: [www.nsf.scout.se](http://www.nsf.scout.se)

- Year-round, country-wide social inclusion activities for children and youth at risk
- Special non-formal education material: Safe Meetings

UNF, the Swedish Youth Temperance Association: [www.unf.se](http://www.unf.se)

- Year-round, country-wide social inclusion activities for children and youth at risk
- Mutual help groups for youth
- A Better Leisure Life – campaign for more drug free environments for youth

IOGT International: [www.iogt.org](http://www.iogt.org)

- Global advocacy for Convention on the Rights of the Child and Best Interest Principle
- Global rehabilitation work: mutual help groups and family clubs method
- Addressing narcotic drugs as obstacle to development (especially in South East Asia and West Africa)
- Executive Director is Vice President of Vienna NGO Committee
- International President is President of World Forum Against Drugs

[www.iogt.org](http://www.iogt.org)

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IOGT International is the premier global interlocutor for evidence-based policy measures and community-based interventions to prevent and reduce harm caused by alcohol and other drugs.

