

## Regional Consultation for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

### Summary

The Regional Consultation Workshop for Eastern Europe and Central Asia was held by the Turkish Green Crescent Society in İstanbul on 26 – 27 November, 2015.

Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) organized 2 regional consultations; one in Tbilisi in September 29-30, 2015 and one in Vilnius in February 2, 2016. EHRN also mobilized civil society in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to organise face-to-face country consultations; and an online consultation was organised in Kazakhstan.

#### Best practices in the region/thematic area

- Community-based services such as NA 12 steps program
- Public health approach (population-based, coordination of all parties, a collective responsibility)
- Needle exchange programs
- Take-home supply of naloxone practiced in Estonia

#### Challenges in the region/thematic area

- Stigmatization against drug users
- Integration into real life after treatment: finding a job, generating income, establishing new social networks etc.
- Corruption
- Lack of long term planning and commitment
- Budget cuts which make treatment harder for those who can't afford it
- Explicit/implicit promotion of drug use in music, movies, etc.
- Lack of regulation both at national and international level for some drugs (such as khat/qat)
- Lack of states' capacity to implement prevention strategies and to provide treatment
- Lack of NGO capacity and funding
- Lack of appropriate rehabilitation services for users of new psychoactive substances
- Prohibition of opioid substitution program in some CEECA countries
- Repressive drug control measures

#### Action-orientated recommendations for the UNGASS roundtables:

##### 1. Drugs and Health

- There should be more investment in treatment and social reintegration.
- Treatment should be accessible, affordable or free for those who seek it.
- New treatment responses for new psychoactive substances should be developed.
- Communities such as Narcotics Anonymous should be recognized and promoted by influential authorities, as a cost-effective community-based service.

- There should be different treatment methods according to people's needs; substitution treatment should be available while drug-free treatment is accessible by anyone who needs it.
- Occupational therapy can be use a new method in the fight against drugs. It supports the individual to actively participate in social life.

## **2. Drugs and Crime**

- Drug testing of politicians can be done to show that they support healthy life.
- Proportionality in sentencing should be achieved.
- International cooperation between states should be increased so as to conduct successful seizure operations.
- The media should be used to convey messages against drugs and related criminal life.
- Administrative and criminal sanctions should be removed.

## **3. Cross-cutting issues: drugs and human rights, youth, women, children and communities**

- Drug addicts under police custody or in prison should have access to proper treatment.
- Inequalities for women and youth should be eliminated by introducing better policies and practices. For example, there should be special employment programs for women in recovery.
- Promoting productive use of free time (sports, languages peer support groups, positive activism) can be useful in protecting youth.
- Prevention-based strategies should be reviewed from the beginning considering the needs of young generation.

## **4. New challenges**

- National and international regulation for drugs that are not mentioned in current regulations should be formulated.
- NGO networking and cooperation is important to increase NGOs' capacity.
- Involvement of users' organisations in the planning of treatment and policy should be given importance to have more inclusive policies.
- Law enforcement professionals should be trained to avoid stigmatization of users.
- A more balanced distribution of resources for demand and supply reduction programs should be ensured, and sufficient funding for harm reduction interventions should be allocated.

## **5. Alternative development**

- Alternative development should also focus on infrastructure; economic, political, and social development.
- Depending on the country and agricultural land, cash crops need to be utilised to compete with the price received by illicit crops.
- Alternative development projects need to be adapted to religious and cultural considerations. Religious leaders can play a huge role in explaining that illicit drug cultivation is forbidden. There is evidence that this could have positive effect according to 2013 UNODC report.
- There should be no fumigation or forced eradication of illicit crops. This only has the effect of pushing farmers further into poverty.
- Assistance and encouragement needs to be provided to ensure that projects are more bottom-up than top-down.