
In 2007, the UN General Assembly, declared 20 February as the World Day of Social Justice calling member states to support efforts in poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social wellbeing and justice for all, with the objective to promote development and human dignity. However, the successful and effective implementation of aforementioned objectives requires a coherent strategy that efficiently address all the specific and varied needs of the different population groups.

In this context, the “Persons Who Use Drugs Count” campaign, highlights and promotes the need to respect the human rights’ of an extremely vulnerable and marginalized population, reminding all of us that persons who use drugs do not lose their rights as citizens and human beings. The failure of the existing international drug control system was recognized during the UN Special Session of the General Assembly on Drugs (UNGASS 2016), where it was highlighted that “people should be the focus of international and national drug policies” and underlined the importance of legislative changes ensuring safety, protection, public health, respect for human rights and the fundamental principles of freedom for every human being without discrimination.

Our goal is to contribute to reducing stigma and ignorance both across the general population and stakeholders, by raising awareness regarding the shortcomings, barriers, negative effects and harms produced by the long term implementation of repressive policies and punitive measures undertaken to tackle the world drug phenomenon. These adverse effects caused by ineffective drug policies became more intense and prominent than ever, during a period of a profound economic and social crisis at global level: poverty, homelessness, exclusion from basic social goods, limited access to healthcare, welfare and essential medicines, increased rates of morbidity and mortality, limited livelihood opportunities, exclusion from job opportunities and barriers to skills development, disproportionate sentencing for minor drug related offenses and unequal participation in social dialogue.

In order to achieve our goal, it is of outmost importance that persons who use drugs will stop being marginalized and gain voice, equal access to opportunities and services and also participation in planning, implementation and evaluation processes of policies and programs on narcotic and psychoactive substances, as suggested by a number of international and European guidelines and recommendations.

This campaign is within the frame of the project “Strengthening NGO capacity and promoting public health and human rights oriented drug policy in South Eastern Europe”. 