

REPORT
Drug Policy Dialogue in Southeast Europe and Drug Law Reform
project
January – December 2013

Project implementation

A. The 10th Informal Drug Policy Dialogue 14-16 February 2013

The tenth meeting of the Informal Drug Policy Dialogue series, organised by the Transnational Institute (TNI) and Association Diogenis, took place in Warsaw, Poland, gathering over 35 NGO representatives, academics, policy makers and practitioners. The Dialogue comprised five major sessions on drug policy. During the first session, participants discussed the current state of drug policy in Poland. The second session focused on the new European Union (EU) Drug Strategy for 2013-2020 and its Action Plan for 2013-2016. During the third session, participants discussed cannabis policy reform movements worldwide, with a special focus on the legal regulation of cannabis markets in US states Colorado and Washington and the Uruguayan bill on cannabis policy. Discussions also covered cannabis policy and possibilities for reform in Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and Poland. In the following session, participants shared their experience and expertise on different models of decriminalisation, with a specific focus on Poland, Italy and the Czech Republic. The final session of the Dialogue provided updates on the 56th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), (11-15 March 2013 Vienna, Austria).

B. Informal Drug Policy Dialogue in South East Europe 21-23 June 2013

The Informal Drug Policy Dialogue in South Eastern Europe, is part of the project New Approaches in Drug Policy and Interventions (NADPI) supported financially by a Grant of the European Commission and Co-financed by OSF. The Dialogue has been held in Kalampaka/Greece from 21-23 June 2013. 35 persons participated at the dialogue including representatives of NGOs, academics, delegates of competent agencies on drug policy and professionals in the field of drugs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece,

Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. Further participation incorporated a representative of project Correlation - European Network Social Inclusion & Health (The Netherlands), a spokesman for the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) (Portugal) and a representative of the Tirana Regional Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Main topics at the meeting were the developments in drug legislation in South Eastern Europe with special reference to Greece, which recently approved the new law on addictive substances and Croatia that has decided to decriminalise the use and possession of small quantities for personal use. During this session the volume published by Diogenis on "*Drug Policy and Drug Legislation in South East Europe*" has been presented . The representative of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) referred to the new Drug Strategy of the European Union (2013-2020) and the EU Action Plan (2103-2016). Another topic of discussion was the Action Plan between the European Union and the countries of the Western Balkans, and especially the importance of the involvement of civil society in shaping drug policy in South Eastern Europe. The representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, based in Tirana, presented the United Nations Programme for Combating Drugs in the region of SE Europe. An extensive discussion took place on the difficulties that agencies and organizations providing services to dependent people are confronted with, because of the economic crisis. The participation of representatives of the organization of Drug users in treatment by OKANA was essential in this session as they had the opportunity to express their views on problematic situations, as the waiting lists, and other matters related to services.

3. Expert Seminar on drug legislation in South East Europe 4-5 April 2013

The expert seminar on "Developments and trends in Drug Legislation in South East Europe" has been held in Thessaloniki, Greece on February 4th and 5th, 2013. The aim of the seminar was to exchange opinions, experiences and ideas among policy officials, civil servants, academic researchers, and non-governmental experts in the field of illicit drugs and evaluate recent initiatives on drug control legislation in South East Europe (SEE). The seminar aimed also to substantiate concrete recommendations and to facilitate civil society participation in policy making at the national and regional level. Experts and researchers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia, as well as an expert from EMCDDA, and a representative of the Regional UNODC in Belgrade (Serbia) participated at the expert seminar. The program of the seminar consisted of three sessions and has dealt with the issues of decriminalization of possession of drugs for personal use, harm reduction services and drug legislation, supervised drug consumption rooms, pros and cons, cannabis policy initiatives in SEE in the light of

current worldwide developments (recent global developments on cannabis policy; drug trafficking and drug production in SEE; cannabis in legislation and practice in the countries of SEE) and a general discussion on developments and trends in Drug Policy in SEE (prevention, treatment, harm reduction and rehabilitation; public opinion and drugs; the economic crisis and developments in production and trafficking of drugs; national politics and drug policy; the influence of the EU drugs strategy; drug use and petty crime).

D. The Drug Policy Network in South East Europe

1. Meeting Advisory board 17 January 2013, Belgrade, Serbia

The Advisory board of the Drug Policy Network in SEE met in Belgrade on 16-18 January 2013. The agenda of the meeting focussed on a Review of Developments and activities in the period March-December 2012, discussed the Report of Network meeting in Vienna in 2012, has decided on the de common activities to be undertaken 2013 and made an annual planning

A discussion on *the way forward* took place and practical decisions have been taken about decision-making in the board, the extension of the term of the membership of the board from two to three years and the broadening of the network with new members. The planning of activities in the year 2013 the support of IDPC for the the Network has been discussed. The IDPC secretariat pointed out in a written note that the IDPC secretariat will step back from being directly involved in coordination, communications, work planning and implementation of activities for the SEE network. IDPC will continue to support the SEE network indirectly through promoting its work and in instances IDPC has available budget may dedicate some funds for small and clearly defined pieces of work or activities. The board members of the Network referred to initiatives they would undertake during in 2013 and planning arrangements have been made.

2. Meeting in the margins of the Harm reduction Conference, 10 June, Vilnius, Lithuania.

During the Harm Reduction Conference in Vilnius, at the margins of the conference, a meeting has been organised to discuss a note about the membership and organisation of the network, some members expressed dissatisfaction about the profiling of the network, others were positive about the continuity that has been in past two years with common activities, study visits and conferences combined with exchange of experiences of best practices, the publication of the newsletter etc.

3. Meeting in Kalampaka 21 June 2013 in the margins of the Informal Drug policy Dialogue in South East Europe

In the margins of the meeting in of the informal Drug policy dialogue in Kalampaka. Greece it has been decided to ask the Network organisations to confirm whether they want to continue their participation in the Network. All organisations confirmed in

writing that they wish to continue co-operating in this joint initiative. A more formal application procedure for membership has been agreed.

4. Nieuw Members

After the Kalampaka meeting three new members joined the Network (ALIAT from Romania, Positive voice and Kentro Zois from Greece). With these two members the number of the organisations of the Network increased to 15.

5. Seminar on Cannabis in Albania 20 september 2013. Tirana, Albania

A successful bilateral co-operation between Diogenis- Aksion Plus resulted in the organisation of a seminar on Cannabis policy in Albania. The seminar has been held on 20 September in Tirana Albania. The regional office of UNODC in Tirana, has been supportive by the organization of this workshop and participated actively in the discussions. 32 persons from several service providing organizations, health and educational institutions and the police participated at the discussions.

6. Visit to Romania and Bulgaria 26 November- 1 December 2013

From 26 November to 1 December we visited Romania and Bulgaria. Jef Helmer vice president of Diogenis and Thanasis Apostolou brought this visit to these two countries in order to contact the member organisations of the Network, meet with the researchers who are co-operating in the Project Drug Law Reform in South East Europe, meet with Roma organisations in order to explore possibilities of co-operation on the drugs issue and contact authorities and institutions responsible for drug policy.

In Romania we met with the Romanian Harm reduction Network (Valentin Simionov) the organisation Sastipen, a Roma centre for health policies (Daniel Radulescu), The Harm reduction NGO Carusel and the New member of the network NGO ALIAT (Viorel Roman, Ioana Tomus, Bogdan Glodeanu). The discussions were informative and referred to the situation of Drugs in Romania, the Roma people and the harm reduction services in the quarter Ferentary where we visited the unit of syringe distribution for mainly Roma people living in the neighbourhood. We met with Mr. Victor Nicolaescu of the Association for Social-Economic Development and promotion CALACTICA who is responsible drug policy issues and the two researches that are cooperating with Diogenis on the Drug Law reform project. A meeting with Sorin Oprea, the director of the coordinating Agency on Drugs, has taken place after the presentation of the annual report on the drug situation in Romania, an informative meeting where he presented the annual report and answered questions. In our discussion with him we stressed the importance of co-operation in the region and invited him to participate at the Athens Informal Drug Policy Dialogue in January 2014.

In Bulgaria we visited the Network member Initiative for Health Foundation (IHF), and had there a discussion with them and a representative (Theodora Krumova) of the Roma NGO Amalipe. Initiative for Health Foundation is experienced in work with Roma people and Amalipe is a cultural organisation of Roma with several Units in the country. This was a meeting to explore possibilities of collaboration in a project with Roma people in Bulgaria.

It has been agreed that all partners (IHF, Amalipe and Diogenis) will make a written proposal about the possibilities that they see from their perspective to contribute to a joint initiative of a Project on Roma and drugs. Jef Helmer is going to work for this initiative.

Another good contact in Bulgaria was with the Centre for the study of democracy. We had a discussion with Ognian Shedov (director of the centre) and Atanas Usev and Dimitar Markov. Atanas and Dimitar are already cooperating with Diogenis in the project Drug law reform. The director was very much in favour of collaboration between the Center and Diogenis. The first concrete cooperation will take place June this year by the Expert seminar of the project New Approaches to Drug Policy and interventions (NADPI) which will be held in Sofia. The Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) is an interdisciplinary public policy institute based in Bulgaria. The CSD is a non-partisan, independent organization fostering reform through impact on policy and civil society, and is one of Bulgaria's most prominent NGOs with a well-established reputation for the high quality of its research.

7. The action Plan on drugs between the EU and the western Balkans

The Organisations of the Drug Policy Network in South East Europe have discussed during the last dialogue in Kalampaka (June 2013) the possibilities to be involved in the implementation of the Action Plan on Drugs between the EU and the Western Balkans. The suggestion has been done to write a letter to the Joint Ministerial Forum between the EU and the Western Balkans Ministers who would meet in December 2013 in Montenegro and would adopt a declaration for the further implementation of the Action Plan. The letter has been sent and we hope that the EU and the Western Balkan countries will respond.

8. The Harm reduction NGO platform in Athens, Greece /advocacy work

After the festival "Legalise" organised in Athens a group of NGO's met together and decided to meet regularly and form a body that could speak on behalf of the NGO's in the Platform with authorities and coordinate activities of the organisations themselves. The group consists at the moment of the following organisations: PRAKSIS, Positive Voice, Kento Zois, Prometheus, the Association of people in substitution programmes of OKANA, Diogenis, Doctors of the World and the Association Nifalioi. For advocacy work in Greece this is a good basis that can be developed in the coming years. Diogenis is participating with the task to inform the

platform about international developments, the EU civil society forum and the EU drug policy, the UN and in particular the CND, and the regional developments. Several organisations of the Platform are members of the Drug Policy Network in South East Europe. The structure of the platform is at the moment rather loose and arrangements have to be made with regard to secretariat etc. Meetings with the platform have taken place on 13 May 2013, 11 Sept. 2013 and 21 October 2013.

Diogenis has reacted with a letter to the Greek Standing parliamentary Commission on the amendments of the law on addictive substances that the government had submitted to the parliament.

E. Project Drug law Reform in South East Europe

The Drug law reform project continued for the second year with a research on "Sentencing of drug offenders, the legislators policy and the practice of the courts." The proposal of this research has been discussed in November 2012 and would be implemented from January 2013 on. Due to the late approval of the OSF grant the project implementation has been delayed. A meeting of the coordinating scientific Commission took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia on May 24th where we discussed the planning of the project. In September a proposal has been sent to potential researchers in the 10 countries of the region and we got responses in the October and November. Several researchers who participated in the project in 2012 have agreed to do this research to. There are several new researchers involved in this research (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina). The university of Maribor (Prof. Dobovsek) has contributed greatly in finding researchers for this project. We expect to complete this research end of March and the General and final report will be ready in May-June 2014.

E. Media, Publications

1. Website

The Diogenis website has been used to report on several events of the Association, the Drug Policy Network in South East Europe and other NGOs and to disseminate information about national and International developments. The site is in two languages (Greek and English). ([www, diogenis.info](http://www.diogenis.info))

2. The Newsletter of the Drug Policy Network in South east Europe

The Newsletter has been published twice during 2013. The last invitation from the secretariat to the member organisations to send copy for the Newsletter has been sent in the autumn of 2013. It has been proven difficult to get copy for the newsletter. We have to think about new ways to put the newsletter together.

3. Volume Drug policy and Drug legislation in South East Europe

In June 2013 the printed version of the country reports on *Drug Policy and Drug legislation in South East Europe* has been published by the Publishing House Nomiki Vivliothiki in Athens. The Volume has been presented during the informal drug policy dialogue in Kampaka (June 2013) and will be disseminated in Meetings, Conferences seminars, study visits etc. An interview with Thanasis Apostolou director of Diogenis Association has been published in the Athens daily newspaper (Efimerida ton syntakton) where reference is made to the volume and to international developments on drug policy.

4. Briefing Papers

Diogenis continued the series of briefing papers in 2013.

Two briefing papers has come out

- a. Trends and developments in Drug Legislation in South East Europe and
- b. The HIV epidemic among injecting drug users in Greece in economic crisis

The first briefing paper has been published in English, Greek and Servo-Croatian, the second in English and Greek)

5. Reports

The following reports have been published:

- a. Report of the expert seminar (in English, Greek and Servo-Croatian)
- b. Report of the Informal Drug policy Dialogue (in English and Greek)
- c. Report in Cannabis policy In Albania (in English)

6. Presentation on Harm reduction, at the festival "Legalize" Athens

On June 9th 2013 Thanasis Apostolou made a presentation at the festival "Legalize" in Athens on drug policy worldwide and in particular the Dutch policy on drugs. [See](#)

F. Other

Diogenis participated at the Harm Reduction Conference in Vilnius Lithuania. (9-13 June). The CND in Vienna (10-16 march) with active participation at the Civil society hearing and the informal Dialogue with the executive director of UNODC and the president of INCB.

During the CND Diogenis participated at the General Assembly of the VNGOC.

Diogenis is member of the Civil Society Forum of the EU and participated at the first plenary meeting of the forum that took place on 24-25 June 2013.

Diogenis participated at the meeting "The Transparent Chain" organised by the organisation Epicurus and TNI in Utrecht on October 30 the expert seminar on Cannabis organised by TNI in A'dam on October 31st and the correlation meeting on November 21st 2013.

4.

Project outcomes

-The Dialogues have proven to be a useful platform for Policy makers, experts and practitioners to exchange views and experiences on strategic issues concerning drug policy reform. The briefing paper on "Trends and developments in Drug Legislation in South Eastern Europe" has incorporated several issues discussed at the expert seminar and the regional Drug policy Dialogue.

-The Drug Policy Network in SEE has discussed extensively its structure and focus of the activities. At the margins of the Vilnius conference and the Informal Drug Policy Dialogue in Kalampaka the Network members met and discussed proposals for a more formal procedure regarding membership and the enlargement of the Network with new members. Since then two new members joined the Network (the Romanian organisation ARAS and the NGO 4life from Montenegro). There are now 14 organisations member of the Network. Diogenis is willing to keep going on supporting the Network and involving Network members in regional activities although the financial resources available for this regional network are very limited.

5.

Evaluation

Diogenis has build up a Network of contacts with policy makers, Ngo's and the Academic community. The challenge is now to continue and further develop the possibilities for further initiatives. The financial recourses are the main worry of the organisation noting that in the environment of the economic crisis it will not be easy to obtain sufficient resources for the work that can done.

6. Sustainability

-The Grant from the EC guarantees with the OSI grant that for 2014 activities will continue.

7.

Co-funding

The EC grant will not continue after the end of 2014. Diogenis will try to involve other potential donors, although it will be difficult in the current economic situation to acquire funds from the countries in South East Europe. We have jointed IDPC, TNI, Forum Drogue and the EHRN by the submission of an application for an EU grant, but unfortunately, the proposal has not been approved.