

# Current Challenges for the Social and Professional Reintegration of Young Drug Users: Motivation through and for Work

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**Abstract.** *Adolescence is seen as a critical period regarding the adoption of a behavior of drug consumption that leads to absenteeism, respectively dropout. But adolescence is the period during which individuals realize their own preferences regarding their educational and vocational route. The coordinates that essentially mark the status of a drug user in Romania are the impossibility of maintaining a stable socio-occupational frame, stigmatization, marginalization and even social exclusion. For these reasons, it is necessary to conduct activities that facilitate the access to the labor market of drug users that, because of the lack of training or work experience, have employment difficulties. In order to motivate drug users to reduce or give up the consumption behavior and to reintegrate on the labor market, it is important to consider his interest in certain areas of knowledge or activity. Also, the more obvious the overlap between career opportunities and personal values is, the more likely their choice and stability will be found in their choice. Seen from the perspective of current challenges, this paper analyzes and highlights the role that education, motivation for work and community support plays in the socio-professional reintegration of young drug users. In this context, the activity of reintegration of drug users cannot be reduced to working directly with the client, an extremely important role accounting for professionals in building support networks, starting from the specific resources for professional reintegration: socio-educational centers, socio-professional orientation centers, centers for promoting professional alternatives, educational, entertainment and leisure workshops, workshops for developing social skills, services for finding jobs.*

**Keywords:** social reintegration, drug, drug user, risk factors, protection factors

## Theoretical background

One of the current problems of Romanian society is the alarming increase of drug use among young people. Adolescence is characterized by a desire to impress, to be always in the spotlight, which can lead to the adoption of a drug use behavior. Adolescence is, for many

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young people, the debut period in terms of drug use behavior, leading to absenteeism, respectively dropout. But adolescence is also the period during which the individual has to take a number of decisions regarding his future professional life. Because of substance abuse, these people are found, most often, being personally and socially vulnerable.

Thus, according to the National report regarding drugs – 2012, in the period of 2006-2011, for the indicator “Admission to treatment as a follow up for drug abuse”, the highest proportion consists of persons without own income or who are working without a labor card. ([www.ana.gov.ro](http://www.ana.gov.ro))

According to the same report, compared on genders, the situation is the following :

- regarding male beneficiaries, there is a higher proportion of unemployment / unemployed / working illegally (without work contract) and, generally, lower for those who, at the time of admission, were following a form of education (pupil / student) ;
- regarding female beneficiaries, there is a higher proportion of people economically inactive (retirement or household) and, generally, lower for employed persons, with a contract on a determined or undetermined term.

With regards to educational level, we can see that it is low among drug users who have come to treatment services in 2011 (values are higher among consumers who have asked for assistance for the first time) :

- approximately 2/3 have a low level : have never been to school/ haven't graduated primary school (7,1%, respectively 7,4% – new cases) or have graduated 8 grades (55%, respectively 56,8%) ;
- approximately 1/3 have, the most, a medium level (maximum post-secondary education) : 31%, respectively 29,6% ;
- less than 10% have a high education level (university/post-university education) : 7%, respectively 6,2%.

Also, depending on the gender of the beneficiary, the situation described above does not change, with the following observations for :

- women – there is a higher proportion of those with a very low level of education (have never went to school / did not complete primary school : for female beneficiaries, the maximum value is 7.9% – total cases and 9.8 % – new cases, while for males the maximum value is 6.8% – total cases and 6.7% – new cases) or middle and high education level (maximum post-secondary or university / post-university education : for female beneficiaries, the maximum value is 59% – total cases and 54% – new cases, while for the male beneficiaries, the maximum value is 48% – total cases 47% – new cases) ;
- men – there is a higher proportion of people with low education level (graduated no more than secondary education) : for male beneficiaries, the maximum value is 64% – total cases 63% – new cases, and for female beneficiaries, the maximum value is 59% – total cases and 58% – new cases).

Therefore, carrying out activities to facilitate access to the labor market for drug users becomes imperative. If ignoring the educational gaps, the consumers are enabled to develop offenses, from minor ones to serious crimes. Antisocial attitudes derived from the shortcomings of education during childhood, if not removed by education, tailored to the situation, lead to the stabilization of negative habits which updated in unfavorable socio-economic conditions can generate deviance and even crime.

## Motivation through work for the success of social reintegration of drug users

Drug users are facing financial problems, often due to the fact that drug use affects the work ability of the adult drug consumer, his only interest being in buying daily doses. Labor relations are damaged, leading, ultimately, to the loss of the position held. Also, drugs are expensive, consumers spend every penny earned to buy them. In such a context, it is necessary to work towards achieving social reintegration of consumers, aiming to find a job and maintain it. Such approaches are especially important when those people show their willingness to give up the consumption behavior. From a general perspective, offering healthy alternatives for leisure time are essential. The absence of professional qualifications and employment are significant risk factors in maintaining drug-related behavior. Removing these factors increases the chance of social reintegration of consumers. Job stability, consumers' ability to find and maintain work significantly reduces their tendency to keep the addictive behavior.

The effects of unemployment has an impact on the society as a whole, having serious welfare repercussions for the current young generation that, because of their vulnerable position on the labor market, have to cope with uncertainty and insecurity at a point in their life that should be the strongest and most secured (Baciu and Lazar, 2012, 45). On the other hand, the education plays a central role. It is what equips the individual with the skills needed on society (Pânzaru, 2012, 105).

The work of assisting drug users in their social and professional reintegration involves the development of vocational guidance and counseling programs for people who have lost their jobs and for those who have never been employed. The mentioned activity aims to supporting the consumers' choice for forms of education, vocational and professional training that are appropriate for their skills, interests and values. The overall objective of this activity is to train and develop the skills necessary to identify, evaluate and use information about themselves and about the labor market, skills that will facilitate taking realistic decisions about social and professional / occupational status. According to the "National medical, psychological and social standards for drug users", the specific objectives for promoting professional alternatives for drug addicts are :

- Promotion of activities that facilitate the approach of drug users to the labor market ;
- Facilitation of the development of attitudes that is necessary for socio-professional integration ;
- Involvement of social agents that can facilitate socio-professional integration ;
- Development of formative processes that promote professional training and socio-professional integration of beneficiaries ;
- Structuring socio-professional insertion processes in order to facilitate the creation of enterprises through technical training, impresario and administration / management assistance ;
- Collective self-employment and autonomous employment so that the employment potential increases ;
- Establishment of mechanisms for cooperation together with social agents involved in the assistance network ;
- Facilitating the access on the labor market for drug addicts that are in a treatment process.

Rehabilitation and social reintegration of consumers is part of a global plan addressing biological, psychological and social aspects of the individuals' problem, but also the

intervention on his environment and the community. They must rely on personal and social resources of the individual, acquired in advance, potential or recovered. This dimension of the assistance is particularly important in order to achieve the aim of social reintegration. For achieving tangible results for the victims of this phenomenon and also to obtain benefits for the whole society, it is necessary to involve all social actors with responsibilities in this regard. Including all resources, community services and active participation of citizens is essential. An important role is given to the academic field in close correlation with the business area. For decreasing the rate of unemployment among the younger population, it is essential to create a strong network between educational institutions and the private sector for practice activities (Lazar and Baciu, 2012, 187). This includes not only long-term educational programs but also short-term training and vocational courses. Between their specificity and the needs of the labour market a solid connection must exist (Pânzaru, 2012, 105).

When schools are opened up to community participation, all the people who know and work with the child can organize themselves to work together, focusing on the child's learning. Then the context is transformed, because what happens at drug users family is no longer separate from what happens in the school ; learning is promoted in both places and occurs more extensively. (Garcia, Alexiu and Duque, 2010, 216)

For these reasons, an important role is focused on raising awareness among employers by giving a vision adjusted to the reality related to drug users, in order to adopt an effective and cohesive social attitude. It is important for employers to understand the importance of the fact that, by providing employment for drug users, they contribute to the intervention on the individual and his environment, which is an important factor for the social reinsertion of that particular drug user.

In the area of rehabilitation and social reintegration, the community is a support network that sustains positive behavior change approaches and is to be involved in solving problems faced by that person, because, ultimately, he returns in the community without presenting new risks for the security of that community.

For achieving social inclusion, we need to work on several areas of intervention (National Antidrug Agency, Bucharest, 2005, 118) :

- Personal and social. Achieving cohabitation rules, strengthening positive attitudes towards drug users and promoting the use of community resources ;
- Professional training. Developing and improving professional knowledge and techniques ;
- Employment. Finding and obtaining a paid job ;
- Education and culture. Achieving an educational, cultural and playful level strong enough in order to understand and participate in social life ;
- Stabilization of the legal criminal and civil situation ;
- Community involvement. Coordination, technical support and collaboration with public and with social initiative entities. Strengthening community social services.

The therapeutic intervention becomes unsuccessful if there had not been achieved the social reintegration of drug users, in order to establish social contacts and finding a job. The acquisition by the consumer, of the work capacity is one of the main aspects that the support services are focused on. Otherwise, it reaches to the exclusion of consumers from the society, to labeling them, and, therefore, depriving them of the opportunity to acquire an abstinence behavior. In such circumstances, consumers face feelings of depression, hopelessness, helplessness and lose their self-esteem. These feelings are risk factors regarding the maintenance of drug use behavior, or relapse, where, for a period they have quit using the substance use behavior.

In such a context, we seek the acquisition, for the drug users, of skills for searching, finding, and not last, as noted above, maintaining their jobs. In this respect, it is necessary

to conduct activities through which drug users acquire technical professional knowledge, to develop work, cohabitation and relational skills and benefit of support for vocational guidance.

According to the same National report regarding the situation of drugs – 2012, the National Antidrug Agency, through the 47 Centers of Antidrug Prevention, Evaluation and Counseling and through the 5 Centers of Integrated Assistance of Addictions continued to provide, during the year of 2011, social assistance for the social reintegration of drug users enrolled in treatment programs.

Thus, in 2011, experts of the National Antidrug Agency have initiated 3,622 demarches towards the integration / reintegration of beneficiaries enrolled in the integrated treatment programs, namely :

- integration in the labor market – 892 demarches ;
- family integration – 1,250 demarches ;
- school integration – 499 demarches ;
- social integration – 981 demarches.

In the present, a reality is the change of career path during their active life, which is an adaptive method to the dynamics of the labor market.

Changing career path has a motivation that starts with an unmet need that creates physical, psychological, social tensions for the individual. This need gives birth to motivational forces that determine the person to behave toward achieving a goal or obtaining an incentive. Achieving the goal (incentive) will ensure the satisfaction of the need and reduce internal stress.

In the contemporary society, the unidirectional orientation based on a static model, of overlapping the personal characteristics with characteristics of an occupational area is not valid. Nowadays, for finding a job for drug users, they must be educated for independence and flexibility in five areas of competence: self knowledge, occupational information, decision-making, planning and problem solving (Băban, 2003, 205). Only those who have adequate skills manage to enter the labour market. Others, not having the skills needed for employment, become unemployed and are forced to undergo professional training and retraining to meet the requirements of socio-economic integration for entering the labour market (Pânzaru, 2012, 106).

The primary criteria of analysis of the existing alternatives in terms of finding a job is self-knowledge. Career expectations and attitudes that the consumer has towards himself and towards his career, in general, are generated by interests, values, skills and personality. Thus, it is necessary to develop the social skills of drug users, skills that will have an impact not only on social behavior as such, but also on their attitudes and feelings about themselves and others. When seeking to develop such skills, it is important to address issues regarding the behavior that those seeking deem as problematic, otherwise the action itself could fail. Regarding professional training, an important element is *self-esteem*. Those who have a good self-image tend to explore more career options, to choose professions with a higher level of educational requirements. Therefore, it is recommended to develop with people who use drugs, activities of self-image development, self-knowledge and positive guidance on personal characteristics. A high self esteem is a major protective factor in terms of drug use. It is therefore important that such activities are carried out during adolescence, a critical period for the adoption of consumption behavior and, also, an important period for choosing a profession.

In order to motivate drug users to reduce or quit the consumption behavior and to reintegrate in the labor market, it is important to consider his *interest* in certain areas of knowledge or activity. The congruence between personal interests and the chosen profession determines both professional satisfaction, stability of choices taken and the ability to adapt to internal changes of the environment, professional performance and a low level of occupational

stress. (Lemeni and Miclea, 2004, 147) Also, an important role is that of the *values*, which represent the basal beliefs of individuals regarding what is important in life, in interpersonal relationships and employment. They are motivational sources in a specific area. Based on these values, individuals manifest avoidance or, conversely, the propensity for tangible or intangible elements such as money, power, spirituality. (Băban, 2003, 213) Each individual has a constellation of values, in which intrinsic values (autonomy, professional competence, expressing creativity etc.) coexist with the extrinsic ones (material benefits, status, prestige, security etc.). During adolescence, in choosing a profession, a higher share is that of extrinsic values, while their share reverses in adulthood.

The more obvious the overlapping between professional opportunities and personal values is, the less probable their stability is.

## Conclusions

In taking a decision concerning their profession, young drug users are sometimes undecided. It is necessary that this indecision is followed by an exploratory behavior, of search for information about themselves and educational and occupational paths, the evaluation of alternatives and seeking alternatives. Drug users will need to identify resources and services needed, to connect the existing components of the community, to plan a way to follow in the process of rehabilitation and reintegration.

The efforts made by European institutions, national governments and public policy offices to reduce discrepancies between the skills supply and demand and thus increase the opportunities for employment among young people need also the support of social partners, in order to be successful. From this perspective, the role of the Universities is essential : they are the closest institutions to the future inputs on the labor force (their students) and, at the same time, because of their purpose of training and producing viable qualified human resource, able to successfully insert on the labor market, they have the necessary capacity and motivation to be in permanent contact with the employers and monitor their needs. (Baciu and Lazar, 2011, 88) Education and learning should be viewed in connection with other social factors related to exclusion (employment, economy, youth, healthcare, justice, housing and social services), include practical and contextual knowledge and address social as well as human capital. (Alexiu, 2012, 23)

In order that the activity of reintegration of drug users in the professional life is effective, it is necessary that it should be based on two concepts : an open and interactive communication and an education for independence and values.

Social reintegration services have, at the functional level, the role of regularizing the personal and social situation of people with addiction problems. Social reintegration involves ensuring livelihoods (shelter, food, clothing), including them in a form of education and integration in the labor market.

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