HIV in Prison
Situation in Germany

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Approx. one third of the 80,000 prison inmates in Germany use illegal drugs.

Almost one fifth of all intravenous drug users started drug abuse in prison.

It is a known fact that not even the harshest controls can prevent drug abuse in prisons.

Additionally: Between 50% and 75% of all prisoners have mental-health problems.
WHO defines drug addiction as a chronic or recurrent condition, characterized by the compulsive use of toxic substances which affect the central nervous system of the user and result in a state of physical and/or psychological dependence on these substances. Drug addiction is harmful to the individual and/or society. *(ICD 10)*

Means: It’s a chronic Disease.
Drug-related deaths

► ~2,000 Deaths by illegal drug use.
► ~73,000 Alcohol-related cases of deaths.
► ~140,000 Persons per year die from diseases related to the consumption of tobacco.
► ~1.5 Million people with a dependency on medication have to be added to the total number of drug addicts.

Source: Deutsche Hauptstelle für Suchtfragen (DHS), Germany, 2004
According to WHO approx. 50 % of the prison population has had some experience with drugs abuse.

Almost 50 % of the injecting drug users who use drugs when living in freedom, continue taking them in prison, and sometimes take extremely high risks.

In addition, unprotected sexual contacts as well as tattooing, which is common practise in prisons, contribute to infections with hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV.

Source: 2007 action plan for the fight against HIV/AIDS of the Federal Republic of Germany)
„Persons, who while incarcerated frequently shared syringes, had a 10-fold higher risk of contracting an HIV-infection than those who had never been in prison.“ (Kleiber, 1991)

50% of those IVDUs, who had shared syringes more than 50 times while in prison, had contracted HIV, and 97% of them had a co-infection with hepatitis C. (Kleiber, 1991)
Infectious Diseases in Prison (HIV/AIDS and hepatitis)

- It is assumed that a total of 1 % of the prison population is HIV-positive. Imprisoned women are more strongly affected than men (the incidence is 20 times higher than in the general population).
- Approx. 20% of all prisoners (and up to 80% of the prisoners addicted to drugs) are HCV-positive (that means that the incidence is 40 times higher than in the general population).
- Transmissions of HIV and hepatitis during imprisonment have been proven.
- There is a strong correlation between hepatitis infections and previous stays in prison.
- Needle sharing is widespread among inmates.
Infectious Diseases in Prison

► According to conservative estimates, in Germany approx. 1% of the prison population is HIV-positive, that is 25 times the rate found in the general population.

► In addition, between 36% and 90% of all intravenous drug users have a co-infection with Hepatitis A, B, or C.

► The incidence of tuberculosis is 30 times higher „inside“ than „outside".
Risk of infection: unsafe use

Heroin is filtered and sucked into the syringe
Risk of infection: tattooing

Self made instruments for tattooing (common sewing needle, part of a refill device for a ball point pen for inserting pigments into the skin, sewing thread for binding the components together)
Consequently, HIV and Hepatitis are easily transmitted in prisons, and it is not surprising that today prisons play a decisive role in disease transmission.

The incidence of HIV among prisoners is considerably higher than in the general population.

Prisoners, particularly IVDUs, spend more time in prisons than in therapeutic centres.
Effects on the General Population

- Prisons are so to say hot spots where people of different social groups mingle.
- For this reason the health risks are not limited to imprisoned intravenous drug users and their fellow inmates, but – in the long run – the health of the general population is at risk as well, particularly as far as unprotected sexual intercourse is concerned.
In general, in prisons it is a problem to ensure adequate care, treatment, and support of people living with HIV and AIDS.

Prisoners are subjected to an extreme isolation from the outside world and also inside of the prison. At the same time they have to live with the fear of seriously falling ill or dying behind prison walls.
20 % of the prison’s health budget for medication is spent on HIV-treatment.

And: „HIV-infected patients in German prisons can usually rely on receiving the best available treatment, and medication which is up to the newest standards.“*

*German technical magazine for physicians „Ärzte-Zeitung“ dated 25.05.1999
Model project
Prophylaxis of infectious diseases in prisons in Lower-Saxony:

► In 1996 practices which had proven to be practicable and had made an effective contribution to the reduction of new infections among IVDUs outside of prisons were first introduced in two prisons in Lower-Saxony, Germany:

- in a prison for women in Vechta, and
- in a prison for men in Lingen.
Legal Equipment for IVDUs in Prison

Injection set with name tag and content: Syringe without needle with blocked piston (imitation), Ascorbic acid, alcohol sponges, filter, band aid, NaCl-solution 0.9 %)
Concept

- Individual HIV/AIDS-counselling by the medical service, special counselling services for drug addicts and the „AIDS-Hilfe“, a self-help organisation.
- Distribution of leaflets and brochures about HIV/AIDS, "safer sex", and "safer use".
- Information campaigns about HIV/AIDS and hepatitis.
- "Safer-use-counselling" by the „AIDS-Hilfe“.
5 decentrally located machines for the exchange of syringes have been installed in the prisons. Another method is the personal handover by members of the counselling service for drug addicts which operates inside the prison.

The members of this service have to treat patient information with confidentiality.

On week-ends syringes are provided by medical personnel.
Machine for the exchange of Syringes

Left: The used syringe is introduced into the opening.
Centre: The ring is turned anti-clockwise.
Right: The new syringe is taken out.
Aims

► Prevention of new infections of HIV and hepatitis.
► Health promotion.
► Easy, anonymous access to sterile injection equipment, in order to prevent syringes from being sold as a commodity in prison.
► Safeguarding the health of prison staff.
The studies have shown that in Germany 1% of the prisoners are HIV-infected, while the infection rate in Spain is 23 %, and in Ireland 20%.

In Germany one out of four prisoners injects drugs. In Denmark 40% of the prison population inject drugs, and in Portugal even 55%.

UNAIDS emphasises, that it is highly recommendable to introduce abstinence treatment and an exchange programme for used syringes in prisons. Furthermore, disinfectants for sterilising syringes and condoms should be provided.
The high number of exchanged syringes in both prisons which participated in the model project clearly shows, that clients became aware of health issues related to their drug consumption. This means, that the imprisoned IVDUs accepted this prophylactic approach which on the one hand aimed at raising awareness about their health and on the other hand at the prevention of infectious diseases.
“Prisons are the least protected places in our society. In prisons people are not only deprived of their freedom, but they also face a lot of dangers such as violence, dependence, and infectious diseases, while at the same time their capacities of managing these risks are considerably reduced.”

* Introduction of the WHO pamphlet „HIV in Prisons“, WHO Europe, 2001
STATEMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES*

► Principle 1: People in prison are part of our communities.
► Principle 2: People in prison have a right to health.
► Principle 3: Good prison health is good public health.
► Principle 4: Protecting the health of prisoners, and reducing the transmission of disease in prisons, also protects the health of prison staff.
► Principle 5: Sex and injecting drug use occur in prison, and are widespread in many prisons.
► Principle 6: Harm reduction, rather than zero-tolerance, must be the pragmatic policy basis for fighting HIV/AIDS in prisons and in providing HIV/AIDS care.
► Principle 7: HIV/AIDS in prisons is a major problem in many countries, and States must act collectively and cooperatively in the fight against the epidemic.
► Principle 8: Action to fight Hepatitis C in prisons is as crucial as is action to fight HIV/AIDS, and must be integrated into all initiatives addressing HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.

* DUBLIN DECLARATION ON HIV/AIDS IN PRISONS IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA, 2004
Prison Health is Public Health”*

* DUBLIN DECLARATION ON HIV/AIDS IN PRISONS IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA, 2004