

National Drugs Forum 2025

Adapting to change:
meeting new demands
in drug services

#nationaldrugsforum

**Croke Park,
Dublin**
13 November 2025



An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health



An Bord
Taighde Sláinte
Health Research
Board

Quality standards, methods of quality assurance and evaluation tools are well established parts of the response to the drugs situation in European countries. Together they contribute to a process of continuous improvement and provide an opportunity for practitioners to reflect on their work and measure the extent to which a service's objectives have been realised.

Standards cover aspects of service planning and implementation such as qualifications, professional training, adherence to human rights principles and the use of interventions that are soundly based on scientific evidence.

The drug phenomenon is very different to that faced by many services at the time they were established. Changes in the demography and patterns of drug use, the adaptability of the drugs market and the astonishing range of substances available will require greater diversity in approaches to demand reduction and preparedness to deal with unanticipated harms. Regionalisation and the implementation of Sláintecare will require new administrative and reporting arrangements.

Adaptation will involve diagnosis of problems, such as meeting new service needs, better communications and improving service outcomes. During this year's National Drugs Forum we will learn how other countries have approached the task of service improvement and what regionalisation has meant for a number of EU Member States. The opportunity to share international experience will provide examples of innovative approaches to implementing quality standards and prepare for the challenges ahead.

National Drugs Forum 2025 programme

09:30 – 09:45 **Forum opening: Ms Murnane O'Connor TD**, Minister of State with responsibility for public health, wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy

09:45 – 10:20 **Dr Lorraine Nolan**, Executive Director designate, EUDA
Linking change at EU and national levels.
Dr Gráinne Gorman, Chief Executive Officer, Health Research Board

10:20 – 11:05 **Mr Tony Canavan**, Regional Executive Officer HSE North West division
HSE Regions; where are we now?
Dr Jonathan Pratscke, Independent Researcher
Regionalisation of drug services in Europe: an evidence review

11:05 – 11:45 Break

11:45 – 13:00 **Marketplace presentations:** Quality assurance in drugs services in EU countries

Ms Tereza Černíková, Drug Policy Department, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic
The Czech Republic's experience with a quality assurance system in addiction services

Dr Byron Gaist, Cyprus National Addictions Authority
Minimum quality standards in Cyprus

Mr Gavriel Efstratiou, Cyprus National Addictions Authority
Minimum quality standards in Cyprus

Dr Artur Malczewski, National Centre for Prevention of Addictions
Drug treatment in Poland – challenges and achievements

Mr David Lane, Health Service Executive
Aligning service delivery with population needs in a large urban area in Ireland

13:00 – 14:00 **Lunch**

14:00 – 14:45 **Dr Ross Macmillan**, University of Limerick
The RePS study on Irish prevention interventions: UNODC standards and current prevention practice

14:45 – 15:30 **Panel discussion:** Approaches to service improvement in Czechia, Poland, Cyprus and Ireland. (Chaired by Ms Elaine Burke)

15:30 – 15:45 **Close of forum**

Speakers



Ms Jennifer Murnane O' Connor

Ms Jennifer Murnane O'Connor TD is Minister of State at the Department of Health with special responsibility for public health, wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy. She was appointed to this role on 29 January 2025.



Dr Lorraine Nolan

Dr Nolan joined the Health Products Regulatory Authority in 2001 and since that time has held a number of different roles at senior level within the organisation across a range of areas including inspection and authorisation of human medicines, medical devices, cosmetics and controlled substances. Prior to assuming the role of Chief Executive, she was Director of Human Products Authorisation & Registration. Lorraine was previously the Chair of the European Medicines Agency Management Board, and member in the EU Heads of Medicines Agencies Management Group.

In June of this year, Lorraine was appointed as incoming Executive Director of the European Union Drugs Agency, a role she will assume in January 2026, after completion of her current contract with the HPRA.



Dr Gráinne Gorman

Dr Gráinne Gorman officially assumed the role of Chief Executive at the Health Research Board on 1 October 2025. Neurologist by training specialising in mitochondrial disease. At Newcastle University, she served as Professor of Neurology, Director of the Wellcome Centre for Mitochondrial Research, and Theme Co-Lead within the NIHR Newcastle Biomedical Research Centre. She is an alumna of the UK Academy of Medical Sciences' FLIER (Future Leaders in Innovation, Enterprise and Research) programme and a graduate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

She completed undergraduate and postgraduate training in Ireland, attaining specialist certification in Neurology before moving to the UK to join Newcastle University, where her work has focused on clinical trials and translating mitochondrial research into innovative, co-designed care with patients and communities.



Tony Canavan has worked in the Health Services in the West for over 30 years. Over that time he has held a number of appointments with the Western Health Board in the Mental Health Services, the Department of Public Health, Primary Care Services and Acute Hospitals Services. In 2012, he was appointed Chief Operating Officer of the first Hospital Group in the country known then as the Galway Roscommon University Hospitals Group, which subsequently became the Saolta Group and was extended to include Letterkenny and Sligo. In 2015, he became Chief Officer of Community Healthcare West before returning to the Saolta Group four years later as CEO. He took up the role of Regional Executive Officer, HSE West and North West in March 2024.



Dr Jonathan Pratschke has worked in applied social research for 25 years and has completed more than 50 projects on work, health and wellbeing. He has published numerous journal articles, books and reports and has participated in evaluation projects in the context of community-led implementation strategies and national programmes. He developed the Pobal HP Small Area Deprivation Index in collaboration with the late Dr Trutz Haase, and is an expert in the construction of systems for the measurement and monitoring of inclusion and equality in the fields of education and health. In recent years, he has completed systematic reviews for the Health Research Board, the Higher Education Authority and the European Union Drugs Agency.



Professor Ross Macmillan

Professor Ross Macmillan is Professor of Sociology at the University of Limerick, Ireland. He is a graduate of the University of Toronto, Queens University Canada, and the University of Winnipeg. After a short lectureship at Queens, he joined the faculty in sociology at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities where he was an assistant professor and then associate professor with tenure. During this time, he undertook training in formal demography at Stanford University and was director of the graduate program in population studies. He then joined the faculty in policy analysis and public management (now social and political sciences) at Bocconi University in Milan, Italy and was the director of the Dondena Centre for Research on Social Dynamics.

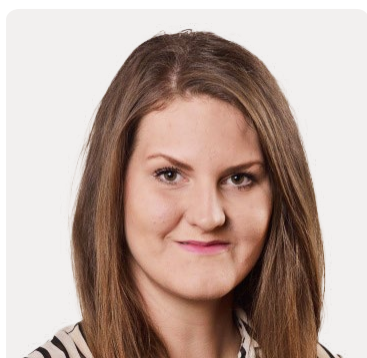
Subsequent to this, he helped design the PhD in Public Policy and Administration before being appointed its inaugural director. A sociologist, demographer, and epidemiologist, his research has focused on crime and victimization, child development, family relationships, and the dynamics of health and well-being over the life course. Alone and in collaboration, his work has been funded by the Health Research Board, the European Union, the European Research Council, the National Science Foundation (USA), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (USA), and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



Ms Elaine Burke

Elaine Burke is a journalist and broadcaster who provides clear, plain-speaking commentary on science and technology developments in print, online, on TV and radio, and in podcasts. She is the resident tech expert for Ireland AM and a weekly TV and streaming analyst on TodayFM's The Last Word. Winner of the inaugural Women in Business Journalism Award in 2022, Elaine is passionate about science communication and delivering expert-led content in accessible ways.

Marketplace presenters



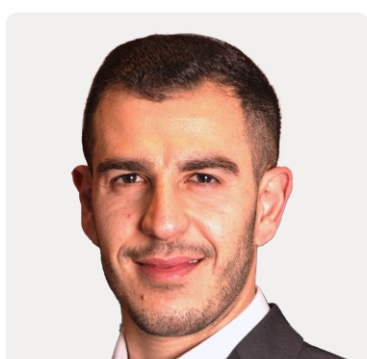
Ms Tereza Černíková

Tereza Černíková has been working in the Drug Policy Department at the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic since 2014. She currently serves as a methodologist for addiction services, responsible for nationwide support to services in the areas of prevention, harm reduction, and treatment, as well as for coordinating related measures. She is responsible for the national quality assurance system of addiction services. Her work includes the development of expert opinions in the field of addictions and active participation in the implementation and evaluation of strategic documents related to national addiction policy. She closely collaborates with the National Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Addiction and contributes to its publication outputs. She has a master's degree in addictology from Charles University.



Dr Byron Gaist

Dr Byron Gaist is Head of the Policy Department at NAAC, the National Addictions Authority of Cyprus. He holds postgraduate degrees in psychology and a PhD in psychoanalytic studies, and is a registered counselling psychologist and licenced psychotherapist with 30 years of professional work experience in the fields of counselling and teaching in mental health and addictions. His broad research interests include the spiritual, religious, and philosophical aspects and implications of social science.



Mr Gavriel Efstratiou

Gavriel Efstratiou holds a degree in Politics and International Relations from the University of Nottingham and a Master's in International Security from University College London (UCL). He works in the field of addictions policy since 2022, focusing on international cooperation, prevention, harm reduction, supply reduction and addressing social stigma. In his role at the Cyprus National Addictions Authority, he represents the organization at European and international meetings organized by the Pompidou Group, the EU Horizontal Working Party on Drugs and the UNODC. His work includes coordinating with partners and stakeholders to improve preventive programs, particularly those supporting students facing personal challenges related to substance use, and monitoring developments concerning cannabis and supply reduction efforts in Cyprus.



Dr Artur Malczewski, Deputy Director at the National Center for Prevention of Addictions (Ministry of Health, Poland), responsible for research, treatment, certification, and behavioural addictions. He has been working in the field of addiction for 25 years. During the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, he served as co-chair of the Horizontal Working Group on Drugs in Brussels. He is the recipient of the European Society for Prevention Research (EUSPR): Leading European Prevention Science Practitioner Honour (2021) and the Medal of Honour awarded by the Polish Minister of Health (2022): For Merits in the Protection of Health.



David Lane is a General Manager for social inclusion in HSE Southwest (Cork and Kerry) which covers drug and alcohol services, homeless services, migrant health, traveller and roma health, the LGBTQI community and community work. He has been employed in the health service since 2000 and has worked across many areas of the health service over that time. He started his career in the health service in the community work department. Following that he was the coordinator of the Cork Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force from 2002 until 2008 and he held the role of operations manager for drug and alcohol services from 2008. For a period of time he also worked as a general manager in primary care services while continuing to hold the brief for social inclusion in Cork and Kerry. He has presented at numerous conferences on the subject of drugs and alcohol misuse and has been a regular contributor to topical debates in the media on issues pertaining to addiction.

National Drugs Forum 2025

#nationaldrugsforum

