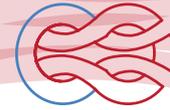


# NEWSLETTER



DRUG POLICY  
NETWORK SEE

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2017



Senior Level Policy Dialogue



Cooperation with Portugal



Regional training on budget advocacy  
and monitoring



DPNSEE General Assembly

## News from the organizations of the Network

### **Aksion Plus, Albania**

- Drug policy situation in Albania

Article by By Genci Muçollari, Director

### **Centre for Life, Greece**

- Young people & HIV: Video for the proper use of condoms

- People living with HIV, live just like any other person

### **Diogenis Drug Policy Dialogue, Greece**

- Conference in Cyprus, 19 -21 October 2017

- The annual plenary meeting of EU Civil Society Forum on drugs (CSFD) took place from 27-29 November 2017

- LADDER program final meeting, Strasburg, 21-22 November 2017

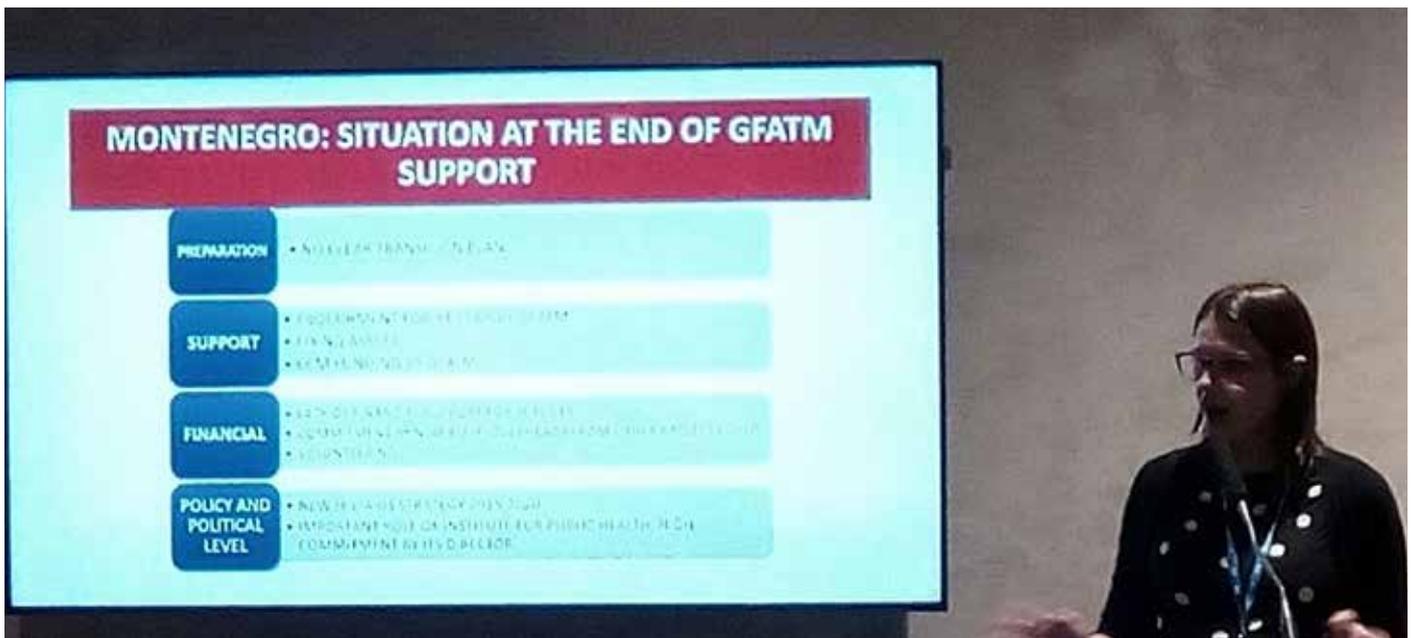
### **Initiative for Health Foundation, Bulgaria**

- Supporting municipal response to HIV/AIDS in Sofia

### **Prometheus, Greece**

- Prevention program on Hepatitis B – Hepatitis C  
HIV – Tuberculosis at Korydallos Prison Hospital  
“Agios Pavlos”

## Senior Level Policy Dialogue



The Senior Level Policy Dialogue "Addressing HIV and TB Challenges: from Donor Support to Sustainable Health Systems" was held in Tallinn, Estonia in December 2017 as an official event in the programme of the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The event, organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs and National Institute for Health Development from Estonia, WHO European Region, UNAIDS, and the Global Fund, brought together representatives of the health and financial ministries of Europe, the Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries, representatives of the European Commission, international organizations, as well as community representatives and institutions involved in funding programmes and offering services to tackle HIV and TB.

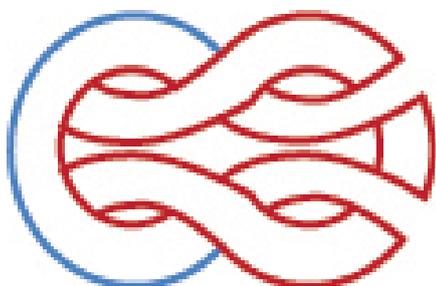
DPNSEE and 4 participating member organizations representatives (Margina, Viktorija, Cazas and Juventas) actively contributed to the meeting. Both the experiences from South East Europe and challenges we face were presented, emphasized and mentioned by many participants.

The main focus of the meeting was to:

- Present and discuss good practices at political and technical level of integrating HIV and TB services into national health systems, including challenges, risks, and opportunities;
- Present and discuss current financial and programmatic sustainability gaps and challenges, with particular focus on effective national investment to ensure universal access to health care, including key affected populations;
- Discuss roles and responsibilities of national governments, EU and international partners, as well as civil society partners in transition processes, to effectively and sustainably address HIV and TB.

### Regional training on budget advocacy and monitoring

The regional training on budget advocacy and monitoring, held from 21 to 23 December 2017 in Veles, FYR of Macedonia, tried to provide answers to questions concerning why is it necessary to advocate for adequate funding of drug use harm reduction programs, and which kind of changes do we expect to achieve by advocating for adequate funding.



**DRUG POLICY  
NETWORK SEE**

The participants of the training gained knowledge that will help in their efforts to obtain financial resources from state authorities, and covered topics that point out problems that the organizations are experiencing due to insufficient funds, as well as the activities that the organizations can take to solve them. In addition, the process of budget analysis as a basis for advocating for creation of an effective budget as well as the procedures that are important in the process of monitoring and analysis of budgets were analyzed.

11 participants came from six harm reduction civil society organizations from the region who are faced with a lack of funding for their programs after the departure of the Global Fund: Prevent and DPNSEE from Serbia, Margina and PROI from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Juventas and Cazas from Montenegro (all members of DPNSEE), and two came from local organization Becej Youth Association from Bečej, Serbia and Group for Public Policies from Belgrade. The training was organized by HOPS - Healthy Options, Skopje, with the support of the Foundation Open Society - Macedonia and conducted by experts from The Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women - ESE from Skopje.

### DPNSEE General Assembly

The Drug Policy Network South East Europe held its 2nd regular annual General Assembly in Belgrade, Serbia on the first week of December 2017. It was the opportunity to meet, analyze the work looking back on the year that almost ended and decide about the future work.

Thanks to the generous support from the Office for combating drugs of the Republic of Serbia, the Assembly was held in the Palace Serbia, the governmental representative building. Representatives of 15 out of 22 member organizations participated, including 2 newly recognized members.

Our distinguished guests at the Assembly were His Excellency Ambassador of Portugal, Mr. Augusto Saraiva Peixoto and Director of the Office for Combating Drugs of the Government of Serbia, Mr. Milan Pekić.

The Assembly adopted the report about the work in 2017 and financial report presenting the Network's main activities. The plans for 2018 were also adopted, based on the strategic priorities proposed by the Board and ideas for possible projects and partnership building.

Changes in the Board were introduced to ensure that this governing body is active in implementing the action plan. Vlatko Dekov (HOPS, FYRO Macedonia) is elected new Chairperson and Nebojša Đurasović (Prevent, Serbia) new Vice-Chair. While Denis Dedajić (Margina, Bosnia Herzegovina), Marios Atzemis (Positive Voice, Greece) and Saša Mijović (4 Life, Montenegro) remain members of the Board as Secretary, Treasurer and Member, newly elected Board member Anna Lyubenova (Initiative for Health Foundation, IHF, Bulgaria) will serve as Deputy Secretary, and Erlind Plaku (Aksion Plus, Albania) as Deputy Treasurer.

In order to establish common positions, small working groups were organized on key issues for which DPNSEE will issue statements in the future. Cannabis and Drug checking were specific topics for sharing and generating ideas.



## Cooperation with Portugal

During several events in October, DPNSEE have deepened existing and established new relations with Portugal, which is usually seen as one of the countries with most effective drug policies in the European Union.

Our staff member during December had an unofficial visit to APDES (Agência Piaget para o Desenvolvimento), a non-governmental organization, which promotes integrated development in their headquarters in Vila de nova Gaia, near Porto. The services they deliver, among others, are related to health, harm reduction and human rights. During several days, our staff member got introduced to the Portuguese policies and functioning of the system itself, but most important also the actual situation on the ground.

As a part of the TWIST project at Lisbon Addiction 2017 conference, several days later, member organizations representatives and Staff members had an opportunity to meet with various officials and activists from Portugal and learn about their policy and activities. This occasion, has not only served as a great opportunity for learning from academia, but also to network with wider European specialist in areas related to substance use and addiction.

After returning to Serbia, DPNSEE staff members had a meeting with the Ambassador of Portugal His Excellency Augusto Saravia Peixoto and the Deputy Head of Mission Ms Graça Vosta Macedo. The exchange about drug policies of both countries as very interesting, agreeing easily that a comprehensive approach involving all stakeholders is necessary for obtaining good results. The Ambassador offered support in ensuring array of contacts for the visit to Portugal with the opportunity to get a full insight into the policy and field activities.

His Excellency is also interested to extend cooperation to other countries of the region where he represents Portugal: Bosnia Herzegovina, FYRO Macedonia and Montenegro.



## AKSION PLUS

ALBANIA

**Drug policy situation in Albania****By Genci Muçollari****Director, AKSION PLUS.**

The country was expecting the coming support from the GFATM, which has been delayed for almost one year. At last, the contract has been endorsed and there are some remaining technical issues to be elaborated by the Ministry of Health. 2017 was a difficult year for the methadone network in Albania regarding the procurement of the basic medicine, not to mention the wages and other expenses needed for the implementation of this service. Aksion Plus is very grateful to IDPC for providing a grant to the organization in order to procure methadone and support its staff.

In general, drug policy in Albania is affected by the political climate. There is a non-supportive atmosphere for the politicians and decision makers to think about the services and how to amend laws for the protection of the most vulnerable groups, including people who use drugs. Also, the financial situation of most of the donors is deteriorated considering the lack of funds, different granting policies where priorities are confused and the people needs are not addressed properly. The central and the local government are not ready yet to commit funds and other resources for such interventions. For that reason Aksion Plus is presenting the related needs by organizing meetings with the relevant authorities, sending projects and other important information. The director of the organization states that: "We are aware that qualitative services should be backed up by advocacy and lobbying, but bureaucracy, strict financing rules by the government, corruption, delays and other factors are affecting heavily our work".



CENTRE FOR LIFE

GREECE

People living with HIV, live just like any other person



"KATERINA is HIV-positive and is AFRAID that she might not pass her exams", "DIMITRIS IS HIV-positive and is DYING of suspense, because tomorrow is his daughter's first day at school", "NICOLAS IS HIV-positive and has LOST HIS SLEEP because he misses his girlfriend who went abroad". People living with HIV might face challenges, difficulties and concerns, but many of them are no different from the ones faced by any other person.

Centre for Life's new anti-stigma campaign aims to eliminate the misconceptions about the everyday life of people living with HIV. The most effective way of fighting social stigma is by direct, systematic and comprehensive information for the general public.

Thanks to the vast progress of medicine, in only a few years, one of the most terrifying and fatal diseases has become a manageable chronic condition. Recent large-scale surveys have shown that with proper use and systematic reception of the appropriate antiretroviral therapy, in combination with a healthy lifestyle, people living with HIV can reach life expectancy equal to the one of the general public.

Aside from the increased life expectancy, the improvement of the quality of everyday life of people living with HIV is remarkable. They fall in love, become parents, go to university, travel, dream, work and at the same time have their own concerns and worries; the same concerns and worries all people have. Let's do our best, so that people living with HIV have the everyday life they deserve, free of stigma and discrimination. Just like any other person.

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Public Health Greece  
www.isicgreece.gr



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CentreForLifeKentroZois

#stopstigma



Since 1991

CENTRE FOR LIFE

For the support of the people living with HIV/AIDS

## Young people & HIV: Video for the proper use of condoms

As a part of its continuous efforts for the provision of comprehensive information to the general public in regards to HIV and AIDS, Centre for Life presents with the support of DUO a video on the proper use of condoms, targeting the critical age group of adolescents and young people.

Almost 10% of new HIV diagnoses in Greece concern teenagers and young people aged 15-24, while more than 1 in 4 diagnoses concern young people up to 29 years old (Centre of Disease Prevention and Control. Epidemiological Survey of HIV / AIDS infection in Greece, 31-12-2016 (Issue No. 31). Athens 2017). At the same time, 1 out of 4 pupils up to 15 years old in Greece are sexually active, and 1 out of 5 of them do not systematically use a condom (World Health Organization and University Mental Health Research Institute 2014 "Pan-Hellenic research on health-related behaviors of adolescent students").

The main reasons for why adolescents and young people are more vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases appear to be related to the early onset of sexual activity combined with poor awareness regarding safe sexual behavior. Based on these data, it becomes clear that informing adolescents about issues like prevention of HIV transmission is of particular importance.

In order to have more impact on the target audience of teenagers, the video unfolds in a bus and depicts high school students ready to depart to the airport for the usual five-day school trip.

You can find below the relative video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ACEudBBzpg>

## DIOGENIS

GREECE

### Conference in Cyprus, 19 -21 October 2017



With the participation of representatives of Civil Society, National Agencies and experts from 12 European countries, the conference titled "Services for the Treatment and Harm Reduction in Times of Economic Crisis: Developments and Challenges" was successfully held in 19-21 October, in Nicosia, funded by the European Commission and the Open Society Foundations and organized by "Diogenis – Drug Policy Dialogue".

During the conference, participants had the opportunity to exchange information, good practices and policies on drugs in their countries as well as Europe-wide, amid economic difficulties and social challenges in Europe.

The conference was held in the context of the EU-funded project "New Approaches to Harm Reduction Policies and Practices", involving the Transnational Institute (TNI) – Netherlands (Leader Organization), "Diogenis – Drug Policy Dialogue" (partner), "Forum Droghe" (FD) – Italy (partner) and "International Center for Ethnobotanical Education, Research and Service" (ICEERS) -Spain (partner).

The results of the conference will be announced shortly on the Diogenis' website [www.diogenis.info](http://www.diogenis.info).

## **The annual plenary meeting of EU Civil Society Forum on drugs (CSFD) took place from 27-29 November 2017**

**A**t the meeting of the Civil Society Forum held in Brussels from 27-29 November 2017 a series of issues were on the agenda. The workgroups, on Civil society involvement in National Drug policies, institutional relations with the EU and international structures, the EU drug strategy and action Plan, the workgroup on quality standards and the core group reported to the plenary about their work in the year 2017. This was the last year of the CSFD in this composition. The European Commission is working on renewing the Civil Society Forum. It has been announced that a call for membership would be published by the end of the year 2017. Organizations that will apply have to be registered in the Transparency Register. The outgoing membership will continue the work up to the moment that the new membership of the CSFD will take over. Up to the publication of this newsletter, there was no call of the European Commission published.

The work of the CSFD will be supported in the next two years by the "Project Civil Society Forum". The poor funding for the activities of the CSF was limited to one annual plenary meeting and the meetings of the core group. In order to support the activities of the Forum, a consortium of CSF members was established to apply for funding under the call of the Justice Programme. The CSF plenary in 2016 mandated the consortium for this. The project was selected and will run from November 2017 until November 2019. The consortium members presented the action plan of the project and answered questions of the CSFD members.

The meeting has been informed about the actions undertaken by the core group and the working groups in the past year. The core group, in close cooperation with the work groups, has in its consultations with the Horizontal Drug Group (HDG) and the Commission contributed in shaping the EU position on the 2019 process that will evaluate the political declaration of 2009; discussed the UNGASS implementation and the background document on the way forward shared by the CND chair. The EU presidency presented a good statement on this issue. Priority was given also to the EU relations with countries in Violation of Human Rights. Further activities were the contribution to the evaluation of the action plan 2014-2017 and the preparation of the new action plan 2017-2020. The CSF members had on the 29/11 a meeting with the Horizontal Drug Group (HDG). Among the issues in the agenda were: The future of drug related policies and drug related funding and alternative measures to coercive sentences. It is expected that the next plenary meeting of the CSF will be held in May 2018. From the region of South East Europe the organizations Diogenis, HOPS and RHRN participated at the plenary session of the EU Civil Society Forum on drugs.



**LADDER program final meeting, Strasburg, 21-22 November 2017**

The final conference of project LADDER was held in Strasburg on 21-22 November 2017, and constituted a key opportunity to create new bonds and strengthen existing partnerships for the localization of SDGs in the next years.

The conference marked three years of joint work within an extremely ambitious project, co-funded by the European Union and led by ALDA, gathering 27 partners and 19 associates from 19 EU and 17 non EU-countries. The unanimous commitment to continue the great work done so far in the field of development education is a great satisfaction for all of us, as well as the sign of LADDER's sustainability. The event, hosted by the Council of Europe and by the Region Grand Est, was opened by the welcome speech of Antonella Valmorbida, Secretary General of ALDA, and Alina Tatarenko, Head of the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform of the Council of Europe.

Diogenis actively participated in both the program and its final meeting. The project that was implemented in Athens and Thessaloniki by Diogenis last May, entitled "Drugs & SDGs: Development and Harm Reduction Policies", under the auspices of the municipalities of Agios Dimitrios, Athens and Thessaloniki, accounted for the highest graduation rate during the evaluation of proposals due to its innovative approach.

The Strasburg meeting, in addition to the project review, included work in groups, aimed at demonstrating and making proposals to local governments, on new actions to implement SDGs at the local level with the active involvement of civil society organizations.

## INITIATIVE FOR HEALTH FOUNDATION

BULGARIA

**Supporting municipal response to HIV/AIDS in Sofia**

By Anna Lyubenova

Initiative for Health Foundation participates in the project “Fast-track TB/HIV responses for key populations in EECA cities” - a regional project funded by the GFATM and aiming to support city responses to HIV and TB in key populations in the cities of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The period from October to December 2017 was intensive for the project and for the collaboration between Sofia municipality and NGOs working in the field of HIV/AIDS. On the World AIDS Day a group of activists visited the municipality and met with the Mayor, Mrs. Yordanka Fandakova, and the Deputy Mayor on health issues – Mr. Doncho Barbalov. The group presented to the Mayor the current situation concerning HIV epidemiology, (non)available services, national response and most immediate needs. It was discussed and supported by the Mayor that Sofia shall have its HIV strategy and civil society shall participate in its development. Mrs. Fandakova and Mr. Barbalov supported the World AIDS Day by being photographed with the activists and wearing the red ribbon.

In October a City Seminar on the collaboration between municipalities and civil society in the area of HIV/AIDS took place in Sofia. The seminar was organized by Initiative for Health Foundation and delivered by experts of AFEW – The Netherlands and licit - Switzerland. The seminar was aimed at reflecting the status quo, discussing gaps and challenges and developing strategies of a well-balanced partnership through the involvement of cities’ stakeholders from municipality, police, health and social sector, NGOs and key populations. The seminar gathered 31 representatives of NGOs, municipality and health institutions in Sofia.

Another central event for the period was the visit to Bern of a mixed delegation consisting of three municipal representatives, the advocacy manager of the National CCM, a journalist from the Bulgarian National TV and two NGO representatives. The group visited diverse institutions in Bern, providing services in the drugs area and were made familiar to the Swiss drug policy principles and the models of cooperation between municipality and NGOs. Delegations from Odessa and Balti participated as well. The Mayor of Bern – Mr Alec von Graffenried – welcomed the three delegations. The drug policy experience of Bern was presented in a film, broadcasted by the Bulgarian National TV and available online now in the YouTube channel of Initiative for Health (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThOoQIV6D0A>). English subtitles will be available soon.

## PROMETHEUS

GREECE

**Prevention program on Hepatitis B – Hepatitis C – HIV – Tuberculosis at Korydallos Prison Hospital “Agios Pavlos”**

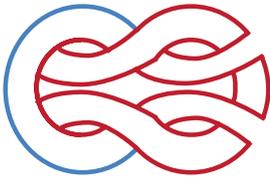
Since October 2017, a holistic program has been launched, aiming to promote prevention, to offer screening and to enhance linkage to healthcare for Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B, HIV, and Tuberculosis, in the Hospital of Korydallos Prison "Agios Pavlos". The program focuses on people who are under detention in the prison of Korydallos - Attica and have history of injecting psychoactive substances.

In the light of the specific needs of vulnerable population groups, the program includes presymptomatic control screening (Rapid Tests) for hepatitis C, hepatitis B, HIV and tuberculosis, as well as screening for the quantitative and qualitative determination of the viruses respectively, as well as the conduction of liver elastography via the method of “fibroscan”. The final purpose of the program is linkage to treatment for imprisoned PWID.

From October to December 2017, 208 beneficiaries received liver elastography screening in Korydallos Prison.

The program is being implemented by Hellenic Scientific Association for the Study of AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Scientific lead: Mrs Vana Sypsa – Ass. Professor, Dept. of Hygiene, Epidemiology and Medical Statistics School of Medicine, University of Athens and Mr George Kalamitsis – Chair of Board, Hellenic Liver Patient Association «Prometheus».





## DRUG POLICY NETWORK SEE

4Life, Podgorica, Montenegro  
 Aksion Plus, Tirana, Albania  
 Aliat, Bucharest, Romania  
 ARAS, Bucharest, Romania  
 Cazas, Podgorica, Montenegro  
 Centre for Life, Athens, Greece  
 Coalition 'Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities', Skopje, FYRO Macedonia  
 Diogenis, Athens, Greece  
 HOPS, Skopje, FYRO Macedonia  
 Initiative for Health Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria  
 Juventas, Podgorica, Montenegro  
 Labyrinth, Kosovo  
 Margina, Tuzla, Bosnia Herzegovina  
 Positive Voice, Athens, Greece  
 Prevent, Novi Sad, Serbia  
 Proi, Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina  
 Re Generacija, Belgrade, Serbia  
 RHRN, Bucharest, Romania  
 SEEAN, Ljubljana Slovenia  
 Terra, Rijeka, Croatia  
 Viktorija, Banja Luka, Bosnia Herzegovina  
 Romanian Harm Reduction Network (RHRN), Romania  
 Prometheus, Greece

The newsletter is aiming to inform and keep updated organisations, institutions and individuals on drug policy developments along with news in the website and social media of the network. Our plan is to actively involve member organisations to report about their activities and about developments in their countries.

The Newsletter is prepared and published by the Diogenis, Drug Policy Dialogue.

Members of the drug policy network feed into the Newsletter following on topics related to criminal justice, social and Health programmes, human rights and events of interest.

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