

**REPORT  
DIOGENIS**

**Project:** “Strengthening NGO capacity and promoting public Health and human rights oriented Drug Policy in South East Europe”

**January 2015 – December 2015**

**1. Summary of implementation of the programme**

Diogenis was in 2015 the lead organisation of the project “Strengthening NGO capacity and promoting public Health and human rights oriented Drug Policy in South East Europe”. Together with four partner NGOs from Albania (Aksion Plus) Bosnia and Herzegovina (Association Margina), Montenegro (NGO 4life) and Serbia (Association Prevent) implemented a range of activities as described in the project summary of our application to OSF. For the coordination of the activities of the project a Project Management Team (PMT) was formed to monitor and coordinate the activities. The PMT met during the reporting period 4 times (26-28 January; 30 March, 6 July and 31 August) The PMT discussed the planning and implementation of the work plan and prepared the meetings with the Network organisations where the discussions took place about the establishment of a regional NGO umbrella organisation with legal status.

The meetings with the advisory board and the representatives of the organisations of the informal Network took place in March, July and August and have taken decisions, which led to a formal General Assembly on September 1st 2015 where representatives of 13 NGOs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia organisations decided to establish the Regional NGO umbrella organisation “Drug Policy Network South East Europe”(DPNSEE). The General Assembly elected an executive board and the Network has been registered as a legal entity at the Serbian Business Registers Agency (SBRA).

The project implemented all activities as planned in the action plan (Meetings, advocacy in the countries of the region, developments in harm reduction, Conference Young people, Participation CND, EU Civil Society forum, the publication of a quarterly Newsletter, set up Website, 3 seminars on drug law reform in respectively Sarajevo, Belgrade and Tirana. On October 2 and 3 a regional meeting on “The UNGASS and its significance for SEE” was organised by Diogenis in Belgrade. The meeting adopted a statement where they propose that the General Assembly Special Session on drugs provides guidelines and commits the member states to implement a number of issues which are of great importance for a health and human rights oriented drug policy.

During 2015 Diogenis has changed the seat and address from Trygona Kalampakas to Fokionos street 8, 10 563 Athens. The offices of the organisation are at this address and Diogenis is officially registered in the first instance court of Athens. Beginning of November 2015, a process of amending the Articles of Association of Diogenis has been completed, new members joined the Association, a new board was elected and an advisory scientific committee has been appointed.

## **2. Narrative report**

### **1. Establishment of a legal Umbrella organisation of NGOs in SEE**

One of the main objectives of the action plan in 2015 has been achieved. Activities that took place for the realisation of this objective were:

**a. meeting of the advisory board** of the informal Drug policy Network in South East Europe ( Tirana 30/03-01/04/2015). Main issues that have been discussed were the location for the Umbrella organisation, the financial aspects, especially the co-funding of the programme and the relationship between the umbrella organisation and the members. It has been decided to ask the organisations to make proposals for the location on the basis of a number of agreed criteria.

**b. a meeting of representatives of all members** of the informal Drug policy ( Novi Sad 7 and 8 July 2015). The main objective of the meeting in Novi Sad was the preparation to come to the establishment of a formal umbrella organization which will be a continuation of the current Network. For the preparation, a note has been sent to the participants of the meeting. Also a representative of the Balkan Civil society Development Network was invited to present their experience as regional South East European organization. This meeting has decided that of the Legal Umbrella organisation would be “Drug Policy Network SEE”(DPNSEE), to choose for Skopje as the location, to convene a general Assembly of the Network on 31 and 2 September 2015, to ask an external moderator to lead the discussions and to prepare draft statutes and proposal for the governance of DPNSEE.

### **c. Assembly of the new legal umbrella organisation**

Which will be the continuation of the existing informal Drug Policy Network in SEE (31 August-2 September 2015). The meeting focussed on the approval of the concept Statutes, the constituent Assembly of the founders as well as the election of a board of the Network and the adoption of the main lines of the action plan 2016 which will be the basis for a renewed application for the project “Strengthening NGO capacity and promoting public health and human rights oriented drug policy in South East Europe”. The approval of the statutes and the election of the board took place the first day. The second day was dedicated to the adoption of the main lines of the action Plan 2016

#### **d. Registration of the legal Umbrella organisation .**

On the basis of the decisions of the General Assembly the organisation HOPS in Skopje in Co- operation with Diogenis have contacted the Authorities for the procedure of the official registration of DPNSEE. The conclusion of the contacts with the authorities in Skopje was that the requirements did not match with the international character of DPNSEE. The advice of HOPS was to try to register in another country of the region. Two proposals had followed, namely to locate the organisation either in Sarajevo or in Belgrade. Via an electronic vote the decision has been taken to locate the organisation in Belgrade. At the meeting in Belgrade on 02-10-2015 the members reconfirmed the decisions taken on 31/08 and 02/09 as well as the decision to locate the organisation in Belgrade and some changes of the board. Subsequently DPNSEE is registered in Belgrade on 15.10.2015 by the Serbian Business Registers Agency under nr. 28184247 and VAT nr.109211428 .

## **2. Involvement in policy developments at national, regional and international level.**

### **a.Commission on Narcotic drugs (CND)**

The meeting of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs took place on March 9-13 2015. Three persons participated at the CND (2 from Diogenis (the director and the communication officer) and one from Association Margina (the Director). A report of the meeting is published in the Newsletter of the Network and the website of Diogenis Association see:

[http://www.diogenis.info/ckfinder/userfiles/files/NEWSLETTER01\\_final\\_eng.pdf](http://www.diogenis.info/ckfinder/userfiles/files/NEWSLETTER01_final_eng.pdf)

### **b.Civil Society Forum (CSF)**

The Civil Society Forum (CSF) of the EU decided in July 2015 positively on the application of Diogenis and two other members of the Drug Policy Network SEE (HOPS and the Romanian Harm Reduction Network (RHRN) to become member of the CSF. Diogenis participates in the working group of the CSF "Civil Society Engagement with National Policy". The group will work in the coming period on this issue and will in the end bring out a paper with conclusions and recommendation to the EU and the member states.

### **c. Political Dialogue EU Western Balkans**

Diogenis has been always an advocate of involvement of civil society in the implematation of the action plan on drugs between the EU and the candidate counties of the western Balknas. This point was part of the action plan of the Network in SEE for 2015. In the framework of this activity, we had the intention to follow closely the political dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans on drugs. We did not yet

succeed to contact persons who are participating in the political dialogue between EU-Western Balkans. This remains a priority and we will try to find out whether we at least can be informed about the agenda of the dialogue. The contacts we had on the national level in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania did not result in more information about the participants from the Western Balkans in the EU-Western Balkans dialogue.

#### **d. NGO Platform psychoactive substances (GREECE)**

The NGOs working in the field of drugs in Athens have formed a platform in order to discuss developments in the city, react jointly towards the authorities in issues related to drugs and support each other in activities. The platform decided to have its address at the offices of Diogenis, hold the meetings at the meeting room of Diogenis and let Diogenis do the secretarial work (preparing the agenda minutes, sending letters on behalf of the platform) in co-operation with the NGO Praksis. The past period, the platform has comment the draft on the Greek National Drug Strategy on drugs. It has released a message to the press about Harm reduction which got much attention in all the daily newspaper. Organised the Greek campaign on "Support don't Punish" and at this occasion produced a film supported by IDPC. The platform participated at the Greek national prevention campaign organised by OKANA. It wrote also letters to the ministry of Health about harm reduction issues. The platform adopted an internal document with guidelines for good cooperation and principles to which its members must adhere.

#### **e. Drug Policy Dialogue in Greece**

In two occasions is Diogenis invited to make a presentation about drug policy issues in public meetings. The first occasion was at the meeting organised by Promytheus on "Hepatitis C and drug use in Greece". The director of Diogenis has been asked to make a presentation on the issue: «The significance of international drug policy for the implementation of harm reduction programmes». (7 June 2015) The second occasion was by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pan-Hellenic Meeting on AIDS and Hepatitis, (17-19 September 2015) where the director of Diogenis presented the theme "Current developments in drug policy".

#### **f. Drug law reform (Sarajevo, Belgrado, Tirana)**

Following the publication of the volume "Drug strategy and Drug legislation I South East Europe" Diogenis organised three meetings on recent developments in drug policy and drug legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Albania. The meeting in Sarajevo was held on 14 May 2015, in Belgrade on 10 December and in Tirana on 17 December. At the meetings participated the researchers that worked for the country reports in the

respective countries, policy makers, NGOs and interested public. Similar meeting will be organised in 2016 in Montenegro, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo.

### **g. Harm reduction developments**

Harm reduction is more and more accepted as an approach to drug dependence and treatment in the countries of South east Europe. However the national authorities do not secure the existence of harm reduction services and when the Global does not continue supporting the services, many of them have to close down. This issue is a permanent challenge and needs good organised and strong advocacy. Diogenis took the initiative to set up a questionnaire and is going to work with it in 2016 and is part of the action plan that is supported by the European Commission

### **h. UNGASS**

Diogenis organised on 2 and 3 October 2015 a regional meeting in Belgrade, with participation of civil servants from countries in the region, experts, researchers and NGOs.

The meeting discussed the agenda of the UNGASS as agreed at the CND and concluded with the statement "The significance of the UNGASS for South East Europe". This statement has been disseminated as broadly as possible.

Diogenis has been actively involved in the discussions at the international level by commenting on papers of member states who asked VNGOC members to react on proposals that they would present at the intersessionals of the CND.

Diogenis attended one of the intersessionals on 24 September 2015. Besides the Belgrade meeting on UNGASS, Diogenis participated at the regional meeting of Eastern Europe and Central Asia which was held in Istanbul from 26-27 of November 2015

### **i. Media, publications, website, newsletter**

The website of DPNSEE was designed by the company watermark. Also the Logo of DPNSEE has been designed. The website will be operational in 2016. The newsletter was published 4 times according to the action plan. Reports of all meetings were written and a briefing paper on the UNGASS.

## **3. Outcomes**

- a. The Legal Umbrella organisation has been established and is registered in Belgrade
- b. Diogenis participated at the CND session 2015
- c. Diogenis participated at the meetings of the Civil Society Forum and its working group on the UNGASS
- d. 3 meetings on drug law developments have been organised in respectively Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia and Albania.
- e. The regional conference on the UNGASS was held in Belgrade (2-3 October 2015)
- f. Diogenis participated at the Regional consultation on UNGASS in Istanbul (26- 27 November 2015)
- g. a questionnaire for a research on Harm Reduction was prepared.

h. The website of DPNSEE was designed

I Four issues of the regional newsletter were published.

J A briefing Paper on the UNGASS is published.

k. The change in the organisational structure of Diogenis is completed. New statutes are adopted. The members of Diogenis increased, a new board is elected and a scientific advisory Commission is appointed.

#### **4. Evaluation**

The annual action plan has been implemented. The organisational issues are arranged, but they must be consolidated. Diogenis has successfully supported the establishment of the legal NGO Umbrella organisation in the region of South East Europe. This has been one of the main successes of the project in 2015. There is however a lot to do for an independent, proper and efficient functioning of the new organisation. Diogenis is of the opinion that the capacity and expertise of the member organizations should be optimally used for the main purpose of the Umbrella organization, namely: to promote and advocate for drug policies and drug legislation based on a public health, harm reduction, social inclusion and human rights approach. Diogenis will in this context continue its regional activities in close co-operation with DPNSEE. The partnership between Diogenis and DPNSEE will have a positive impact on drug policy in the countries of the SEE region. The contacts with the relevant national, regional and international bodies will be strengthened and co-operation will lead to improvement of the health and social conditions of drug users and the protection of society from the adverse consequences of the current drug control system.

The relationship between Diogenis/DPNSEE and the National, regional, European and International bodies has to grow further. The relationship is now limited to participation of representatives of the states in Conferences, the communication through our newsletter and informal contacts. It is obvious that good relationships between local/national NGOs and the national authorities is indispensable. It is on the local level that changes have to take place. The task of regional organisations is to support local organisations in capacity building and good informed advocacy practices. State authorities in South East Europe are in principle open for co-operation with NGOs. In practice this is not so easy to realise. From both sides we need concrete examples of co-operation.

The scientific community (universities and research institutes in several countries in South East Europe is willing to cooperate in research projects initiated by Diogenis. We had this year good co-operation with the law faculty of the University of Sarajevo by organising the debate on drug law reform.

#### **5. Media Coverage**

In 2015 Diogenis organised a briefing for Journalists in the premises of Diogenis in Athens. Invitations were sent to around 15 journalists. The number of responses to the

invitation was positive from nearly half of the invited journalists but only two showed up. We will try to make further attempts to build up a good relationship with journalists. The fact that in our new executive board participate journalists can help us to further contacts. The meetings and campaigns we organized with other NGOs had relatively good press coverage.

08-01-2016

Thanasis Apostolou