

Annual REPORT
DIOGENIS, Drug Policy Dialogue
January 2018 – December 2018

1. Basic Project Information

Title of the project:

-Drug Policy Dialogue in South East Europe, advocacy and drug law reform in Greece and
-New approaches in Harm reduction Policies and Practice

Grant start and end date: from 01/01/2018 to 31/12/2019

Project submission date: 14.11.2017

Contribution OSF (USD): USD 110.000

Grant Number: OR2017-40436

2. Contact information

Full name of the organization: Association Diogenis, Drug Policy Dialogue

Legal status of the organization and the year of its foundation: non-profit civil Association,
2010

Postal address: Fokionos 8, 10 563 ATHENS, GREECE

Legal address (if different than the postal one):

Telephone: + 30-210-3255326

Email: info@diogenis.info

Website: www.diogenis.info

Contact person responsible for project implementation

Name: Thanasis Apostolou; position: director;

Phone+30- 2103255326 +30- 6934178468 (mobile)

Organization staff authorized to sign grant contract

Name: Thanasis Apostolou; position: director;

E-mail: thanasis@apostolou.info Tel. +306934178468

3. Summary of implementation of the programme

Please give a global overview of the Work Programme's implementation for the reporting period (no more than ½ page).

Diogenis has continued activities with the co-financing of the Open Society Foundation in two projects supported by the European commission. **a.** The project in the Western Balkans "Strengthening the capacity of NGOs and promoting public health and human rights drug policy" and **b.** The project "New approaches to harm reduction policies and practices". The activities on advocacy in Greece could take place due to the grant of the Open Society Foundations.

The following actions have been carried out.

1. In the framework of the project in the Western Balkans, Diogenis focussed in 2018 on further strengthening the umbrella organisation DPNSEE in terms of good relationships with the national authorities in South East Europe. This has been implemented through the joint advocacy in effectively addressing the problems that SEE countries face in the area of Harm reduction and the regional meeting with the Drug Policy co-ordinators in May 2018.
2. Diogenis was responsible for the publication and dissemination of the Quarterly Newsletter of the Network of NGOs in SEE. Three (3) Staff members of Diogenis participated at the 61th annual session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna. A public meeting has been organised in Athens on 27th of March 2018 to inform service providers, NGOs and policy makers about results of the 61th CND and discuss about the harm reduction services and interventions for active substance users in the city of Athens. In May 2018 a meeting organised by Diogenis took place in Belgrade with Drug Policy Co-ordinators from the countries in South East Europe. The Annual regional drug policy conference in SEE has been held in Thessaloniki in June 2018. Advocacy activities in Greece focussed on a. The regulation of cannabis for medical purposes. b. The re-opening of the supervised drug consumption facility in Athens c. The harm reduction services in prisons settings. d. The participation of the NGOs in the National Planning and Coordination Committee on Drugs and e. the participation of the NGOs in the discussion about the problematic situation of drug use in Public places in the centre of Athens. Six (6) national dialogues have been organised in the framework of the EU project "New approaches to harm reduction policies and practices" in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy Portugal and Romania. A briefing paper about "The economic crisis and drug policy in South and SEE" has been published as part of the Project "New approaches to harm reduction policies and practices".

4. Interim Narrative report

a) Activities and methods

Main Achievements

The following actions have been carried out during 2018.

a. Co-operation with the South East Europe NGO Network (DPNSEE).

The DPNSEE has developed independently its activities in 2018. The co-operation with Diogenis was limited to the regular quarterly meetings of the project partners. The Board of DPNSEE took decisions concerning the program and organisational issues of the Association.

b. Global developments in Drug Policy. The 61st CND and the public meeting of 27th March 2018 in Athens

The 61st session of the Narcotics Committee discussed in detail the question of how the assessment of the 2009 Political Declaration and the decisions voted by the General Assembly of 2016 relate to each other. The first point was that the 2019 session would not

seek to adopting a new text and that the text of the UNGASS 2016 outcome document will remain the UN Strategic Plan for the coming years.

This is an important decision because the General Assembly of 2016 adopted a strategic plan which- although not radical- contains decisions and recommendations that deviate from previous action plans. A new approach of dealing with drug is introduced which dissociates itself traditional methods that have the sole purpose of abstaining from use. The UNGASS 2016 emphasizes harm reduction and a healthy life that prevents dependence from drugs.

Diogenis organised the meeting of 27 March 2018 to inform professionals in the field of drugs about the international drug policy developments and to discuss about their impact on the national and local level. Based on the adopted resolutions of the 61st CND a debate took place about the situation of drug use in public places in Athens and the way to address it. In relation to the drugs situation in the centre of Athens the resolution about stigma adopted by the CND was reason to discuss this subject in more detail. The resolution calls on the UN Member States to recognize that stigmatization is the result of discrimination and prejudice and prevents the access of drug users to health and social services. It recommends avoiding stigmatisation and urges social and health services to systematically train and educating their staff not to use stigmatising language and address stigma as a serious issue.

c. The annual SEE regional conference on drug Policy

The 8th annual regional conference on drug policy in South East Europe has been held in Thessaloniki from 7-9 June 2018. The issues discussed at the conference were: a. refugees and migrants in the countries of South East Europe and the drugs issue. The involvement of NGOs and the National authorities. b. Youth culture, festivals, drug use and harm reduction in South East Europe: Policy implications for the competent authorities, the organisers of the festivals and harm reduction services. c. The evaluation of the Political Declaration 2009-2019 in relation to the UNGASS outcome document. What are main issues of discussion and what can be the contribution of NGOs? d. Evaluation and follow up of the Harm reduction project in SEE. e. Current topics of importance: The regulation of cannabis for medical purpose - the current regional project in the western Balkans and the way forward.

See report:

<http://www.diogenis.info/cms/files/2018/09/REPORT-regional-Conference-SEE-7-9-June-2018-Final.pdf>

d. Co-operation between NGOs and National Authorities in the field of Drugs in South East Europe, Belgrade 10 May 2018

On 10 May 2018 a meeting, took place in Belgrade, between representatives of National Authorities responsible for Drug Policy and NGOs working in the drugs field. The meeting was organised by Diogenis, Drug Policy Dialogue in co-operation with the Drug Policy Network in South East Europe (DPNSEE) and the Office for Combating Drugs of the republic of Serbia. The aim of the meeting was to discuss about the cooperation between authorities and NGOs at the national level, open up the possibility to exchange information and experiences of good practices and reflect on perspectives of future cooperation. At the conference participated drug policy Coordinators from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Croatia, Montenegro, Romania Serbia, Slovenia (the national co-ordinators from Bulgaria, Greece and the FYR of Macedonia could not participate). From the NGOs there were participants from all countries except Croatia. The conclusions of the meeting were: a. There is a need for a more structured dialogue between National Authorities and NGOs. b. Cooperation among NGOs at the national level strengthens their position in the dialogue with their government. c. Quality Standards for NGOs is a required condition for the implementation of projects and activities. Participants appreciated the initiative for organising this meeting. It was a good example of dialogue about cooperation between national authorities and NGOs. It was also a contribution to mutual understanding. Often, both governments and NGOs are critical to each other and often they stand opposite each other. Repetition of such meetings is desirable in order to find ways of mutual understanding and improve co-operation.

See report:

<http://www.diogenis.info/cms/files/2018/09/REPORT-on-Drug-Policy-Co-operation-between-NGOs-and-national-Authorities-in-South-East-Europe-Final.pdf>

e. Legislation on cannabis for medical purposes in South East Europe.

At the regional Conference in Thessaloniki exchange of information took place about current developments on legislation of medicinal cannabis. Special reference was made to the law in Greece. The parliament adopted an amendment of the drug law that makes possible the legal production of cannabis for medical purposes. The amendment was supported not only by the parties of the current government but also by opposition parties. Greece had already legalized the production of cannabis for industrial purposes in 2013. In countries as Slovenia, Croatia and the FYR of Macedonia there is already legislation that allows patients to import medicinal cannabis.

f. The Newsletter.

Under the responsibility of Diogenis 4 numbers of the Quarterly Newsletter of the Drug Policy Network in South East Europe have been published and disseminated. News about activities of the different DPNSEE members, regional conferences, contacts with the national authorities and information about developments in drug policies at the national, European and Global level is the main content of the Newsletter. The closer co-operation with the individual organisations that we had hoped to be improved remained the same and in some case became less. Since this project came to an end in December 2018 a newsletter for the Network will be in the future –if DRNSEE decides to continue the publication- a responsibility of the DPNSEE.

g. Visual Communication Campaign.

The Plan for to create a communication campaign titled "People Who Use Drugs Count" is carried out. At the International World Day of Social Justice, (February 20th), the World Health Day,(April 7th), the Harm Reduction Day (May 7th), the International Overdose

Awareness Day (August 31st) and the Human Rights Day (December 10), a press release has been disseminated in a large range of media (facebook, newspapers).

This was an online campaign focussed on the general public and in particular the youth. A big number audience read the press release and has seen the film.

2. The project “New Approaches in Harm Reduction Policies and Practice” (NAHRPP)

a. National dialogues in six EU countries

Several activities for this project have already been implemented in 2017. The activities in 2018 have focused on the organization of 6 national dialogues in the countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal and Romania. The national dialogues aimed to consider possibilities for implementation of the proposals and recommendations of the research and the regional conference conducted in Cyprus. The national dialogues included policy makers, journalists, NGO representatives, harm reduction and treatment services in the separate countries. The results of the dialogues have been published in a report.

b. Briefing paper “the economic crisis and drug policy in South and South East Europe”

The briefing paper on the “economic crisis and drug policy in South and South East Europe” describes the effects of the economic crisis on drug policy, the consequences of the austerity measures for the organisations working in the drugs field and de drug users. Reference is made to the contribution of NGOs and their relation to the state and public institutions and services. The report concludes with suggestions and recommendations for the way forward. The briefing paper and the country reports will be widely disseminated within the EU and among drug policy makers, civil society organisations, experts in the drugs field, practitioners, and treatment and harm reduction services and the press and social media.

(Briefing paper attached).

3. Drug policy developments in Greece and NGO advocacy work

a. The platform psychoactive substances/advocacy activities

Diogenis has continued its involvement and contribution to the initiatives on drug law reform in Greece. This has taken place mainly in co-operation with the Greek NGOs of the “platform on Psychotropic Substances”. Diogenis has the secretariat of the platform, prepares the agenda of the meetings, monitors the implementation of decisions, makes drafts for letters/reactions on policy developments and press releases and arranges contacts with the authorities. In 2018 several issues in the field of drugs have been subject of public debate. The co-operating organisations in the platform have been active in 2018 in advocacy initiatives related to the following issues:

b. regulation for the supervised drug consumptions rooms. The platform organisations have used all possible opportunities to advocate for legislation to open supervised drug consumption rooms. The drug consumption rooms were in all public meetings of the organisations a subject of discussion reminding officials of the government present, that

they have to submit a proposal. It did not happen in this report period. A member of Parliament from the Democratic Coalition (Demokratiki Symparataxi) submitted in July 2018 an amendment asking for the establishment of the supervised drug rooms. The positive result of this was the support of the governing party Syriza that declared to be in favour of the amendment and asked to have some time to consider some points of concern. In October the member of parliament who submitted the amendment asked the minister to explain why he is not willing to discuss the amendment. The minister of health in his answer promised to come with its own proposal very soon. This has not happen yet.

c. In February 2018 Diogenis submitted a **note to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs of the Greek Parliament with comments to the draft law on medicinal cannabis**. Diogenis expressed appreciation for this positive step of the government and pointed out that special attention has to be given to the needs of the patients who have to have easy access of the cannabis for medical purposes.

d. **The participation of a representative of the NGOs in the “National Commission for Planning and Co-ordination on drugs”** has been subject of action by the NGOs of the platform. The NGOs presented in April 2018 a report with their organisational structure (vision, aims, activities and government) and proposed to amend the article of the drug law 4139/2013 that describes the aims and the composition of the National Commission. The amendment would be the inclusion of a representative of the NGOs in the Commission. There was no written reaction from the minister, although in a discussion between the general secretary of the ministry of health and NGOs he said that the proposal of the NGOs will be taken seriously into consideration.

e. The **Special Subcommittee of the Greek Parliament** on Drug policy met on Tuesday, 15 May with representatives of drug expert organizations to exchange views on drug policy. Among the organizations invited to participate was also Diogenis, Diogenis was represented by the Director Thanasis Apostolou and the advocacy office Sofia Galinaki.

f. Diogenis has 2018 together with the organisations of the platform co-organised the **campaign “Support don’t punish”** with several activities. The Greek TV has devoted a special show to the action of the NGOs.

g. In September 2018 the minister of health asked the organisations of the platform to submit **ideas and proposal for a project about drug use in the centre of Athens**. The organisations wrote a letter with several suggestions how to address the problem of drug use in public places. The minister wrote a letter thanking for the contribution of the NGOs and noted that he will invite the organisations to participate in the planning for the action plan. This is to be seen. An action plan was publish by the ministry in November 2018 without any reference to the NGOs.

8. Media, publications, website, newsletter

The website of Diogenis is further improved. There have been several technical shortcomings, which almost all of them have been solved. There is –compared to previous years much more publicity about the activities of Diogenis in the press and social media (Facebook).

b) Outcomes

The results of the work programme are positive. A number of important activities are presented below.

1. The regional conference brought again together policymakers, representatives of civil society and researchers from 9 countries to discuss developments in drug policy and trends. Hopefully this activities can continue to be organised in the future.
2. Diogenis has also this year increased its leading role in undertaking initiatives for public debates about issues concerning drug policy. Also the advocacy role has further increased.
3. Law now regulates the issue of Cannabis for medical use. It is an achievement in a short period due to public involvement of civil society organisations, experts and due to political will. The NGOs working in the field of drugs have actively participated in this process.
4. The contacts with media and press are increasing; Reports about activities of NGOs in the field of drugs are regular on TV and the press. There is still much to be done in this area.
5. The participation of NGOs in the National Commission on Drugs, have been intensified. The subject is on the political agenda.
6. The recognition of Diogenis as partner in the public debate is growing. The invitation by the special parliamentary Commission on drugs to speak in the parliamentary hearing is a positive sign. In addition, the invitation of the minister of health to submit ideas and proposals on the issue of drugs in the centre of Athens is a sign of appreciation of the contribution of the NGOs co-operating in the platform.

c) Evaluation

As pointed out in the report of the previous year, the new board of the Drug policy Network in SEE was a new step towards a more independent functioning of the umbrella organisation. Diogenis reduced its activities of co-ordination and support to the members of DPNSEE. The cooperation between Diogenis and the organisations in South East Europe focusses more on activities related to policy issues, drug policy trends and developments in Europe and internationally (UN and NGO initiatives) as well as advocacy at the national level. The advocacy activities in Greece are increasing in a positive direction. The advocacy function will be reinforced through co-operation with other civil society actors (NGOs, organisations of affected populations in particular associations of drug users and the scientific community).

d) Sustainability

11. Sustainability

The activities of Diogenis and its profile in Greece is a development that will reinforce its presence in the country. The co-operation with other civil society organisations and initiatives is growing and new activities are undertaken.

As far as the financial sustainability is concerned Diogenis has successfully secured funding for activities in the past 4 years. The perspective for 2019 is however problematic. The efforts to get support from the European Commission have failed. The Greek State excludes NGOs from financial support. The funding organisations in Greece are hesitant to support drug policy activities. In the first Months of 2019 it will become clear whether Diogenis will manage to raise financial resources to continue its work in the coming years. Several initiatives that Diogens has undertaken will be answered in the first six months of 2019.

12. Budget of the Organisation

For 2018 the total budget of Diogenis administered was 204.019,61 USD for the implementations of the programmes (66.145,41 USD from OSF, 129.118,02 USD from EC, and 8.756,19 USD from other sources).

See separate the financial report 2018.

Thanasis Apostolou

January 2019