

TO: The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

11 May, 2021

**Subject: Decriminalization of the possession of small amounts of psychoactive substances in the Republic of Lithuania**

Honorable Members of the Seimas,

Signatories of this open letter welcome your consideration of the law on the decriminalization of possession of small amounts of psychoactive substances in the Republic of Lithuania and call on the Members of the Seimas to support the drug policy changes that are on the Seimas' agenda these days.

Every year thousands of people in Lithuania use drugs, but the repressive laws against people who use drugs introduced in 2017 have not yielded any positive results to the extent. From an expert point of view, there are many reasons why it is time to adopt rational approaches to drug policy and put health above punishment:

Based on regional and global experience, a country can save much more taxpayers money by reducing the number of people prosecuted for minor drug-related crimes (possession of small amounts with no intent to sell), as well minimizing the burden on the law enforcement and the justice system. Shifting priorities and investment towards health and social services for people who use drugs will allow law enforcement to focus on more serious crimes, including those associated with drug trafficking in large quantities, and ensure public safety.

Criminalization of people who use drugs puts people on the margins of the society and creates stigma and violation of the human rights of people who use drugs. This is why most people with drug use issues do not seek medical help, support or treatment. Decriminalization of small amounts of drugs will reduce stigma and discrimination and encourage people to trust the healthcare system. Decriminalization will also open new opportunities with the introduction of proven and effective public health interventions and harm reduction approaches (such as drug checking services), which are currently not possible due to laws that persecute anyone who possesses drugs (even if it's a harm reduction service provider). Prohibitive laws also create barriers to prescribing pain relievers and palliative medication. Decriminalization and alternatives to coercive sanctions should be adopted to reduce human rights violations of people who use drugs and improve their access to health and social services which would have positive public health impact.

We believe that the Members of the Lithuanian Seimas will make pragmatic and evidence-based decision on the decriminalization of possession of small amounts of psychoactive substances, thereby placing Lithuania on a par with countries that, thanks to a balanced drug policy, are changing the lives of their citizens for the better. The international community is calling the highest national legislative authority for the abolition of penalties for the possession of drugs in small amounts to ensure justice and protection of human rights for Lithuanian citizens.

With sincere support and hope the open letter is signed by:

1. Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (Lithuania)
2. društvo AREAL (Slovenia)
3. Harm Reduction Network@Trimbos Institute (The Netherlands)
4. Estonian network PLWHIV (EHPV) (Estonia)
5. Paramos fondas "RIGRA" (Support Foundation "RIGRA" (Lithuania)
6. HPLGBT (Ukraine)
7. Youth RISE (Estonia)
8. SANANIM (Czech Republic)
9. Public association "PULS Comunitar" (Moldova)
10. PeerNUPS- Δίκτυο Ομοτίμων Χρηστών Ψυχοδραστικών Ουσιών (Greece)
11. Women for Health (Georgia)
12. International Charitable Foundation "AIDS Foundation East-West" (AFEW-Ukraine) (Ukraine)
13. Correlation - European Harm Reduction Network (The Netherlands)
14. Fund of Women living with HIV (Kazakhstan)
15. Rubicon (Georgia)
16. Fund social support Revansh (Kazakhstan)
17. Union for HIV prevention and Harm Reduction (Moldova)
18. New Generation Humanitarian NGO (Armenia)
19. ОО "СВОИ Плюс" (Svon Plus) (Tajikistan)
20. ФЕНИКС 2009 (FENIX 2009) (Georgia)
21. Intercambios Civil Association (Argentina)
22. Africa Advocacy Foundation (The Netherlands)
23. National Coordinator of NGO on HIV/AIDS (CESIDA) (Spain)
24. Общественная организация "Дорога жизни Днепр" (Public organization "The road of life Днепр") (Ukraine)
25. Asociación Costarricense para el Estudio e Intervención en Drogas (ACEID) (Costa Rica)
26. Ukrainian Network of People who Use Drugs (VOLNA) (Ukraine)
27. Ukrainian Network of Women who Use Drugs (UNWUD) (Ukraine)
28. Charitable Fund 'Hope and Trust' (Ukraine)
29. Alliance for Public Health (Ukraine)

30. Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (Georgia)
31. Общественный Фонд "КАРИНА " (Public Fund „Karina“) (Kyrgyzstan)
32. Women's Network of Key Communities (Kyrgyzstan)
33. ARAS - Romanian Association Against AIDS (Romania)
34. Forum of People Who Use Drugs Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan)
35. Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) (Hungary)
36. Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos (Portugal)
37. Metzineres. Environments of Shelter for Women who Use Drugs Surviving Violences (ICEERS) (Spain)
38. Asociación Stop Sida (Spain)
39. Center Women and Modern World (Azerbaijan)
40. Eurasian Key Populations Health Network (Poland)
41. Association of HIV affected women and their families "Demetra" (Lithuania)
42. Asian Network of People who Use Drugs (ANPUD) (Thailand)
43. Asociatia RHRN - Romanian Harm Reduction Network (Romania)
44. Mainline (Netherlands)
45. MONAR-Krakow Association (Poland)
46. Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS (Georgia)
47. University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
48. Michel Kazatchkine (Switzerland)
49. Juventas (Montenegro)
50. NGO Convictus Estonia (Estonia)
51. Harm Reduction International (United Kingdom)
52. Graham Shaw Consulting Ltd (United Kingdom)
53. Adviespunt Verslaving, Antwerp Belgium (Belgium)
54. Healthy Options Project Skopje – HOPS (North Macedonia)
55. International Doctors for Healthier Drug Policies (United Kingdom)
56. National Institute for Infectious Diseases Prof. Dr. Matei Bals - ARENA OST Center (Romania)
57. CASO (Portugal)
58. European Network of People Who Use Drugs (EuroNPUD) (Portugal)
59. Positiiviset ry, HivFinland (Finland)
60. Hepa plus (Georgia)
61. Društvo SKUC (Slovenia)
62. New York University (USA)
63. Life Quality Improvement Organisation Flight (Croatia)
64. NNA Sweden (Sweden)
65. Centre Excellence Research of AIDS, CERiA, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)
66. Odysseus, Civic association (Slovakia)
67. Europea AIDS Treatment Group (Belgium)
68. Polish Drug Policy Network (Poland)

69. Scottish Drugs Forum (United Kingdom)
70. Rights Reporter Foundation (Hungary)
71. UDRUGA ZA POMOĆ MLADIMA "HELP" – SPLIT (Croatia)
72. Drug Policy Network South East Europe (Serbia)
73. Association for harm reduction Stigma (Slovenia)
74. Cannabis.es (Spain)
75. HIV Legal Network (Canada)
76. Centro de Convivência É de Lei (Brazilia)
77. Fundación Latinoamerica Reforma (Chile)
78. A.N.O. – Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (Czech Republic)
79. Společnost Podané ruce o.p.s. (Czech Republic)
80. México Unido Contra la Delincuencia (Mexico)
81. Stichting Hepatitis Informatie (The Netherlands)
82. Hungarian Youth for Sensible Drug Policy (Hungary)
83. GAT Portugal (Portugal)
84. Institute for Drug Control and Human Security (IDCHS)) (Sierra Leone)
85. Independent Advocate and Activist for Affordable Access to Medicines in Malaysia (Malaysia)
86. Stop Overdose Now Foundation (The Netherlands)
87. VšĮ Jauna banga (Lithuania)
88. Africa Network of People Who Use Drugs (Kenia)
89. Dianova International (Spain)
90. International Renaissance Foundation (Ukraine)
91. WHITE LIGHT I, c.a. (Czech Republic)
92. Release (United Kingdom)
93. Stockholm Drug Users Union (Sweden)
94. Karolina Zbikowska Free Clinic (Belgium)
95. GoiA Free Clinic (Belgium)
96. Needle exchange Flanders (Belgium)
97. Free Clinic vzw (Belgium)
98. Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation (Canada)
99. ECOM - Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (Estonia)
100. Общественное объединение "Поддержка людей, живущих с ВИЧ , "Кут" (Public Association "Support for people living with HIV") (Kazakhstan)
101. AIDS Action Europe (Germany)
102. Georgian Harm Reduction Network (Georgia)
103. International Drug Policy Consortium (United Kingdom)
104. UNITE - Global Parliamentarians Network to End Infectious Diseases (Portugal)
105. MSOC Free Clinic (Belgium)
106. ASOCIACIÓN BIENESTAR Y DESARROLLO (Spain)