

Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA)

Strategic Framework

2018-2019

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What is Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA)?

EHRA is a non-for-profit public membership-based organization, registered by the initiative of harm reduction activists and organizations from Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA) region in 2017, continuing regional harm reduction activists' network tradition since 1997. EHRA strives for a progressive human rights-based drug policy, sustainable funding advocacy and efficiency of harm reduction services oriented on needs of people who use drugs. EHRA is now unites 161 organizational and individual members in 7 sub-regions of CEECA region: Baltics, Central Europe, South-Eastern Europe, European Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Caucasus, Central Asia and Russia.

How does strategic framework work?

Suggested strategic directions of work were developed by EHRA Secretariat and the Steering Committee based on the previous experience of harm reduction advocacy and current context of harm reduction programs in CEECA region.

This document is first discussed by the Steering Committee, then it is discussed and approved by the General Assembly of EHRA members on 13-27th of November 2017. After approval, the EHRA strategic framework will be published on EHRA official website www.harmreductioneurasia.org.

EHRA Strategic Framework will become background for the operational planning of EHRA Secretariat, political and advocacy actions and fundraising efforts of the Association and its members.

To monitor and evaluate implementation of the Strategic Framework, EHRA will use comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to build transparent environment for all CEECA organizations for joint learning and knowledge sharing based on results. Basic project and process monitoring system will be established to ensure proper documenting of events and activities. It will be used by the Secretariat staff for reporting purposes and analysis of the organization's progress, as well as for the review of the operational approach and procedures effectiveness.

To insure proper learning within the Association the organizational web-page and social media outlets have been developed. Sharing process will include announcements and reports on key documents, processes, discussions, and events with reflection and feedback from participants and experts.

Evaluation of the Strategic Framework implementation will be organized at the end of 2019. The final process is an analysis of achievements and lessons learned by all EHRA members on community and policy level as the result of Association's strategy implementation using following dimensions:

- Changes in funding sources and amounts of financing of harm reduction programs in countries of the region;
- Changes in the drug policy environment on national and regional level;

- Changes in harm reduction services regulations and access to services;
- Changes in civil society and community advocacy capacity;
- Changes in community involvement in national or local decision-making processes on drug policy, harm reduction programs sustainability, services efficiency and access to services for people who use drugs.

Key indicators for the Strategic Framework implementation evaluation are defined for each of strategic objectives. The evaluation will be conducted by a strategic working group assigned by EHRA Steering Committee with support from external experts using qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Findings of the evaluation will feed the reforming approaches to advocacy and capacity building and influence development of the EHRA Strategy for the next period.

Harm reduction, current context

EHRA recognizes individual life choices and allows everyone to maintain their health along with the use of psychoactive substances. The foundation of harm reduction philosophy is the respect for the dignity of people, and services based on the needs of the individual, with regards to real life circumstances.

Harm reduction refers to a set of practices, programs and policies which aim to reduce the harms associated with the use of psychoactive drugs among people who use them. The focus of harm reduction programs is on the prevention of harm, rather than on the prevention of drug use itself. Harm reduction programs also provide access to various kinds of drug treatment – if such request comes from the person who use drugs.

EHRA strives to make harm reduction interventions become accessible to all people in need in the CEECA region and advocate for humane drug policies in each and every country.

The current development of harm reduction in the CEECA region is underpinned by several interrelated processes:

- During the last decade, there has been a continuous reduction of **HIV-related funding**. The national governments of CEECA countries still fail to allocate sufficient financial resources to scale up HIV and harm reduction programs. At present, the investments to HIV treatment and prevention are inconsistent with the burden of HIV among people who use drugs in these countries.
- Although harm reduction is becoming increasingly accepted in the global community, **repressive drug policies** remain firmly in place, undermining access for people who use drugs to life-saving programs. Repressive drug policies represent a key obstacle to health and well-being of individual drug users and communities.

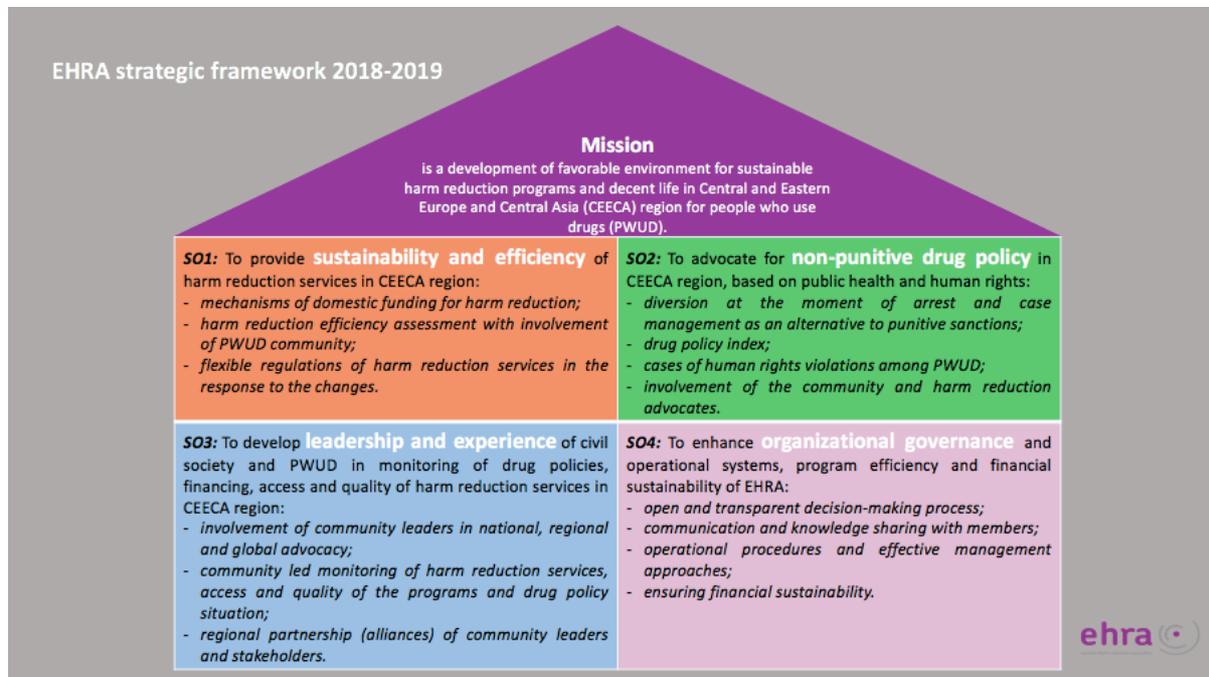
- There is a growing international body of evidence, guidelines, and mechanisms supporting a need to focus on **human rights**. With regard to harm reduction, it is crucial to collaborate with law enforcement agencies and judicial systems, establish dialogue with legal experts and organizations, and encourage them to provide legal support to people who use drugs. Systematic documentation of violations of human rights of people who use drugs, women in particular, is a necessary step in establishing partnerships with human rights organizations and joint advocacy on the national level.
- In the current environment, **the role of community of people who use drugs** is becoming increasingly important and also driving harm reduction activities, advocating for justice and equal access to care at the local, national, and international levels. The community sees harm reduction not only as a health issue but as the main component of evidence-based and humane drug policies.
- During the last decade, there has been a growing concern about **new psychoactive substances (NPS)**. The current situation with NPS has become truly alarming in CEECA and presents one of the major challenges to the national public health systems, local NGOs, communities and people who use drugs.

EHRA mission, vision and role

EHRA **mission** is the creation in CEECA region of favorable environment for sustainable harm reduction programs and decent lives of people who use drugs.

EHRA **vision** is a society where human rights are safeguarded for every individual. We strive for a strong community of people who use drugs supported by civil society to achieve a progressive human rights-based drug policy, sustainable funding and efficiency of harm reduction services based on needs of people who use drugs.

Role of EHRA is to bring in international resources and knowledge, equip CEECA region with expertise and effective practices; we set the regional and national agenda of drug policy and harm reduction with the meaningful involvement of drug users community in national and local stakeholders dialogue. EHRA is attracting region's attention to the voice of community and needs of people who use drugs for advocacy actions and changing international policy trends.



Strategic objectives, activities and indicators

Strategic objective 1: To ensure sustainability and efficiency of harm reduction services in CEECA region.

Provision of sustainability of harm reduction programs by municipal governments focused on technical support to civil society and community representatives and organizations as well as their meaningful involvement in the municipal, national, regional and global level transition-focused advocacy and decision-making processes, is crucial to insure sustainability and efficiency of HIV prevention and other priority services. Communities should become one of key actors in the process of effective transition from international support to domestic funding.

Activities under strategic objective 1:

- *Strengthening of regional and national-level advocacy for sustainable funding of quality harm reduction services from national sources;*
- *Ensuring the meaningful involvement of civil society and people who use drugs community representatives from CEECA in the processes related to transition from international support to national funding on municipal, country, regional and global levels;*
- *Strengthening EHRA's advocacy towards funders and technical agencies as the key supporters of harm reduction in CEECA;*

- *Provision of technical support to and building capacities of harm reduction focused NGOs and community-based organizations on budget advocacy and sustainability related issues, development of mechanisms for sustainable funding of harm reduction on national and municipal level;*
- *Development and conceptualization of regional system to insure efficiency of harm reduction services corresponding to the best international practices and needs of people who use drugs.*

Indicators for strategic objective 1:

- *Number of countries with approved and implemented mechanisms of domestic funding for harm reduction grows;*
- *Regional system for harm reduction efficiency assessment with people who use drugs community participation is being developed and piloted;*
- *Number of countries which introduce flexible harm reduction services regulations responding the changes in people who use drugs needs and changes in drug scene grows.*

Strategic objective 2: To advocate for non-punitive drug policies in CEECA region based on public health and human rights.

Representing different political, cultural and socio-economist contexts, CEECA countries continue to apply prohibition approach and punitive sanctions for drug possession for personal use. The region will go a long way to reorient its drug policies to humanistic and right-based approach. There are significant differences in factors that explain extremely high stigma around drug-related issues, low access to and limited efficiency in using human rights instruments. In this context, the central role in documenting human rights violation and analyzing them through the prism of international and national legislation has to be given to people who use drugs, their 'traditional allies' – harm reduction programs, and any human rights movements, organizations and other partners, who can help in documenting human rights violations and advocate for non-punitive drug-policies.

Activities under strategic objective 2:

- *Provision of technical support and capacity building for effective advocacy actions aimed on decriminalization of drug use and possession;*
- *Provision of technical support for advocacy of diversion from arrest and case management as alternatives to punitive sanctions;*
- *Cooperation between international, regional and national partners to advocate for effective drug policies in the changing context of drug use trends and emerging new psychoactive substances;*
- *Implementation of evidence-based advocacy campaign to ensure the respect to human rights of women who use drugs on the national and regional levels with the focus on parental rights and protection from violence;*
- *Engagement of civil society, medical service providers, research institutions, academia and like-minded policy makers across the region in the analysis of current national drug policies to examine their effectiveness, costs and their impact on health and social wellbeing.*

Indicators for strategic objective 2:

- *Drug policy index developed and data on national and regional level collected, analyzed and presented to regional and international stakeholders;*
- *Typical cases of human rights violation among people who use drugs collected, analyzed from the legal perspective and made public;*
- *Drug policy reform and health- and rights-based non-punitive approaches to drugs are high on national and regional agenda;*
- *Decriminalization of drug use/possession for personal use is seen as an important precondition of effective drug policies;*
- *Community and harm reduction advocates are involved in national drug policy reform;*
- *Number of countries with existing programs on the diversion at the point of arrest and case management as alternatives to punitive sanctions grows.*

Strategic objective 3: To develop leadership and expertise of civil society and people who use drugs in monitoring of drug policies, financing, access and quality of harm reduction services in CEECA region.

Increased capacity, skills and knowledge of civil society and people who use drugs will enable them to become experts and take leadership to participate in decision-making or policy making bodies on municipal, national, regional and global levels. Comprehensive capacity building support to EHRA members and people who use drugs initiative groups helps to achieve real positive changes on local and national level. Strategic partnership with ENPUD and local community leaders helps EHRA to be well-targeted and effective in implementation of this strategic objective.

Activities under strategic objective 3:

- *Increasing capacity, awareness, skills and leadership of civil society and people who use drugs to monitor national drug policies and harm reduction programs (access, efficiency and funding);*
- *Increasing capacity, awareness, skills and leadership of civil society and people who use drugs in community led monitoring of harm reduction services access and quality;*
- *Development and sharing with members and community leaders of technical support tools and approaches for better engagement with governmental relations, decision-making processes in countries of CEECA region;*
- *Facilitation of cooperation and communication between international, regional and national level civil society leaders and organizations, community groups and policy makers to support knowledge and practice exchange for joint action.*

Indicators for strategic objective 3:

- *Regional approaches for community led monitoring of harm reduction services are developed, disseminated and used by people who use drugs community groups;*
- *Number of community leaders involved in national, regional and global advocacy grows;*

- *National and regional partnerships (alliances) of community leaders and stakeholders are built;*
- *Number of countries where community leaders and harm reduction advocates are actively involved in decision-making on local and national levels, grows.*

Strategic objective 4: To strengthen organizational governance and operational systems, program efficiency and financial sustainability of EHRA.

Accumulating knowledge and experiences of experts, working in EHRA Secretariat, as well as uniting harm reduction activists from all across the region, EHRA as newly established organization still needs to overcome its launch challenges, to ensure internal security and to build sustainable regional network. For that it is important to ensure effective governance and operational systems for effective decision making and oversight processes. Another important tasks are fundraising for sustainability of EHRA functioning and transparency of management procedures within the Secretariat.

Activities under strategic objective 4:

- *Conduction of regular General Assemblies, Regional meetings and Steering Committee meetings for open and transparent decision-making process on strategic matters;*
- *Development of communication and knowledge sharing system with members from different sub-regions in EHRA;*
- *Development and implementation of operational procedures and effective management approaches;*
- *Ensuring financial sustainability of the EHRA advocacy work in CEECA through fundraising and transparency of reporting;*
- *Creation of an independent from the Steering Committee internal security body of the Association for independent review of external claims and inter-organizational disputes.*

Key impact indicators for strategic objective 4:

- *Members of the Association are fully involved in knowledge sharing and development of key strategic and advocacy approaches of EHRA;*
- *Governance, operational and reporting procedures are developed;*
- *Effectively functioning Secretariat is in place;*
- *Secretariat is securing its sustainability through funds raised.*