



**A global advocacy campaign
Support. Don't Punish**

**Eastern Europe and Central Asia
(EECA)**

2018

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INTRODUCTION

PUNISHING KILLS

People who use drugs need support, not punishment

Dozens of "Support. Don't Punish Campaigns" took place on the 26th of June, 2018 in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This campaign stands for health and human rights as the basics of drug policy. Activists took to the streets to publicly protest against the cruel and senseless state policy against people who use drugs. This event is held around the world every year and provides a great opportunity to draw attention to this unresolved problem!

June 26 is also the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. This discriminatory and repressive language was invented at the UN. No wonder it is so, taking into account the role of the United Nations in continuing "drug war" around the world while the methods of enforcing repressive drug policies are either cowardly ignored or supported by various structures or agencies of this organization.

On the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, a lot of countries talk about the "contribution" they have made to the successful "war against drugs". In past years, some countries have celebrated this day by performing public executions or public beatings of people who have committed drug-related crimes.

On the other hand, the UN has selected 26 June as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, which is very ironic, because people are subjected to murder, torture and violence for the sake of the "war on drugs". Thus, participation in the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish " is an opportunity to support the right humane comprehension of this important day.

Thousands of people from 205 cities and 93 countries took part in the campaign last year, and 220 people did it in 2018.

Such extensive participation of countries and cities in this campaign shows us one thing - that we all live in a world where hundreds of millions of people in all parts of the world take drugs EVERY DAY. While drug use itself is widespread and nonviolent, the governments prosecute and PUNISH those who use or possess drugs for personal use as criminals.

The governments of Eastern Europe and Central Asia offer people who use drugs nothing but PERSECUTION, VIOLATION OF RIGHTS, PROHIBITION AND RESTRICTIONS, PUNISHMENT, HUMILIATION, OSTRACISM, DISCRIMINATION AND STIGMA: from the threat of banning opioid substitution therapy programs in Kazakhstan to wrecking drug policy reform in Georgia, from severing drug policy in Lithuania to bringing the HIV epidemic in Russia to one of the fastest growing epidemics in the world.

However, it is obvious for everyone, including state and law enforcement agencies, that such a policy is not effective and does not bring any results today. The only result this is aggravation of serious social and medical problems, overcrowded prisons, numerous human rights violations, from death penalty and extrajudicial killings to inhumane and forced treatment, and lots of other negative consequences.

This oppression of people who use drugs is evidenced by thousands of cases: from the most obvious, which are committed in sight at the state level, to the routine atrocities that are happening on the ground and may not be visible to the public. BUT it's all there - and clearly or secretly present in the life of every person who uses drugs.

Society and the state, obsessed with drug addiction, are trying to hide the truth and people who use drugs, they want them away – in prisons, mental hospitals, rehabilitation centers which torture people. But on the day of the global campaign "Support, don't punish" we openly testify:

PUNISHING KILLS

Criminal record for possession of a small amount of drugs have already crippled millions of our lives; "drug corruption" in law enforcement agencies has already destroyed the bodies and institutions that should protect the law and us; the HIV/AIDS epidemic and viral hepatitis has already killed millions of our loved ones; sexual violence committed by law enforcement officials and doctors has already deprived us of the ability to live on; billions of dollars are wasted on the "war on drugs" instead of developing healthcare and education systems.

Meanwhile, drug use existed before, still exists and will remain a reality despite all these drastic measures!

PUNISHING DOES NOT WORK

The governments have waged this war with disproportionate, unjust and totally INEFFECTIVE measures for too long. It is no longer possible to turn a blind eye to the obvious facts - the punitive laws against PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS are dangerous and destructive.

IT'S TIME FOR SUPPORT, NOT PUNISHMENT!

BELARUS

Minsk

"Your Chance" (PCOO "Tvoy Shans"), the organization of opioid substitution therapy patients in Belarus, took part in the campaign "Support. Don't Punish". The main goal was to inform the public that criminalization of people who use drugs significantly limits their access to prevention, support and treatment services. The participants of UNODC training joined the action, among them were the representatives of various non-governmental organizations from Belarus.

Drug dependency is a disease which should not be punished, it is necessary to help people in solving social and medical problems, provide support, formulate guidelines for healthcare, give information about prevention of HIV, viral hepatitis, tuberculosis, as well as it's necessary to help drug users receive assistance which is guaranteed to all citizens without exception according to the national law.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://www.facebook.com/TvoyShans/videos/493487697738469/>





Gomel and Svetlogorsk

Actions in support of the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish" were also held in Gomel and Svetlogorsk, Belarus.



UZBEKISTAN

Tashkent

An initiative group of outreach workers working on Global Fund projects held a flash mob in support of the "Support. Don't Punish" campaign in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Four cars with "Support. Don't Punish" logos set off on a journey to the mountains at 12 pm. The flash mob involved not only Global Fund project staff, but also activists from key populations (co - dependent, dependent and PLHIV) - a total of 20 people. An awareness session on the "Support. Don't Punish" campaign was held outdoors.

The participants discussed the further strategy of interaction between key communities and non-governmental organizations providing HIV prevention and treatment services. The result was a decision on close cooperation between these organizations. This common work should be mutually beneficial for non-governmental organizations and key populations. One of the main directions of joint activities is fighting against stigma and discrimination of drug users in the society. The self-help group for codependent people living with people who use drugs was also held after the campaign.





RUSSIA

Moscow

Andrey Rylkov Foundation (ARF) takes part in the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish" for the fourth time. The mission of this campaign is to make drug policy issues visible. The initiative calls for ending the "war on drugs", which means only one thing, and that is the war against people who use drugs. War, oppression, violence doesn't work! People need support, not punishment. We need humane drug policy and evidence-based approaches to really change the situation.

It is with these thoughts and words that ARF activists participate in the action every year. It all starts a week before the action, when they tell the participants during the outreach about the unfair drug policy and ask them to participate in the campaign.

"If these words find a response in your heart-you can also join this campaign and make a small contribution to the change of drug policy in our country!"- says the call of ARF.

The activists decided to change the date of the action to June 30 this year because it was Saturday and would make it easier for the community representatives to participate.

It all started with football. Drug users from different districts of Moscow and social workers gathered to play in their own small football tournament under the banner "Support. Don't Punish!". The huge banner with a campaign logo and slogan was made by our social worker Dima Green, who is also an artist. The excitement of the game, minor injuries, rooting for the teams, interfering people on the field. Despite the uneven score 7: 6, our friendship and support won.

Then the next part of the event began. It was a barbecue, during which the participants took part in the legal quiz on the rights of drug users and drug policy. The participants debated the issues and agreed that there was an urgent need to change repressive discourse of the current drug policy. So, here's our quiz on "Support. Don't Punish" which can be used all around the world:

«1. When does the «Support. Don't Punish» campaign take place?

- a. 31 December
- b. 29 February
- c. 26 June

2. What does the phrase "Support. Don't Punish» mean in Russian?

- a. For the world revolution!
- b. Support. Don't Punish
- c. Stay calm, don't panic

3. Who does the "Support. Don't Punish» mean in Russian?

- a. Prosecutors

b. Drug users

c. Criminal lords

Discussion: Tell us what you know about this campaign, what is it dedicated to, how do you personally feel about it?

4. What is decriminalization?

a. Recognize that something that was previously considered a criminal offense is now legal

b. Open sale of drugs

c. Capital amnesty

5. What are the significant, large and particularly large amounts of heroin (according to the Criminal code)?

a. 5 grams, 100 grams, 4 kg 200 grams

b. 1 gram, 5 grams, 10 grams

c. 0.5 grams, 2.5 grams, 1000 grams

Discussion: What is the difference between "decriminalization" and "legalization"? Which countries has successfully decriminalized drugs? From your point of view, do we need reforms in Russia aimed at decriminalizing drug use? Tell us about your experience, or your friends' experiences associated with the criminalization of drugs?

6. What is "substitution therapy"?

a. Antiretroviral therapy for HIV infection

b. Therapy with opioid drugs, prescribed by a doctor to limit street drug use

c. Therapy prescribed by the substitute of your chief physician

7. What does NOT "substitution therapy" contribute to?

a. Reducing the risk of HIV infection

b. Improving the quality of life for drug users

c. Supporting drug users' health

d. Early retirement

Discussion: Which countries allow "substitution therapy"? Which countries don't allow to use this therapy? (focus on ex-USSR countries). Why is it so? Tell us how you see the future of "substitution therapy" in Russia, do you support its implementation or not, and if not - why? If yes, what positive effects will it give to the state and the program participants?

8. In what other areas of life do drug users need support and not punishment?

(Open discussion for participants)

9. How do you start advocacy measures?

a. With blood revenge

b. Case documentation

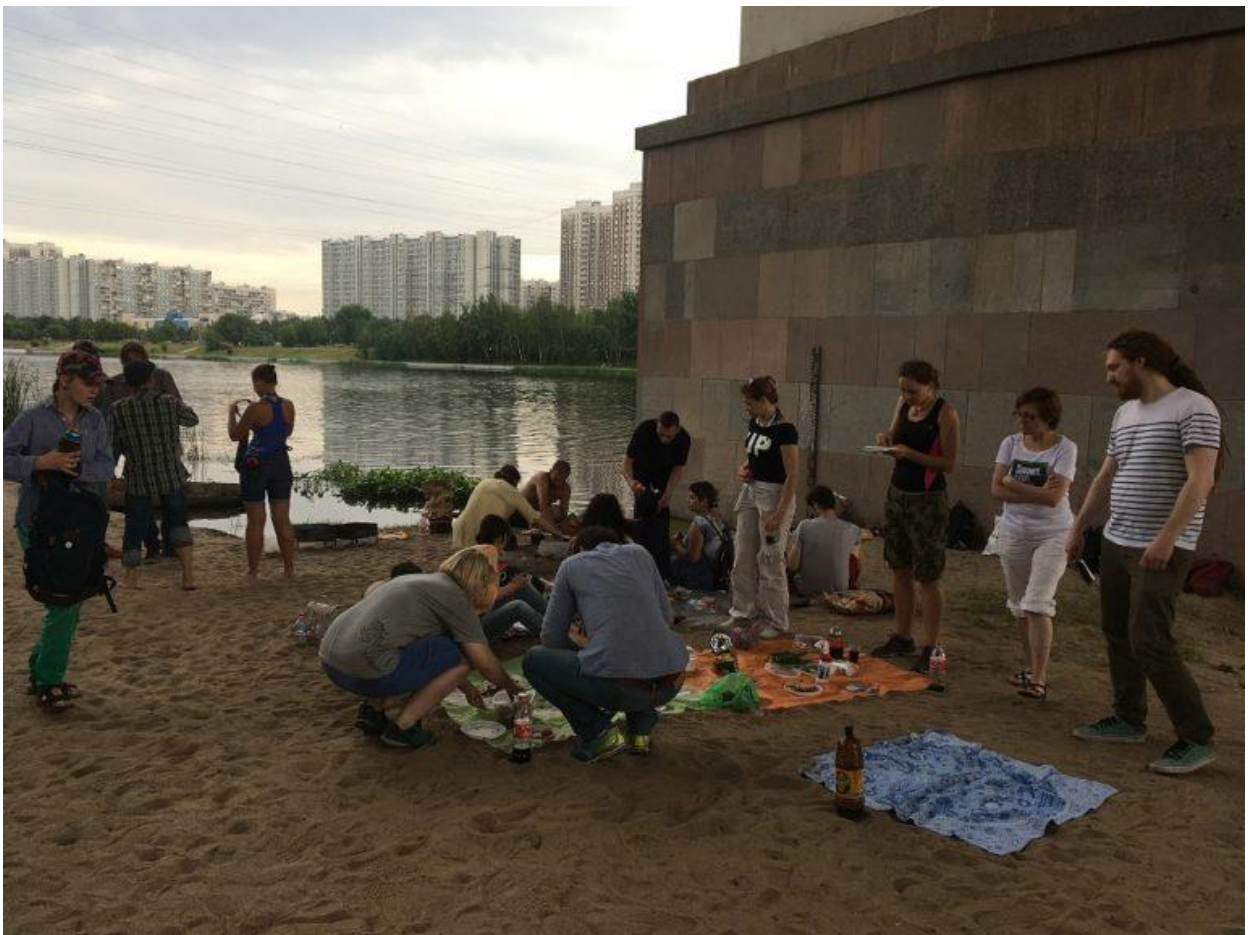
c. Application to the human rights court

A lot of different representatives of the community took part in the campaign, everyone was excited about the football, there were discussions and even disputes. But the most important thing was that there was hope that one-day drug policy would become more humane.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://youtu.be/OfZUTIP0mtM>





Yekaterinburg

"LUNa Social Assistance Center" joined the international initiative for humane drug policy on June 26 in Yekaterinburg, Russia. Our activists joined the «Support. Don't Punish" campaign to support those who were subjected to the cruellest and inhumane treatment in our society - the people who use drugs. The action was held in three districts of Yekaterinburg. The lawyer of the Yekaterinburg Bar Association provided free legal advice to drug users. A total of 54 PWUD took part in the campaign and received legal assistance. The volunteers surveyed the people who were passing by and found out whether they would agree that people who use drugs should be imprisoned for possession of various illegal substances. All 15 respondents said that if a person wasn't selling drugs that he or she shouldn't be imprisoned but offered treatment instead.



Orsk

Alena Asaeva, Mobilization Manager for ENPUD, held a single-person protest in the framework of "Support. Don't Punish", campaign and stood with a poster in front of the symbol of the city, which is a popular place among the locals.

"Any persecution of people who use drugs, is unacceptable and should be punished, regardless of the severity of dependence or other reasons why we use the substances banned half a century ago," Alena Asaeva believes. "Everyone being of sound mind and memory understood long ago who exactly benefits from prohibitions and what is behind our troubles."



Tolyatti

The non-governmental organization "April" held an action on the day of the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish". The activists took to the streets and held posters and leaflets urging people to call for humane drug policy, effective treatment and support, ending discrimination, violence, persecution and punishment of people who use drugs.



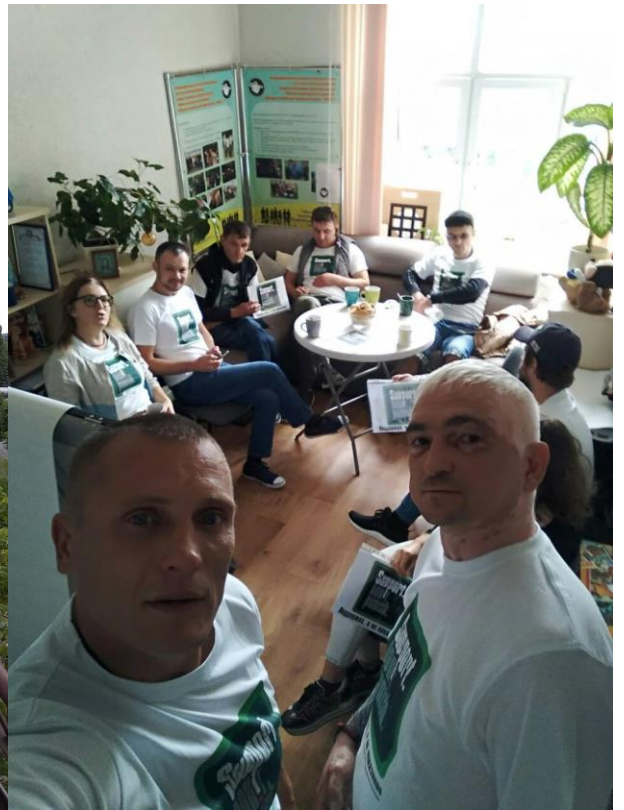
Kaliningrad

The initiative group "Stanovlenie" is involved in the protection of human rights of people who use drugs and decided to hold an action within the framework of the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish" in Kaliningrad, Russia. "Support. Don't Punish" action is a great opportunity to publicly express our protest against the brutal and senseless war against drug users.

10 participants of the action gathered together in the city center to come to the state narcology clinic, where they discussed with the doctors the importance of supporting people who use drugs, providing them with uninterrupted and affordable treatment as well as legal support in courts. After that our activists distributed the leaflets and printed material with the campaign logo to the patients of the clinic. We also posted stickers with "Support. Don't Punish" logo all around the territory nearby.

After visiting the narcology hospital, the participants of the action gathered in the office of the initiative group "Stanovlenie", where the invited specialist held a seminar on the legislation related to drug use and the possibility of alternative punishment in the form of compulsory treatment.





Saint Petersburg

The activists of the informal association "Trava" decided to celebrate the "Support. Don't Punish" day by conducting a mini-conference in Saint Petersburg, Russia. They invited speakers representing projects related to the humanization of drug policy. The conference was held in a special location called Diversity House - it is a safe and inclusive space, free from discrimination. The event was attended by 6 speakers and 48 participants, the coverage in social networks reached 28 600 people.

Speaker 1. Marina Akulova from the Humanitarian Action Fund told the participants about the programs the Fund is currently implementing which also involve HIV-positive people who use drugs. For example, the Fund offers medical and psychological counseling for clients and their relatives, the services on overdose prevention, exchange of syringes on a one-to-one basis.

Speaker 2. Arkady Chaplygin, co-organizer of the St. Petersburg Hemp March and a lawyer, spoke about the history of the ban of marijuana, how repressive policy brings economic losses to the state, as well as the Fourth Hemp March, which was held on May 5 2018 in St. Petersburg — the reasons for this march and their experience.

Speaker 3. Maria Alibegova, translator, spoke about repressive drug policies and how they lead to violation of human rights in different countries of the world. The UN says that "the health and well-being of humanity" is the main reason to combat drugs. Meanwhile the "war against drugs" violated the rights to life and health, the right to a fair trial, the right to freedom from discrimination and even the rights of the child all over the world. How does it happen? Who is to blame and what should we do?

Speaker 4. Gleb Paikachev, Secretary of the Russian Forum of People Who Use Drugs, presented a summary of the report, which the Forum participants prepared for the UN Committee Against Torture. The report describes cases of using the withdrawal syndrome by the police to obtain confessions. It's a usual practice to detain drug users for 30 days for drug use or failure to go through compulsory treatment which is not even available for drug users due to the fact that the hospitals have no available beds and that the treatment is considered ineffective.

What problems do pregnant women who use drugs face in healthcare facilities? How is it possible that people suffering from drug dependency and tuberculosis can't receive treatment and just have to wait for their death? How do repressive laws, discriminatory drug policies of the state and public stigmatization lead drug users to suicide?

Speaker 5. Alexander Delfinov, poet, journalist, civil activist, expert on international drug policy, spoke about the main contradictions of modern drug policy and the transition from law enforcement approach to social and medical support.

Speaker 6. Vitaly Esipov, 228 Project coordinator. 229 is an advocacy bot and a website providing essential information and legal advice on drug-related issues. Vitaly shared the results of the first month after the bot release, the most frequently asked questions, plans for the future, the problems of drug-activism in Russia and proposed everyone to be friends.

The organizers of the mini-conference invited the participants to fill in the feedback forms, while thinking about the key reforms of drug policy in Russia, and what activists can do now, share what was benefiting and what caused conflicting emotions during the conference. The question was: "What reforms would you introduce first of all? » Participants were asked to name three ideas. The answers in order of popularity are as follows:

Scientific research and experiments (7 people)

A full-scale study of the effects of substances and their effects. Encouraging research on substances that have been banned for research for several decades. Introduction of scientific research programs of psychoactive substances.

Conduct a few experiments so that the prohibition of substances could be scientifically justified. Select one area and test how decriminalization will work there.

Decriminalization (7 people)

Prepare the ground for the legalization of recreational drugs. Decriminalization of marijuana. Lifting the criminal penalty for use of any drugs. / Decriminalization of everything. Restructure the article 228 / 228 Amnesty.

Support (7 people)

Harm reduction, rehabilitation and assistance, substitution therapy.

Education (2 people)

Publication of scientific literature and information on the consequences of drug use. Awareness campaign against drug user phobia and discrimination of drug users. Provide awareness on drugs in schools, for students and adults.

Medical use (2 people)

Propose the quota of substances in medical institutions. Medical use of cannabis.

The participants also proposed to regulate the production of drugs, transfer the drug trade to the area of responsibility of the state and cooperate with countries supporting humane drug policy.

The question "What forms of activism are relevant now?" got the following answers:

- Meetings of activists, rallies, pickets.
- Education and awareness: attracting attention, distribution of scientific content, publicity, discussions about harm and benefits of substances.

- Demonstrating the ineffectiveness and unprofitable basis of the modern drug policy: putting people behind bars for smoking weed is expensive and leads to greater criminalization of the society.
- Artistic interpretation.
- Organized humanitarian aid to drug users, grassroots work "on the ground".
- Appeal against regulatory documents, including those that include cannabis to the list of narcotic substances without any ground.

The question

"What was the most valuable thing for you in the meeting?" got the following answers from the participants:

"Meeting with like-minded women and men, new important information, the realization that there are people who feel that protecting the rights of female drug users are important, the feeling that we are not alone and there's someone who understands us."

"I'm just starting to get interested in the topic of drug policy and drug culture, so the whole meeting and reports were very interesting, I learned a lot."

"The publicity of the problem, the desire to understand, research and study the issue, the meeting was very informative. I would also like to highlight the speech by Gleb Paikachev, meeting with Kemp march organizers and the background info on how it was prepared and the story about the blue and yellow ambulance buses".

And what caused conflicting emotions?

"The current situation in the modern drug policy in Russia and in the world, stigmatization and marginalization of female drug users, drug-related oppression, lack of education and assistance at the state level."

"Deplorable situation in many areas, which was outlined by the speakers made me angry. Also disagreement with some commentators from the audience."

"Emotional scaremongering of the problem of rights and freedoms, which created a one-sided vision of the problem: not all drugs are harmless to society, for example, heroin and heavy chemical drugs that are addictive and destroy the nervous system."

"Informal conference on humanization of drug policy, decriminalization and harm reduction programs for people who use drugs".

The participants took photos with "Support. Don't Punish" posters, could get a new issue of the newspaper for drug users "Shlyapa i Boyan" and communicated with experts.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkZaifBJneO3N2WrgoszrBkBCEpJcM52C>





LITHUANIA

Vilnius

In Vilnius, Lithuania, the youth organization Young wave and its supporters, Vilnius students for freedom, Green Circle Society and the initiative group Two Not One held a series of pickets in support of the the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish" calling on the state and society to support drug users and not punish them.

As part of the campaign, a documentary film "Breaking the taboo" (about the war on drugs) and the follow-up discussion were organized in one of the bars in Vilnius. A lot of young people and brave politicians gathered together to take another important step in breaking the existing drug policy taboos in Lithuania. Civil society, which asks questions to those who hide from the direct questions of activists, is the main force on moving this way.

The discussion was attended by the economist and politician Ausra Maldekene, Deputy of the Lithuanian Seimas Ausrine Armonayte, Deputy Chairman of the liberal movement and the representative of the youth wave Aiste Peroskite, as well as civil society activists.

"Support. Don't Punish" campaign calls to implement policies that do not violate human rights but protect the health of all citizens. Today's policy in Lithuania discriminates people who use drugs, expels them from society and persecutes them. By joining the campaign, we show that our country has a civil society that seeks to change the situation. Criminalization of drugs shows that there is a great lack of knowledge among legislators and decision makers on this issue, who are often very reluctant to listen to science, relying only on their moral assessments, while the entire Western world is moving towards a more liberal drug policy. We are the young generation of this country, and we still hope to see modern and advanced Lithuania. Therefore, we believe that it is time to speak louder and bolder about all the problems that exist in society today," said Milda Arlauskaite, the head of the Young Wave organization.

Drug policy became more stringent over the past three years in Lithuania. Young people who use drugs are an "easy prey" for law enforcement agencies. "We don't want to see it in Lithuania. Moreover, the long-term experience of other countries shows the complete ineffectiveness of such "solutions" as criminalization. The level of drug use is not decreasing, while the damage to health, social care and economy is growing. Reallocating to the medical area only 10-20% of the funds

currently allocated to "police" operations against teenagers, youth clubs or those suffering from drug dependency could bring significant benefits for the whole country," said Andrews Ramonas, Chairman of the Green Circle Society.

On June 26, the planned activities were not limited to young people - activists also raised the problem of prisoners who use drugs. A group of OST patients contacted the Department of prisons, the Ministry of justice and the Ministry of health of the Republic of Lithuania on the procedure of availability of substitution therapy in the penitentiary system of the country.

"Until recently, we were one of the two countries in the European Union, where, contrary to the laws of Lithuania and possibly all possible global conventions on human rights, people were forced to interrupt their methadone substitution therapy in prison. This problem was solved this year, but the procedure for providing this treatment in prisons not only does not comply with the recommendations of the World Health Organization, but also significantly differs from the procedure provided in the usual medical institutions of the country. The initiative group "Two Not One" made a public video, which explains this situation. If the situation does not change in the near future, we will attract the attention of all responsible institutions to these and other similar negative processes," said Aista Petushkaite, a member of the "Young Wave".

According to activists, the biggest absurdity of repressive drug policy is to punish the disease, that is why it is so important to participate in the campaign "Support. Don't Punish " in Lithuania. In this regard, all the processes launched on June 26 will be continued.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://www.facebook.com/jaunabanga/videos/1939246726088016/>

<https://www.facebook.com/jaunabanga/videos/1939284002750955/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= oehew8JFmI>





Vilnius

The Lithuanian organizations Resetas, Jauna Banga (Young Wave), a self-group of methadone therapy patients "Two in One" and EHRA help a picket in front of the Department of Prisons in Vilnius, Lithuania. The main message was to change / improve the law on OST in Lithuanian prisons according to the scientific data.

The core of the problem is that for many years Lithuania has remained one of the two States in the European Union, where prisoners could not receive substitution therapy in prisons as a treatment for opioid dependence. It was the only disease for which the treatment guaranteed by the Lithuanian laws wasn't provided in prisons.

In fact, it was a gross violation of Lithuanian and international law, which had long been ignored at the state level.

It was confirmed in April this year that the failure to provide such treatment to prisoners is against the recommendations of the World Health Organization and the European Union Action Plan on Drugs. Lithuania remains one of the last countries in Europe where it is still impossible to start opioid substitution therapy if a patient is diagnosed with opioid dependence.

In the absence of evidence-based treatment, drug-dependent prisoners have to use illicit drugs, share syringes, which are also illegal in prisons, leading to the spread of diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C in detention facilities.





Kaunas

RIGA Support Foundation together with the Lithuanian Initiative Group of psychoactive substances users held a picket within the «Support. Don't Punish" campaign in Kaunas, Lithuania. Activists of the community of people who use drugs from several cities of Lithuania - Klaipeda, Gargždai, Vilnius and Alytus, gathered together in the city of Kaunas. Activists took to the streets of Kaunas to publicly protest against the cruel and senseless national policy against people who use drugs. They handed out leaflets to passers-by (translated into Lithuanian) and spoke about the drug policy in Lithuania.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://www.facebook.com/cyf221/videos/627095184323154/?t=115>

PHOTOS OF THE ACTION

<http://cyf.no-ip.org/cyf/galerija/index.php>





LATVIA

Riga

The event to celebrate "Support. Don't Punish" campaign was held in the Cultural Center Kanapes (Cannabis in Latvian) in Riga, Latvia. The event was organized by several public organizations: DIA+LOGS (center for support for everyone affected by HIV/AIDS), HIV.LV Association HIV.LV and activists of the community of people who use drugs "Dveri" ("Doors"). The event included the exhibition of the film "Three Hope": about DIA + LOGS activists, as well as a discussion on the topic "Is it necessary to punish drug use with criminal penalty?"

Janis Bekmanis, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Astrida Stirna, Chief Narcologist at the Ministry of Health, and Agita Seya, Board Member of DIA + LOGS participated in the discussion. The discussion was facilitated by journalist I. Paparde. The event was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Health, Riga City Council, the Center for Disease Prevention and Control, Probation Service and activists of the community of people who use drugs. Agita Seya highlighted a public stereotype during the discussion: that drug use automatically leads to crime. In her opinion, people with drug dependence should be treated and not prosecuted. A criminal should be in prison, but a sick person should be in hospital. "There were always groups of people that were condemned by the society. Women with black hair were once considered witches, and burned at the stake. Maybe drug users should not be punished either?"

She noted that in this case it was not about supporting the illegal drug trade, but about the way people with dependency were treated by the society. "I would buy a clean drug at the pharmacy or grow a bush of marijuana in the garden with great pleasure myself, » Agita said.

Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Janis Bekmanis agreed that sanctions are not the solution. He, however, pointed out that Latvia is not ready to end criminal prosecution for drug use yet. "Penalty and administrative responsibility are necessary as a deterrent," noted J. Bekmanis. He also added that the minimum term of imprisonment, 3 months, is applied after two administrative punishments. Unpaid fines, the cost of forensic examination, as well as the cost of a lawyer must be paid by the violator, and they still should be paid after serving the sentence. From his point of view, the Latvian laws are quite humane in relation to drug users, when compared with practices of other countries. However, the existing norms of responsibility and support for people are not sufficiently implemented in the country.

Astrida Stirna, chief narcologist at the Ministry of Health, confirms that it's very seldom when compulsory treatment is offered instead of criminal punishment. According to her point of view, the assistance should be more accessible for people who want to recover from drug dependency.

At the moment, most programs are provided on a fee basis, and not everyone who needs help can afford them.

Madara Lapsa, head of the rehab in Liepaja, says that former prisoners often become their patients and most of them were imprisoned not only for drug offenses. It was usually theft, burglary and other crimes. Drugs for these people is just the usual background of their life. They are forced to get involved in trafficking to earn for a new dose. Currently, special programs are being held in the Olaine prison for convicts who wish to recover from drug addiction, but this program only lasts a year, and it is difficult to wait for real results in a period of 3 months. "We need a drug policy that is based on human rights, health care, access to rehabilitation and harm reduction services," Madara Lapsa said.

Thus, the discussion after watching the film was very lively and interesting. There are so many unresolved issues in Latvia that there was not enough time to discuss all the issues of drug policy, rehabilitation and prevention. As a result, everyone agreed that decriminalization is necessary, as well as a broad discussion in society and the media. The economic and legal development of the Latvian society is necessary, which means greater tolerance towards people with "other" views.

THE MOVIE «THREE HOPES»

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xPNEOH7iCY&feature=youtu.be>





MOLDOVA

Chişinău

A series of actions was held in the framework of the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish" in Chisinau, Moldova. The goal was to attract the attention of the general public and put an end to the punitive drug policy, as a result of which people's health, social and economic development are deteriorating, human rights are violated. The main message was "Criminalization and discrimination of people who use drugs is extremely harmful and ineffective". The actions were initiated by the community of people who use drugs of the Republic of Moldova.

Drug policy can be humane and thus effective if people are not punished. The medical system and harm reduction programs are more effective in addressing issues related to drug use. "We are ready for the international action "Support. Don't Punish". We believe that our state will change its approach in the legislative area, and take further steps towards a humane drug policy. Today, the war on drugs has turned into a war against people. Punishment does not work, it only embitters them and brings the whole society to negative results," the activists stated.

Action 1. Parliament. Moldova Consortium, the League of PLHIV, Pulse Initiative Group, GenderDoc M, the Partnership for Equal Access, ECUO, UORN, TDV BALTI in the framework of the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish" and the national campaign "Together for life" held an action in front of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in Chisinau, at the initiative of the community of people who use drugs and other key populations and organizations of Moldova. The aim of the action is to draw the attention of decision-makers and the general public to end the punitive drug policy, which today negatively affects healthcare, socio-economic development and human rights in Moldova, and is one of the main barriers to get access to HIV prevention services.

Activists called on Parliament and the Government to remove political, legislative and ideological barriers and ensure the right to health and other human rights for drug users, their families and society, as well as increase public funding for prevention programs.

The activists addressed to the Parliament of Moldova the following messages: "Support instead of punishment!", "Rehabilitation instead of imprisonment!", "Access to harm reduction programs - instead of a limited number of places in OST program!", "Communities from all over the world call on governments to stop the senseless war on drugs", "By qualifying drug addiction as a crime, the government creates criminal tools to use against people", "The basic human rights to health, life, freedom of choice, movement and many other things are violated", "Support, don't punish!!!"

The activists handed over an appeal to the Prime Minister, Mr. Pavel Philip, and the Chair of Parliament, Mr. Andrian Kandu, to urge decision-makers to reconsider the legislative policy in the

country, stop persecuting and punishing people because of their illness or use of any psychoactive substances, follow the positive example of the European Union countries and draw attention to the fact that the European community opposes repressive approaches and condemns all kinds of discrimination against drug users, as it is contrary to the European standards of democracy and welfare.

Also the activists asked in their appeal to organize a government investigation of violations of rights of people who use drugs, since International human rights standards impose obligations on governments to promote and protect these rights. The activists also called on to promote the adoption of guidelines for the humanization of policies for people who use drugs and the introduction of laws and practices that promote respect for rights on a non-discriminatory basis.

Action 2. Embassy of The Republic of Kazakhstan. Activists came to the Consulate General of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Moldova to support the community of people who use drugs in this country, since it was on June 26 that the fate of the substitution therapy program was decided in Kazakhstan, and the fate of people who use drugs. The representative of the Consulate General of Kazakhstan received a letter of support for the OST program. Thus, the Moldovan activists supported the appeals signed by 64 organizations from all over the world, as well as the held an action to support opioid substitution therapy programs in Kazakhstan.





Bălți

We decided to organize an action on the day of the municipal council meeting in order to personally ask questions to municipal councilors in Balti, Moldova, at the initiative of the community of people who use drugs and other key populations and organizations of Moldova such as Moldova Consortium, the League of PLHIV, Pulse Initiative Group, GenderDoc M, the Partnership for Equal Access, ECUO, UORN and TDV BALTI.

The activists asked the staff of the city hall the following question: "In your opinion, do drug users deserve punishment or support? » We asked the citizens the same question in the Central square of Balti. Its purpose was to draw attention of the public and local authorities to the situation regarding drug users in Balti. All respondents said that drug users did not deserve any punishment. No one said that it should be used. Thus, these answers do not confirm the exaggerated opinion, that the Moldovan society is not ready for the liberalization of drug policy.

The community of PWUD in Moldova, together with other groups and organizations, is going to continue its work in developing and implementing a new humane model of drug policy, and so that oppression of people who use drugs could be finally stopped. We are going to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights on all these issues.





KAZAKHSTAN

Astana

The Kazakhstan Union of People Living with HIV held a series of pickets and other events dedicated to the global campaign "Support Don't Punish" in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The official opening of the photo exhibition "Everyone is important: stories of Kazakhstan people about the world drug problem in photos", was held in Astana on June 26, 2018 and organized by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in partnership with USAID. The opening ceremony was attended by the author, a well-known photographer Nick Danziger, representatives of UNODC and USAID, as well as the patients of substitution therapy programs from various regions of Kazakhstan. The patients later joined civil activist in a campaign to support OST.

The actions in support of substitution therapy programs were necessary because the program had stopped accepting new patients since December 20, 2017 in Kazakhstan. This verdict on the results of the government inspection caused concern among public and medical workers, the patients of the substitution therapy program were panicking themselves. Moreover, a special interdepartmental commission was to be held on June 27, 2018 to decide the fate of the program! All the data showed that OST program was going to shut down on the entire territory of Kazakhstan.

The Kazakhstan Union of People Living with HIV launched an awareness campaign to attract the attention of decision-makers, so they could make the right and deliberate choice, and issued the following appeal together with the participants of OST programs:

"We, the citizens of Kazakhstan, the participants of opioid substitution therapy and those who stand in queues waiting for treatment, need access to treatment of drug dependence in our country. The right to life and the right to the highest level of health are guaranteed to us by the Declarations of Human Rights and the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The substitution maintenance therapy medicine is included to the WHO list of vital medicines. 320 people receive treatment in 13 cities in Kazakhstan today, the main purpose of which, like any other type of treatment, is to stabilize or improve the physical condition of a person. Drug dependence is a chronic disease and substitution therapy is an effective form of treatment.

The situation in Kazakhstan is currently threatening for the program and it might be closed. Meanwhile, this therapy is recognized all over the world as one of the most effective practices for drug dependence treatment. It is successfully implemented in 106 countries. The results of numerous studies indicate that OST positively contributes to reducing the use of illegal drugs and reduces mortality and the risk of HIV infection.

We ask you to protect and exercise our right to receive effective, evidence-based treatment.

The Kazakhstan Union of People Living with HIV has always supported drug users, because even the closest people turned away from many of them, and they could once again become clients of the illegal drug market, end up in prison or die. Everyone should have a chance to live!

We call on decision makers to protect and realize the right of these people to receive effective, evidence-based treatment for substitution therapy!

We ask community activists and all those who understand the importance of the program to support us! We ask you to publish videos, photos and stories on social networks so that this program could be saved, and people would have a chance to change and save their lives.

We will not be silent and afraid! We can change the situation! On June 26, Astana will host an action to defend OST"

Representatives of communities, non-governmental organizations from Astana, Almaty, and Temirtau, and other citizens held a picket to support OST on June 26, one day before the decision on the further existence of substitution therapy programs was to be made.

The activists spoke, proved, called and hoped that they would be heard by the decision makers. Hundreds of those who were already involved in the program hoped with us but those who wanted to be included to the program and stay alive were even more worried. After all, OST is a really last chance for a lot of people. 34 appeals and complaints from patients were sent to the Commissioner for Human Rights of Kazakhstan. A flash mob "Substitution therapy is my chance" aimed at drawing attention to the problem became very popular in social networks. A report was prepared together with the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association and the Canadian HIV / AIDS Legal Network and later presented at the 62nd pre-sessional working group of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in Geneva.

The document contains 30 questions, but the question № 26 is of particular importance: "Please indicate the success of the measures taken by the state party to combat the flow of illicit drugs, such as cannabis and opiates, and to prevent their consumption. Please also provide information on measures taken to improve the quality of drug addiction treatment and rehabilitation services, including the provision of opioid substitution therapy."

Addressing the government of Kazakhstan, the activists hoped that they would be heard and hundreds of people would not lose faith in the future and the programs of substitution therapy would upgrade from the pilot projects to the official form of treatment of drug dependence in Kazakhstan. Every patient should have the right to choose their treatment.

And we won!!! It was decided to continue the programs of substitution therapy in Kazakhstan on June 27! Take action!





Temirtau

The activists of the youth volunteer club "Bridge to the Future" and Center for development and social assistance to the population "My House" joined the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish" in Temirtau, Kazakhstan. Its purpose is to show that punishment can't be an effective measure to solve the problem of drug use, but on the contrary it only aggravates the situation!



ESTONIA

Tallinn

The Estonian Drug Users Association MTÜ "LUNEST" organized an action in the framework of the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish" on Vabaduse Square (the Freedom Square) in Tallinn, Estonia. This year the campaign is focused on the availability of such life-saving medicine like naloxone in Estonia. Other non-governmental organizations such as EHPV and VEK LGBT supported LUNEST during the action.

The main slogan of the action was "1319 lives could be saved", as 1319 people had died from overdose to that day in Estonia. The action showed the Estonian public that there was a problem in the country, and the problem was getting access to naloxone, which could save the lives of hundreds of people who use drugs, and was inaccessible to drug users and their loved ones. The death toll from overdoses is so high because naloxone is a prescription drug in Estonia. This means that it is not available for everyone who needs it in real everyday life.

Therefore, the main message of the action was to call on the authorities to ensure the availability of naloxone over-the-counter. After all, Estonia ranks first in number of deaths from drug overdose in the EU, and inaccessibility of naloxone is one of the main reasons for this sad statistics.

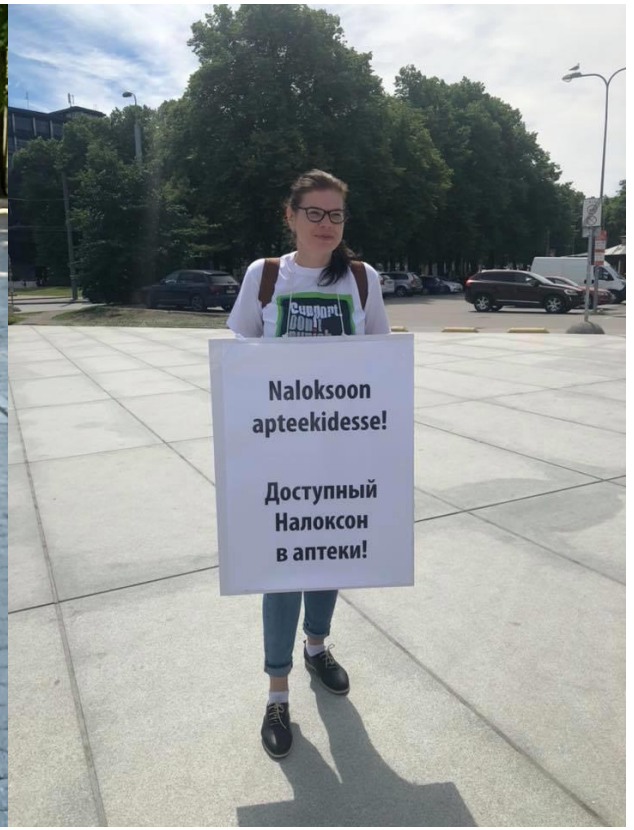
Naloxone is offered to a person in need for free in Estonia, but in order to get it you have to undergo group training in special places such as harm reduction centers. Then naloxone is handed to the drug user. When you finish your ampoule you can exchange it for a new one there. But the group is difficult to gather because everyone is busy and at the same time individual training is not allowed. Moreover, a lot of drug users don't visit such centers and prefer to deal with it on their own. The problem is also that a person can get naloxone only in a city where he or she has been trained - that is, for example, if a drug user permanently lives in Tallinn he has to go to Jõhvi (171 km from Tallinn) to get their naloxone. Also, a lot of people who use drugs don't want to show their faces and so they don't visit harm reduction centers, because they don't trust them and are afraid that their data will then be published somewhere, as the level of discrimination and stigmatization of drug users in the country is quite high.

"We want naloxone to be freely available in pharmacies. So that anyone, for example, a relative of a drug user, could come and buy it. We want it to be available for the police officers and in the ambulance, so everyone could have it in a medicine box. For example, a police officer who saw an overdose or a relative of a drug user could provide first aid themselves. "Now they have to call an ambulance, and it often happens that the ambulance does not come in time," — Elena Antonova, the Head of "LUNEST", said.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKHiUz5gukA>





GEORGIA

Tbilisi

A community of people who use drugs has been fighting for the humanization of repressive drug policies since 2006 in Tbilisi, Georgia. However, the current government continues to pursue a policy of violence against its citizens, tens of thousands of whom have been declared criminals because of their drug use. Repressive drug policy is fighting people, not the problem, it takes away their freedom and hope for the future, their health and, most importantly, life!

The Georgian Network of People Who Use Drugs (GeNPUD) conducted the first large-scale rally in front of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2013, because the Ministry had always resisted the humanization of drug policy. Law enforcement structures constantly used systemic violence against drug users and prevented the drug policy from becoming more humane in Georgia.

In 2017, GeNPUD traditionally joined the global campaign "Support. Don't Punish". Activists from nine regions of Georgia gathered in front again in front of the the Ministry of Internal Affairs and demanded drug policy reform, which would prevent the Ministry from using violent measures against drug users.

This year, GeNPUD organized a mini-football tournament together with the Georgian Football Federation, the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, the Center for Mental Health and Drug Prevention, the Tbilisi City Hall, the Tbilisi City Assembly, the Alliance for the Fight against Tobacco Harm, the Center for the Restoration of Georgia and the Foundation for Health Promotion and Education in Georgia. In parallel to the tournament, all participants were able to take part in voluntary testing for HIV and viral hepatitis C and B.

Media coverage was very positive and helped to change many negative media stereotypes about "sick" drug users, popular with the media. The success of this action and the positive feedback of all participants means that such sports tournaments will become an annual event.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=YclXfqJe2ws



UKRAINE

"VOLNA" in the regions

Actions within the global campaign "Support. Don't Punish" were held throughout Ukraine on June 26. ., Almost all regions of the country took part in the actions: Kiev region, Poltava region, Sumy region, Ivano-Frankivsk region, Odessa region, Kharkiv region, Zaporizhia region, Zhytomyr region, Lugansk region, Dnipropetrovsk region, Chernivtsi region, Lviv region, Nikolaev region.

These actions were organized by: All-Ukrainian Association of People Living with Drug Addiction ("VOLNA") with the support of the Alliance of Public Health, 100% of Life Network, Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD), Public Association "Meridian", NGO "NA Club", Chance Club, Parus, All-Ukrainian League "Legalife", All-Ukrainian Association of Drug-Addicted Women ("ONA"), Second Life, as well as representatives of public, state and international organizations.

In small groups, holding hand-written posters, people took to the streets of their cities with one message: "Support. Don't Punish". They were all the activists and volunteers who responded to the call of the All-Ukrainian Association of People Living with Drug Addiction ("VOLNA") to join the action, and were not afraid to speak publicly about decriminalization and repressive laws in the country.







Kiev

An action-performance “Witch Hunt” took place in front of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in Kiev, as part of the global campaign “Support. Don't Punish”. The action was organized by the All-Ukrainian Association of People Living with Drug Addiction (“VOLNA”) with the support of the Alliance of Public Health and the Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD). The event was attended by people who use drugs, public figures and human rights activists.

Participants of the action staged a performance to draw the government's attention to the national drug policy and the problems of thousands drug users in Ukraine. The activists showed what a “witch hunt” meant for them. The so-called Inquisitor in a police cap and people dresses as public officials and judges tried to burn a “witch” - a female drug-user - on an improvised stake. Then the participants collected signatures under the “petition”. In the end, the witch was released, and that according to the organizers, meant liberalization of the law.

The participants of the action called on the government to end the “war on drugs”, abolish ineffective drug policy and replace the criminal prosecution of drug users with administrative sanctions.

The campaign included the following slogans:

- * “We call the government to abandon the war on drugs which is a witch hunt”.
- * “People who live with drug addiction have the same rights as all citizens of Ukraine, and should not become victims of unproven accusations, myths and stereotypes.”
- “Ukraine should abolish ineffective and punitive drug policy.”
- * “Immediately decriminalize the possession of drugs for personal use”.
- * “Replace criminal prosecution of drug users with administrative penalties”.

“5 years have passed since the first street action like that in Ukraine and we have to stare that instead of fighting serious crimes, thousands of law enforcement officers and millions of taxpayer money are diverted to daily systematic criminal prosecution of thousands of drug users who possess drugs for personal use due to their chronic dependence! A whole army of prosecutors, judges and penal settings officers are involved in maintaining this extremely inefficient punitive system of “combating drug trafficking” based on old Soviet approaches. While our country strives for progressive changes, including in the area of human rights, we urge the government of Ukraine to stop the “witch-hunt”, decriminalize drug use and make drug policy really effective and progressive,” Anton Basenko, the Chairman of the Board of the All-Ukrainian Association of People Living with Drug Addiction (VOLNA), said during the rally.

“The Ukrainian courts sentenced almost 9 thousand people in 2017. Over 6.6 thousand of them or 73% later got a criminal record for possession of drugs for personal use. They possessed such a

small amount of drugs that it is not even subject to criminal prosecution in most EU countries. Ukraine still has a system of "drug user registration" remaining from the Soviet repressive times, which provides unlimited exchange of information about drug users between doctors and law enforcement officers, which is also a gross violation of the Constitution of Ukraine and various international conventions. This shameful policy must be immediately changed. The government should review this issues on a primary basis. We hope that the flames of this symbolic inquisition hearth under the Cabinet of Ministers will burn the feet of Ukrainian officials, who are responsible for the developing and implementation of the state drug policy", - Pavel Skala, Associate Director of the Alliance for Public Health and Co-coordinator of the global campaign "Support. Don't Punish" in Ukraine, said during the interview.

A thematic video was broadcasted on the screen during the performance, the local band "Piaty Prihod" also took the stage. The band members are young drug users who are defending their right to humane drug policy by playing their music. The activists released black balloons with painted bars on them in memory of those who had died because of ineffective drug policy.

The cinema "October" showed a series of documentaries "One Day in a Life" (about activists of the community of drug users), "Positive People" (about the life of drug users living with HIV, and their daily struggles), "The Fifth Therapy" (a social documentary based on a series of autobiographical novels by the Odessa poet Stas Dombrovsky) on the same day. All these movies touched the topic of advocacy and decriminalization of drug addicts, explained their problems and tried to bust common myths about drug users.

There was a press briefing before the screening and the directors Stas Dombrovsky, Sergei Lysenko and Igor Kuzmenko had a chance to present their films to the public.

"It doesn't matter if you hit the rock bottom. There is always an opportunity to fix everything and become a productive person again while you are still alive, it all depends on you. That's what our movies are about" Stas Dombrovsky, the script writer and the leading actor of "The 5th Therapy" said.







Severodonetsk

The action “No witch hunt in Ukrainian drug policy” was held in Severodonetsk, Luhansk region, Ukraine as part of the international campaign “Support. Don’t Punish”. The participants of the action asked the residents and politicians of the city if the Ukrainian society is ready for changes in drug policy and tolerating people who use drugs.

The slogan of our action was "Silence kills!" and we tried to use the action to raise awareness about overdose. Activists drew attention to the inaccessibility of naloxone without prescription in the region, they monitored pharmacy chains to describe the problem in full detail and used the action to inform the regional administration about this issue.

Local media were invited to take part in the action, but no journalists came. This was another indication of the "unpopularity", neglect and stigmatization of people who use drugs. But it doesn't mean that we won't continue our fight to make naloxone freely accessible and that we won't defend our rights! Silence kills!

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://www.facebook.com/alexey.kvitkovsky/videos/1282070935261172/?fref=nf>



Odessa

All-Ukrainian action-performance "Witch Hunt" by people who use or used drugs took place on the Greek Square in Odessa, Ukraine. The action was organized by the All-Ukrainian Association of People Living with Drug Addiction ("VOLNA") with the support of the Alliance of Public Health and the Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD).

The activists made a small performance. The Inquisitor dressed as a police officer found drugs, which belonged to a "witch". Then he hit her with a bat and tied to a stake. The detained witch was then "burned" at the stake.

Participants of the action demanded to abolish criminal persecution for drug use and introduce administrative penalties instead. Thus, part 1 of Article 309 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine on "Illegal production, manufacture, purchase, storage, transportation or shipment of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or their analogues without the purpose of sale" should be abolished immediately. In their opinion, this provision in the Criminal code fuels discrimination of the citizens who use drugs.

"The number of people who were imprisoned for drug trafficking decreased by 25% in our country in 2017, while the cases of punishment for drug use and transportation of narcotic substances increased by 28%." We are fighting to end the repressive drug policy", - Julia Kogan, regional representative of "VOLNA" in Odessa, said during the action.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wbq5FhowB0s>





Zaporizhia-Berdyansk

The team of the Foundation "Second Life" and members of the regional representative office of the All-Ukrainian Association of People Living with Drug Addiction (VOLNA) held actions as part of the global campaign "Support. Don't Punish» in Zaporizhia and Berdyansk. We have chosen the key slogan of the movement for our actions, which is "People who use drugs should no longer be prosecuted as criminals!"

The actions took form of informational meetings for participants of the substitution therapy programs and people who use drugs in Zaporizhia and Berdyansk. The activists told patients of OST and drug users about the international campaign "Support. Don't Punish", distributed t-shirts and badges.

T-shirts and badges with "Support. Don't Punish" logo were also presented to the medical management of the narcology hospital and our colleagues from the "Spodivannya" Foundation, whose President supported this international campaign.

The meetings were facilitated by Denis Korshunov, a representative of "VOLNA" in Zaporizhia region and member of the Coordination Council of the Eurasian Network of People who Use Drugs (ENPUD).





Poltava

The "Witch Hunt" action also was performed in Poltava, Ukraine. It was an art performance, similar to those which the All-Ukrainian Association of people living with drug addiction ("VOLNA") also had showed in Odessa and Kiev.

The activists staged a "witch hunt" during the action. "Inquisitors", which symbolized criminalization and discrimination, tortured and tried to burn the "witch" - a person who lives with drug addiction. The action was aimed at changing the repressive Ukrainian laws on drugs, ending the decriminalization of people who use drugs, and providing them with access to harm reduction services.

"We urge to end the "war on drugs", which turns into a "witch hunt" in our country, where witches are people who use drugs. We call for equal rights for people living with drug addiction and to get rid of myths and stereotypes. We urge you to abandon ineffective punitive drug policies. Decriminalization of possession of drugs for personal use should be a priority. It is also necessary to replace the criminal prosecution of people who use drugs with administrative penalties or completely abolish any punishment», - Velta Parkhomenko, the coordinator of the national action "Support. Don't Punish" said.

A thematic movie was broadcast on the screen during the performance. It was made in memory of those who had died because of the existing drug policy. The activists released black balloons with printed prison bars on them into the sky after the action.

"People who use drugs are constantly discriminated and stigmatized. This prevents them from returning to society and receiving proper treatment, which in turn creates a risk of further spread of HIV/AIDS and other socially dangerous diseases. The purpose of our action is to draw public attention to the problem, so we could counter these threats together, as well as help representatives of key communities to get vital treatment and adequate support of the state instead of the prison sentence," - Yanina Stemkovsky, the protest's organizer and regional representative of "VOLNA" in Poltava, said.

The action was organized by the All-Ukrainian Association of People Living with Drug Addiction "VOLNA", it was supported by "Meridian". Local public organizations and activists from Poltava and its region joined the action.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qCuLz5Oy4A>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19g5iEgSzGM>

<https://misto-tv.poltava.ua/news/30627/>



“Полювання на відьом” в Українській наркополітиці!



GERMANY

Berlin

The community of people who use drugs, BerLUN organized an action as part of the global campaign "Support. Don't Punish" in Berlin, Germany. The activists also used the action to celebrate the birthday of their community in Berlin.

12 people gathered in the office of the Berliner Aids Hilfe, invited by Sergio Grimalsky, exactly a year ago. Sergio introduced Larisa Solovieva to everyone and proposed to join the campaign "Support. Don't Punish". The activists gladly accepted the idea, put on with the t-shirts with campaign logos and organized a small action. Then they discussed Larisa's proposal to create a local community of drug users who had relocated to Berlin from Eastern Europe and Central Asia. No one knew then what would come out of it. The participants simply shared their ideas about the organization, which could help them get a better life and protect their rights. Thus, BerLUN was born on June 26, 2017 in Berlin.

A year had passed, and everyone gathered together again on June 26, 2018 to participate in the campaign "Support. Don't Punish". German law allows to hold rallies, pickets and other public events by giving a notice. Therefore, BerLUN announced a week before the event that they were going to hold a rally on Cottbusser Thor - a popular location among drug users in Berlin. The colleagues from PaSuMi, Nuremberg, were invited to join the action. During their three-day visit they got introduced to BerLUN, Deutsche Aids Hilfe and Berliner Aids Hilfe, got training at FixPunkt, as well as participated in the action on June 26.

Berbel Knor, an employee of Deutsche Aids Hilfe, offered to organize a meeting with journalist Markus Berhardt to cover this event during a joint meeting at JES (German organization of people who use drugs). As a result, we met not only Markus Berhardt, but also Bundestag Deputy Achim Kessler, who is involved in the treatment and prevention of HIV. Achim Kessler promised to take part in the action by BerLUN and kept his word!

Colleagues from the organization FixPunkt helped with a sound generator, so we could use the microphones. We printed a banner which had been specially ordered by BerLUN for this event. All members of the community took part in preparation of the event!

Sergio Grimaldeski addressed the participants and guests of the action at 17:00. Then Dirk Schoeffler took the floor. Then BerLUN members one by one delivered their speeches: coordinator Ilya Rivkin, organizer Larisa Solovieva and community member Mikhail Khor.

All participants called to end the "war on drugs", which had led to a war on people all over the world, unite against cruel drug policies, discrimination and harassment. Give people support, opportunities and rights and completely abolish any punishment associated with drug use!!!

After that the activists of BerLUN took photos with the guests and awarded diplomas with gratitude to those who had helped BerLUN that memorable year.

Everyone went to the nearest café after the action to discuss it over a cup of coffee. It was a good evening of a difficult and very important day. The action showed that the BerLUN community had gained necessary knowledge, experience and skills that year.

VIDEO OF THE ACTION

<https://www.facebook.com/berlun2017/videos/1088188691321829/>

<https://www.facebook.com/berlun2017/videos/1088226604651371/>







CONCLUSION

The demands of activists within the "Support. Don't Punish" campaign in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region can be combined and summarized as follows:

Ending the "war on drugs", which means only one thing, and that is the war against people who use drugs. Repression doesn't work! People need support, not punishment. Drug-related problems should be solved by doctors, not the police.

Changing the attitude towards people who use drugs and getting rid of prejudices and stereotypes. People who use drugs ARE NOT NECESSARILY HIV POSITIVE. People who use drugs are equal and responsible members of society with rights and human dignity.

Ending ineffective drug policies in all countries of our region. Priority should be given to decriminalizing the possession of drugs for personal use and replacing the criminal prosecution of people who use drugs with administrative sanctions or completely ending any punishment.

We hope that our demands will be heard. If not, next year we will meet again at the actions of the global campaign Support. Don't Punish!

Time to act!

Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD)

International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)