

**NARRATIVE REPORT**  
**DIOGENIS, Drug Policy Dialogue**  
**January 2019 – December 2019**

**1. Basic Project Information**

Title of the projects:

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

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

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Organization staff authorized to sign grant contract

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### **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).***

From 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31 December 2019 Diogenis continued its activities with the Grant of the Open Society Foundations. (**Grant nr OR2017-40436**)

#### **Completion of Projects supported by the EU and OSF**

The completion of the project "Strengthening NGO capacity and promoting public health and human rights oriented drug policy in South Eastern Europe" and the project "New Approaches in Harm Reduction Policies and Practices "(NAHRPP) who have lasted 4 and 2 years respectively, required our attention for a substantive and financial reporting. In the briefing paper, "Drug policy reform dialogues in South East Europe. The Contribution of NGOs", we have provided an overview of the most important moments of our work on this point.

#### **The intensive deliberative process about the strategic planning of Civil Society organisations on drug policy in Greece.**

The discussion about the future strategy and planning of Civil Society organizations was a challenge in 2019. The attempts of Diogenis to obtain financing for its activities and ensure the sustainability of the organization were difficult. The funding provided by the OSF for the "Intensive deliberative process about the short and long term strategy of the Civil Society organizations was approved at the beginning of July 2019. We report on this separately.

#### **The advocacy work**

Despite financial setbacks, we have been able to perform our advocacy work as planned and in close collaboration with the NGOs of the platform for psychoactive substances. Our relationship with the newly appointed National Drug Coordinator was very close. The discussions in the Greek parliament legislation and ministerial decisions related to drug issues have been closely monitored and our contributions were highly appreciated. The contacts with the press have played a decisive role in supporting our standpoints. The campaign "Support don't punish" was devoted to the position on women who use drugs. The adoption of the law on supervised drug consumption rooms was an achievement that is due to the input of civil society organizations united in the NGOs platform. The coordination and secretarial support of Diogenis was an essential contribution for this achievement.

## **Engagement in the international debate on drugs**

Diogenis has been active at the European and international level through participation in the Civil Society Forum on drugs of the European Union as well as through participation in the Vienna NGO committee and the CND in Vienna. In the briefing paper, “Drug policy reform dialogues in South East Europe; the Contribution of NGOs”, we have provided an overview of the most important moments of our work on this point. Furthermore, the publication on drug policy reform, the UNGASS 2016 a Catalyst for Change?” has been translated into Greek for dissemination and information of a broader Greek public

### **a) Activities and methods**

#### **Main Achievements**

**The following actions have been carried out during 2019.**

#### **1. Programmes that have been completed**

In the period January-March 2019 activities have been carried out about the closure of the project in the Western Balkans and the project on New Approaches to Harm Reduction Policies and Practices (NAHRPP). The formal closing of the NAHRPP project took place later than the end of in the year 2018. This extension gave the opportunity to the lead organisation (TNI) and the project partners to hold an in depth evaluation of the project in March 2019.

#### **2. The 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the CND**

Diogenis participated at the 62th annual session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna. For the preparation of the 62<sup>nd</sup> CND, Diogenis translated into Greek the key recommendations of the EU Civil Society forum on the draft political declaration of the 2019 CND Ministerial Segment and published it in its website. After the CND a report was written and published in the website about the results of the 62<sup>nd</sup> session.

#### **3. The Civil society forum on Drugs of the EU**

Diogenis is member of the Civil Society forum on Drugs (CSFD) active in the working group “relations with international institutions”. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 a seminar is organised by the CSFD in the premises of the European parliament on “the future of the EU drug policy”. The purpose of the seminar was to inform the Members of the

European parliament and EU policy makers about the work of the CSFD and its activities on Drug policy issues. A briefing paper was published and has been distributed among the participants at the meeting. The representative of Diogenis in the CSFD is the vice-chair of the forum and member of the core group that co-ordinates the activities and of the Forum. Diogenis has contacted Greek members of the European Parliament inviting them to participate at the seminar. They have shown interest but –as most of the invited members of the European parliament did not show up.

#### **4. Advocacy activities in Greece**

##### **1. The supervised drug consumption rooms**

Important for the year 2019 was the adoption by the Hellenic Parliament of the drug law on supervised drug consumption rooms. On February 20, 2019 Diogenis took part at the hearing of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament presenting - also on behalf of the NGOs members of the platform on psychoactive substances- a number of proposals aiming to improve the draft proposal of the Government. During the preparations of the parliamentary debate on the law, several contacts with members of the parliament had as result the submission of amendments to the law. Suggestions done at the hearing have been discussed at the plenary session of the parliament. Main concerns and suggestions were:

##### **a. The registration of the users to the register of recipient of services.**

This registration is a prerequisite for the use of the consumption rooms. This requirement can be a major obstacle to users' access to sites, since a large population of users - the majority of people for whom supervisory sites are useful - do not have legal or identification documents. If they are requested to register , then a large proportion of the target population will be automatically excluded. This is not an easy issue to solve, but it is a reality that has to be addressed

**b.** It is necessary to **cooperate between police and municipal authorities** and other authorities, not for repressive but for protective purposes, so that the phenomenon of being arrested outside of the users rooms since use outside will continue to be considered a criminal offense.

c. Another point was **the cooperation of the Ministry with local government and civil society organizations** that have relevant experience in the field of psychoactive substances. There is no reference in the law on this aspect.

d. It was also proposed that **the operation of the supervised consumption rooms should not be limited only to recognized institutions** by the ministry of health, but be extended with the inclusion of legal entities governed by public or private law in case they meet the criteria and the operating conditions that are required.

e. **Municipalities and regional governments should be involved in the operation of the supervised consumption rooms in cooperation with the Ministry.** This will help the operation of sites in more areas and will give an impetus to local government initiatives on an issue that they experience on a daily basis and their citizens hold them accountable.

f. Regarding the article that "in case of a relapse ... membership will be lost", the NGOs proposed to be deleted as they consider that this is highly stigmatizing. Recidivism should not be used as punishment and interpreted as failure, but as a healing tool to continue the efforts of these people. Their uninterrupted rehabilitation is crucial to their reintegration.

## **2. The Supply don't Punish campaign**

On June 27th, an event was organized as part of the International Day Against Drugs, by the NGOs of the Platform on the issue "Women in Drug Abuse. It was a successful action with discussions, stories of women themselves and experiences of professionals in the field. The event also featured a "Guide to the Rights of Women Drug Users".

## **3. Continuation of the claim for participation of NGOs in the National Commission on Drugs**

The new National Drugs Coordinator in Greece reacting on the requirement of the NGOs to participate in the National planning and coordination Commission took the initiative to invite organizations of the NGO platform to attend as observers the monthly meetings of the commission. The NGOs see this as a positive step but they seek to be represented at the National Planning and Coordination Committee on Drugs as full member.

#### **4. Intensive deliberate process**

In the months July to December 2019 an intensive deliberate process has been realised in co-operation with the NGOs of the platform for psychoactive substances and a number of academics and professionals in the field of drugs. A separate report will refer to the results of this activity.

#### **5. The legislation on cannabis for medical purposes is not yet implemented**

One main characteristic of policy decision making and implementation of legislation in Greece is fragmentation and discrepancy between the approval of the laws and their implementation. Many laws are not implemented properly. The administrative structure needed for the implementation is not yet in place. This is disappointing especially for the Patients who are deprived from medicinal cannabis. Diogenis had been pointed out in its reaction to the government and the parliament, that the main priority of the law had to be the regulation of access to medical cannabis for patients. The minister's promises during de parliamentary debate are not fulfilled. The elections of a new parliament and a new government were also not conducive for the implementation of the law.

### **Outcomes**

**1.** The most important outcome for the drug policy in Greece was the adoption of legislation on the supervised drug consumption rooms. The implementation will be a rather difficult issue given the implications for this provision for eventual protests in neighbourhoods where the consumption rooms will be located and the difficulties with the access to their services of people who do not have a legal status. In the most recent version of the decision of the minister of health regarding the implementation rules of the law, many of the comments of the NGOs have been taken over. The most important is the change of the provisions about the registration of users of users who make use of the Drug Consumption Rooms. In the new version there is no reference to legal papers which would be a serious impediment of undocumented migrants still in procedure for a residence permit. Further there more clarity about the involvement of the local governments and the police.

**2.** The involvement of the Platform organisations in the political discourse in Greece is satisfactory. The parliament and the government are inviting the platform to participate in hearings and react on legislation proposals. Recently the National Drug Coordinator

invited members of the Platform to participate in an advisory committee of the coordinator that will advise on the new strategy and action plan on drugs. A promising move of the National Co-ordinator since this provision is part of his responsibilities according to the Drug Law 4139.2013

**3.** The National report on the drug situation in Greece 2018 is dedicated “ to the Non-Governmental Organizations and the Peer Network that have fought and succeeded in paving the way for the supervised drug consumption rooms”. This is a public recognition of the work supported and co-ordinated by Diogenis.

**4.** The contacts with the National drug co-ordination resulted in informal meetings with him and participation as observers of representatives of the platform organisations in the meetings of the “National Commission on planning and co-ordination to address the issue of drugs” . This is a good step on the way to participate as full member of the National commission. Recently the National Drug Coordinator invited persons members of the Platform to participate in an advisory committee, that will advise on the new strategy and action plan on drugs. A promising move of the National Co-ordinator since this provision is part of his responsibilities defined in the Drug Law 4139/2013

**5.** Diogenis has started to establish good relations with the municipality of Athens due to the reaction of the NGO Platform concerning the problematic situation of drug users in public places in the centre of Athens. It is an opportunity to exercise influence on the drug policy of the local governments.

## **Evaluation**

We have implemented all activities of the action plan 2018-2019. In the year 2019 we focused on activities in Greece and continued our contacts at the international level participating in the Civil Society Forum on drugs of the EU and the CND 62<sup>nd</sup> session. The “intensive deliberation process” financed by OSF, has been executed with ups and downs due to the long period that we had to wait for the decision for financing this activity.

We were forced to take drastic measures for the staff of the organization. At the same time, the members of Diogenis have decided to continue the work because we are convinced that there are still opportunities to continue this necessary work. In our almost 10-year-old organization, we have made good efforts to promote stability. We have implemented a financial and programmatic policy that is recognized as valuable by the

people and the organizations for which we do our work. Diogenis has also been evaluated by external parties as a well-functioning organization. The University of Peloponissos (Patras) published recently a study through its Thalys I program on the functioning of 107 NGOs in Greece. Diogenis has been rated as an organization with the highest score given to 4 organizations active in the field of Human Rights and Good Governance. The results for Diogenis were 4/5 stars (maximum was 5), Effectiveness: 50 points, Organisation 75 points and Transparency 90 points. For us this is also a motive for continuation of our work.

### **Sustainability**

The year 2019 was difficult for Diogenis. The financial limitations have resulted in a number of negative consequences. The staff has been reduced from 4 to 3 and we could not afford the salaries for two staff members for 10 months. We made efforts to acquire financial support but there was no positive result. We missed a chance to participate in a project of the European commission after we had submitted a proposal for a work package to the lead organisation of the project. The consortium partners decided at the last moment not to accept us as partner due to the weak financial situation of our organisation. It was for us a disappointing experience. A proposal we submitted in April 2019 to the Onassis foundation was not successful due to “lack of available budget”. Our proposal submitted in June to the Bodosakis foundation is not awarded. End of October 2019 we decided to continue as an organisation on a voluntary basis, continuing our activities and trying to acquire financial resources. We are confident that we will overcome this crisis. The year 2020 will be decisive for our organization.

January 2020

Thanasis Apostolou