



THE RESULTS OF EHRA RESOURCE SUPPORT IN CAPACITY BUILDING AND MOBILIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

Report on activities to support the communities of CEECA region as part of the project of the International Harm Reduction Consortium “We will not end AIDS without harm reduction”



ABOUT CONSORTIUM

[International Harm Reduction Consortium](#) was created in 2013 with the goal of a more meaningful participation of civil society in political decision-making processes, building capacity in research and advocacy to protect the rights of people who use drugs. Since 2019, the consortium has brought together eight leading international and regional organizations working in drug policy, harm reduction field, and networks of people who use drugs to challenge the global war on drugs as a critical factor affecting the rights of people who use drugs and to advocate for more substantive resources for harm reduction, and for this is implementing [the project “We will not end AIDS without harm reduction”](#). From 2014 to this day, the consortium has been [supported](#) by the Robert Carr Fund for civil society networks.



SMALL GRANTS, MENTORING AND TRAINING - A RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITIES

The principle of the wider participation of people who use drugs in shaping policies and advocacy is fundamental to the EHRA approach.

Starting from 2017, within the framework of the project, we support organizations and community initiative groups through a unique system of small grants, accompanied by daily mentoring, mutual training and the exchange of best practices, advocacy support from the regional level, establishing working relationships with international partners and decision-makers in the country. Thanks to this joint advocacy effort, community projects have a significant impact on people's access to services and the protection of the rights of people who use drugs in the EECA region.





1. COMMUNITY ADVOCACY RESULTS

Thanks to mutual and active communication and regular expert mentoring by EHRA, leaders initiative groups of the community of people who use drugs and civil society organizations from Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova and Russia, as well as representatives of the Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD) have been united in a movement called [“From street to government”](#), directing their efforts to involving the community in the advocacy decision of the key, specific for each initiative group, issues related to the negative impact of current drug policy, and the welfare and safety of people who use drugs in EECA countries.

Total in 3 years, within the framework of this project, 9 grants were issued to 7 organizations and initiative groups.

In 2019, [resource support](#) was provided to 5 public organizations and initiative groups based on the current community needs in the following spheres:

- An initiative group of the community of people who use drugs from Bulgaria was supported to mobilize the community of people who use drugs and save the one of the oldest OST programme in Sofia;
- The collection of data to justify the receipt of state funding for risk reduction programs was implemented by ANO "Everyone's Right" from Russia;
- Advocacy for access to OST in hospitals and a home hospital was carried out by the “Kazakhstan Harm Reduction Network” initiative group from Kazakhstan;
- “The Harm Reduction Network” Association from Kyrgyzstan directed its efforts to inform the community about the possibility of protecting their rights in connection with changes in penalties for storing substances for their own use and in the table for determining the weight of a psychoactive substance in Kyrgyzstan.
- NGO “Young Wave” from Lithuania dealt with the debunking of myths about drugs through public discussions and online questionnaires.

In 2017-2018, small grants helped community groups achieve the possibility of handing [methadone in Belarus](#), supported the creation of a series of educational videos in support of the [“White Noise” movement](#) in Georgia, supported community monitoring of the negative consequences for [people who use drugs of the new Criminal Code implementation](#) in Kyrgyzstan, the voice of a [young community](#) in Lithuania was helped to be heard.



ANO “EVERYONE’S RIGHT”, RUSSIA

Small grant objectives	Results
To prepare justification for funding of harm reduction programs by community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A questionnaire was developed to identify strategic cases. • 36 outreach visits were conducted during the project, where more than 100 people who use drugs living in Orenburg were interviewed. • Four cases on protecting the rights of people who use drugs were taken for case management.
Provide a rationale during a meeting of the anti-drug commission in which decision makers of the Orenburg region participate	<p>Took part in two large-scale events with officials, where a report was presented on the organization’s work with key populations, including people who use drugs.</p>



Aidana Fedosik, project coordinator: *“In our country it’s not difficult to obtain financing for the NGO activities. The only question is what exactly the state is ready to fund and what compromises we are ready to make as a community organization.*

For example, it’s fairly easy to get funds for primary prevention programs among the general population. But we are ready to do only what our people need and what can at least to some extent improve the quality of our lives. Unfortunately, to get funding for sterile instruments and other consumables for people who use drugs is almost impossible in Russia. Talking about increasing the benefits of drug use in Russia is also prohibited by law. But we try to talk about reducing risks, although the balance is difficult to find... Our participation in events with officials became possible only due to the fact that at the start of our independent path we were given trust and support in the form of this small, but so significant for us grant! For officials, the key was that we came to them not to ask for something, but to offer our own (data, statistics, resources, ideas). And our proposals were useful not only to the community, but also to the officials. We were able to show, that we are people of a specific business and are experts in our field.”

COMMUNITY INTIATIVE GROUP IN BULGARIA

The grant was aimed at helping the Bulgarian community to institutionalize and register an organization in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, thereby strengthening their advocacy capacity at the national level.

Small grant objectives	Results
Register a community of people who use drugs organization in Bulgaria.	<p>After serious efforts to register the organization of people who use drugs in Bulgaria, the initiative group faced with a decisive refusal of the court and the registration agency despite the involvement of a lawyer who correctly prepared all the necessary documentation. The reason for the refusal was the justification that the words “drugs” or “drug users” should not be present in the name of the organization. After unsuccessful attempts to prove the importance of the presence of these words in the name of the organization, the arguments were rejected, and the group was forced to start the procedure again, with a different name: "Movement for a progressive drug policy." Now the process of registering a new name is taking place.</p>
Create a promotional video to present the newly created organization and its objectives.	<p>Due to the threat of the OST program closure in Sofia, instead of a video about the organization, it was decided to create an advocacy video by the community in support of the OST preservation. The active advocacy efforts of national harm reduction activists together with the community also included a meeting of OST patients with narcologists,</p>

	during which an official letter from OST patients was prepared for the Ministry of Health. As a result, the Ministry of Health did not dare to close the program, and found the best place, which is located in a hospital complex close to the city center.
Establish contacts with local authorities for further work and cooperation.	Meetings were held with the Deputy Minister of Health, who assured that the MoH would cover 2,000,000 Euro for the new building for the OST program. A meeting was also organized with representatives from the Department of Mental Health and Drug Prevention, the National Center for Public Health, the head of the Ministry of Health in Bulgaria, and the HIV Directorate. At the moment, the initiative group has the full support of psychologists and psychiatrists in 8 OST programs.



Rosen Popov, activist of the initiative group: *“In September, a mass movement appeared in favor of free methadone program closure in the city, there were protests by people living near the hospital where the program was located, and the Ministry of Health decided to postpone or close the program. In this situation, we decided to make a film about this very important issue. EHRA and EuroNPUD also provided useful mentoring assistance.”*

INITIATIVE GROUP – KAZAKHSTAN HARM REDUCTION NETWORK



Small grant objectives	Results
Advocacy for the provision of OST drugs in hands and during hospitalization of patients in other medical institutions, including in TB treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted monitoring of regulatory documents. Informed officials about the possibilities of prescribing morphine for OST clients until the issue of methadone delivery is resolved. Attracted additional funding to prepare for negotiations with decision makers. Conducted IDUIT training with a workshop - a working meeting with the regional and country offices of the UN and the Global Fund, the heads of psychiatric / narcological service and the AIDS center. As members of the Global Fund's Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), activists are constantly including to the meeting agenda the activities of the OST Program Development Roadmap for 2019-2020. At the CCM meeting (September 20, 2019), a report on monitoring visits to OST sites, meetings with outreach workers, program patients, employees of AIDS centers, and narcology was presented. The report included recommendations on: expanding OST drugs variety, access to substitution therapy for inpatient care, expanding handouts that meet the needs of people who use drugs; changing the approach to outreach work, attracting pharmacies and private clinics.
Involving OST program clients in protecting their rights	OST clients from all regions of Kazakhstan communicated in an online social group, which allowed them to know what is happening in OST sites every day and provide support in

through collecting evidence and feedback from the community about the group's activities on the FB page

situations that can be resolved, for example, if a doctor in the city refused to accept an HIV-negative person dependent on opiates. Information constantly appeared in this communication channel: *"they again did not give methadone in the hospital, a friend suffers."* Seeing the evidence in a closed social group about situations with denial of access to methadone treatment in hospitals, they suggested program clients to write appeals to the chief narcologist. Collecting evidence is a difficult stage for the community, people do not feel safe, and therefore refuse to record cases. But the main reason is that Kazakhstan does not have such practices, corruption of power and prosecution of key groups for crimes that they did not commit, as well as the formed opinion that justice is absent in the law system of Kazakhstan, and to achieve is means to do harm to yourself. These reasons alienate the community from such an effective tool as collecting cases.

"YOUNG WAVE", LITHUANIA

Small grant objectives	Results
Assessment of public opinion about mental and behavioral disorders caused by the use of psychoactive substances (through an online questionnaire).	240 Lithuanian citizens answered the questionnaire created by "Young Wave"; showed myths and misconceptions of public opinion and a level of knowledge about drug addiction and the recreational use of substances. The report in Lithuanian is available on the "Young Wave" website.
Raise public awareness of drug addiction and that it should be seen as the basis for social and health care through an online campaign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the implementation of the project, "Young Wave" had possibility to conduct its own 'PrePartis' radio program. Now, every second Friday, different people from the team talk on the radio about the myths / truths that they analyzed when preparing the report. This activity helps people develop the skills of public speaking that are necessary in our work, as well as communication with a wide and diverse audience. Made 5 posters to promote the myth / truth report, which will also be used to promote radio shows. A short video was created about the work of "Young Wave". More than 30,000 people watched it on Facebook.
Train people to become experts in drug policy through BrainFight educational games and radio broadcasts.	BrainFight educational events were held in Vilnius bars and pubs on the topic of drug addiction and drug policy.

"We decided to shoot a video about myths, "Young Wave" and our work. Since there is some negative stereotypical opinion that harm reduction is an activity that promotes drug use, that we receive money from dealers and encourage drug use,"- Ruta Staniulyte, project coordinator.

"Perhaps the most valuable and practical skill that we have obtained is the opportunity to develop the whole team's skill in examining scientific literature, articles and analyzing publications on a specific topic. Each of the Young Wave team had to analyze the statement (myth / truth) and prove it, based on high-quality evidence-based data,"- Ruta Staniulyte.

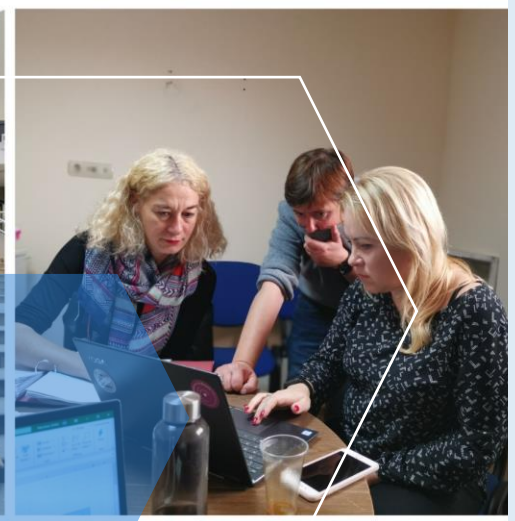


“HARM REDUCTION NETWORK” ASSOCIATION, KYRGYZSTAN

Small grant objectives	Results
<p>To inform members of the community of people who use drugs living in the Alamedin district of Bishkek about the possibility of protecting their rights in connection with changes in the code of misconduct and in the table for the substance weight determination.</p>	<p>Two meetings were held with representatives of the PWUD community in Bishkek and the city of Osh. During the meetings, it became clear that outreach workers, social workers and peer community consultants, called upon to conduct consultations for clients, including legal issues, did not know what the difference between the new and old legislation was, nor about the resolution No. 543 regulating the size of substances, and accordingly, affecting the alleged article.</p>
<p>To shoot the advocacy film “Introduction to Drug Policy of Kyrgyzstan”.</p>	<p>An advocacy film “Introduction to the Drug Policy of Kyrgyzstan” was shot.</p>
<p>To prepare and present arguments from the community and proposals for changing the system of fines in the current code of misconduct.</p>	<p>All data received from street lawyers and monitoring of court decisions are now being generalized and collected for advocacy work. Preliminary results suggest that more than 90% of cases under articles of the Criminal Code 268 and the Code of Misconduct Art. 123 are related to possession of marijuana and hashish. Judges do not always correctly qualify the articles, the weight for the offense – they refer to the Criminal Code, article 123, and almost everyone assigns two main punishments at the same time - a fine and restriction of freedom, although at the beginning of the year, at the meeting with the code developer, this inconsistency was indicated and it was promised to remove.</p>

“Anna has been a service recipient and volunteer for the Harm Reduction Network Association for a long time. In the fall of 2019, Anna was detained for 0.8 gr. of amphetamine, as soon as she picked up the drug. After she was taken to the police office, her parents were informed. Once they arrived to the police office, they heard that she was caught with a large size, has been chased for two months, and all they can do is \$ 2000, transfer the case from 268 Article of the Criminal Code in 123 Art. “Misconduct.” We contacted the parents, invited them to the office, advised on the current situation, where we explained that weight and substance are misconduct (the large size of amphetamine is more than 1.5 g). And their willingness to pay the police 30,000 som (\$ 450) for the re-qualification of the case, is better to be given them officially in the form of a fine, which will also not be considered as a criminal record. As a result, the girl was fined 30,000 som under article 123 of the misconduct code.”



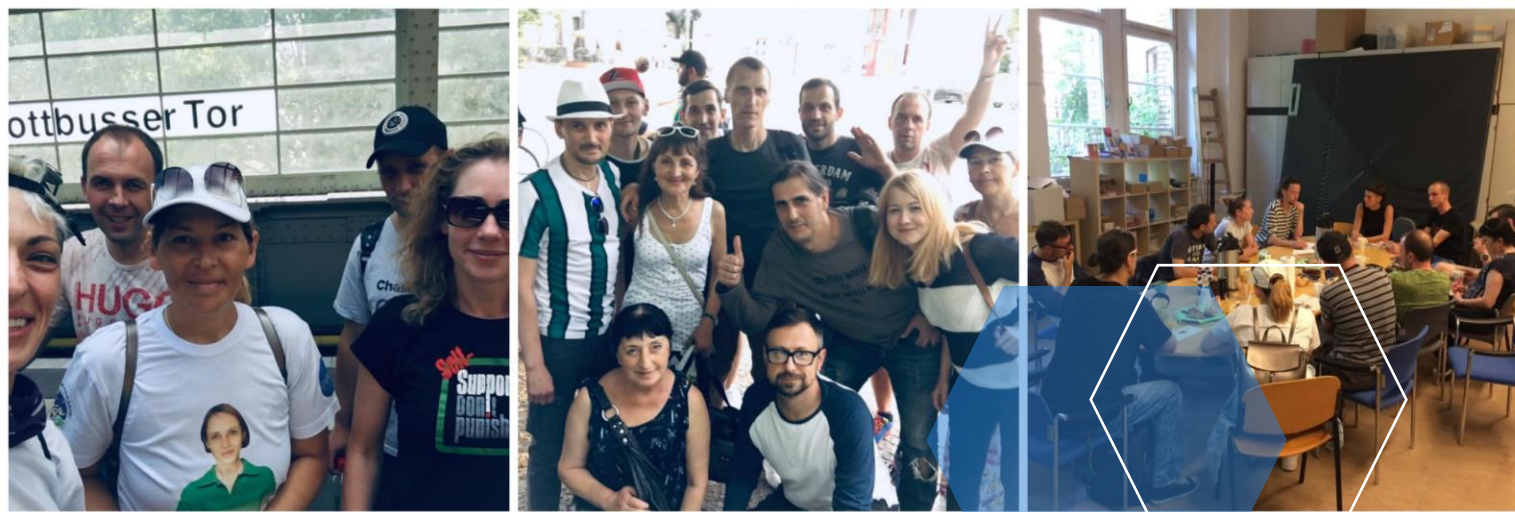


2. DAILY SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ACTIVISTS

Small-scale grants from EHRA became key in the development of initiative groups and their advocacy skills, primarily due to the integrated approach of expert mentoring and daily resource support to activists from EHRA. Support was specific, each time responding to a request and need from national partners. In a systematic way, such assistance included the following components:

- Individual online consultations in the process of grants implementation;
- Mentorship visits to partners in countries to transfer skills, knowledge and teamwork in the country. These visits included participation of the community in working meetings with decision makers, training meetings for understanding by community members in practice, what in the democratic world where human rights are respected means the concept of “meaningful community participation”, seminars and trainings based on the IDUIT Guidelines;
- Assistance in establishing new contacts with organizations and people, partnership with which can positionally strengthen advocacy efforts in the country, establishing a direct dialogue with decision makers, representatives of donor organizations and UN agencies;
- Strengthening community voice by supporting community advocacy demands from the regional network during international meetings or national conferences.

For example, in 2019, the community organization “Your Chance” from Belarus, one of [the 2017-2018 grantees](#), received mentoring support from EHRA. The result of this collaboration was the fact that the organization received a grant from the Emergency Fund for Key Communities to continue advocating for the adoption of the new OST Guidelines, including take-home OST drugs and other services for OST patients in Belarus. Also, in 2019, the problem of deprivation of the maternal rights of women who applied for OST treatment, appeared. The expert support from EHRA contributed and managed to return one child to her mother’s home and raise the issue of changing the approach among the social services of the Republic of Belarus regarding women who applied for drug treatment.

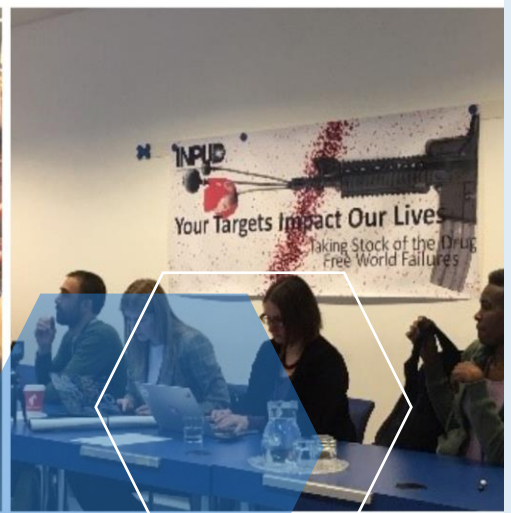


3. INTERNSHIP

A study-tour to the country where activists have already made a significant difference in life for the better is an inspiration, new strength and understanding of the long-term advocacy goals for activists from the community of people who use drugs, who are actively advocating for access to services and support based on principles of public health and human rights. Each such trip also becomes a time for the exchange of experience among themselves, forms a single team, a movement with an understanding of goals. That is why EHRA dedicated much effort to organizing internships for leaders of organizations receiving support from small grants.

In 2017, community leaders visited [Portugal](#) to test in practice how the decriminalization policy works through commissions to curb substance abuse. In 2018, EHRA organized an internship in Prague (Czech Republic) so that community representatives could get to know local drug policies, laws, financing of harm reduction programs, the work of NGOs and the role of the community in the Czech Republic.

The 2019 internship in Berlin for organizations that received small grants was organized jointly by EHRA, ENPUD and a community-based organization led by the Berliner community - [Berliner Aids-Hilfe e.V.](#) The purpose of the study tour was to develop the expert and partnership potential of the community of people who use drugs. The objectives of the internship included familiarization with German laws and the practical implementation of drug policies, as well as creating and strengthening contacts between people who use drugs from different countries.



3. STRENGTHENING THE VOICE OF ACTIVISTS IN THE REGIONAL NETWORK OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

Advocacy work at the national or local level by people who use drugs is intensified at the regional level by the activity of the Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs.

In 2019, the Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD) began the process of discussing and agreeing on the Manifesto of the ENPUD members “Nothing for us without us”. The purpose of the manifesto is to identify and formulate priorities in the field of drug policy and respect for the rights of people who use drugs in the EECA region.

In the process of the manifesto development:

- 2 webinars were prepared and conducted:
 - [“World and regional drug policy: development vectors”](#), host Alexander Levin, communications and drug policy specialist at ENPUD;
 - [“The role of the community of people who use drugs in drug policy reform: regional and global experience”](#), host Mikhail Golichenko, human rights analyst at the Canadian HIV / AIDS Legal Network.
- Prepared a [Review on the basic issues of drug policy](#) for ENPUD members.
- Developed a document on [three basic principles of drug policy reform](#): decriminalization, human rights, support.
- Prepared an [article on World and regional drug policy: development vectors](#).
- [Position Paper](#) on the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the 62nd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) was prepared, which was announced by the ENPUD Program Coordinator during a commission meeting in Vienna.
- To August 31, Overdose Awareness Day, ENPUD prepared a [press release](#) and more than 50 thematic publications.

In 2019, as part of the “Support Don’t Punish” campaign, ENPUD supported 14 organizations and community initiative groups with mini-grants. The actions were held in 34 cities of 11 EECA countries: Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan. The campaign report can be found [HERE](#).

The ENPUD Secretariat has provided mentoring assistance in preparing presentations to country community teams and in providing direct translation for the voice of people who use drugs from the EECA region to be heard at the 2019 Harm Reduction Conference “People Are More Important than Politics” in Porto, Portugal. They also participated in the joint preparation and holding of a meeting on the impact of repressive drug policies on the level of violence against women.