



Open Letter

To the Joint Ministerial Forum of Ministers
of Justice and Home Affairs of the EU and the countries of the western Balkans

December 17, 2013

The undersigned NGOs of the Drug Policy Network in South East Europe, address the Joint ministerial Forum of Ministers of Justice and Home affairs of the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans, meeting in Budva, Montenegro on 19-20 December 2013, to promote the implementation of the EU-Western Balkans Action Plan on Drugs with regard to the co-operation between the EU-Western Balkan and civil society.

The ministers are intending to adopt a Joint Declaration on enhancing cooperation on drugs and renew the commitments of the EU-Western Balkans Action plan on drugs (2009-2013). We welcome the renewed commitment, but also emphasize that in the past four years little has been done in the area of drug demand reduction. There is hardly anything to be found in the reports on the implementation of this part of the work plan. Our organizations are concerned about this and would like to actively co-operate with the EU and the Western Balkan countries to seek ways to implement the activities described in the work plan.

The organizations of the Drug Policy Network in South East Europe have established the Network in 2010 and have developed common activities such as regional conferences, exchange programs and bilateral activities. The vast majority of the 15 organizations of the Network from the 10 countries in South East Europe is working with high risk populations and provide harm reduction services to drugs users, people who live with HIV, drug dependant people in prisons, people with multiple physical, mental and social disadvantage and other vulnerable groups. The activities of the Network as a whole focus on promoting co-operation among the organizations, co-operation between NGOs and relevant national, regional and European authorities and exchange of information on drug Policy developments in Europe, the South Eastern European region and worldwide. The Association Diogenis, based in Greece, is responsible for the Secretariat and the support and coordination of the Network.

We endorse the priorities in the EU-Western Balkans Work Plan and the recently adopted EU drugs Strategy (2013-2020) and action plan (2013-2016) in the area of demand reduction. Activities targeted on high risk populations; improvement of medical services for prisoners and related rehabilitation and preventive measures for drugs offenders, establishment and

implementation of alternatives to imprisonment legislation, drug prevention, social protection, rehabilitation of drug dependent people and risk and harm reduction are also priorities of our organisations and we actually do work in these areas with very limited financial resources. The continuity of this work is at this moment very uncertain since the external donors are withdrawing and the National authorities have difficulties to financially secure this work. You have committed yourself to "support programmes and campaigns aimed at informing on the risk of drugs and raising public awareness, including by projects which involve the civil society". We are willing to co-operate with the EU and the Western Balkan countries to implement activities of the Work plan. We would appreciate an invitation from the EU and the Western Balkan Countries to mutually explore possibilities of future co-operation.

Sincerely yours,
on behalf of the Drug Policy Network in South Eastern Europe

Thanasis Apostolou
Director Diogenis Association
phone (Mobile) +30-6934178468
E-mail: Drugpolicy.see@diogenis.info

Aksion Plus (Albania)

ALIA (Romania)

Association Margina (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Association Prevent (Serbia)

Association Terra (Croatia)

Diogenis Association, Drug Policy Dialogue South East Europe

Healthy Options Project Skopje (HOPS) (FYR of Macedonia)

Initiative for Health Foundation (IHF) (Bulgaria)

Juventas (Montenegro)

Kentro Zois (Greece)

NGO Veza

Positive Voice (Greece)

Romanian Harm Reduction Network (RHRN)

South Eastern European Adriatic Addiction Treatment Network (SEEAN) (Slovenia)

Viktorija (Bosnia and Herzegovina)