

Part # 2 of EHRA report¹ **#From street to government**

Results and Lessons learn of the project “Strengthening Civil Society Advocacy for Critical Enablers of the HIV Response for People Who Use Drugs”.

The main goal of the project’s activities is to **increase awareness of civil society and raise resources for changing drug policy** as basic reason for escalation of poverty and violence, HIV and Hep C among people who use drugs.

Leaders’ groups of the community of people who use drugs and NGOs, participating in the project, [“Your chance”](#) Belarus, [“White Noise Movement”](#) Georgia, [Association of Networks of Harm Reduction](#) in Kyrgyzstan, [“Young Wave”](#) Lithuania, leaders’ group [#Save OST in Kazakhstan](#) together with regional organizations the Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD) have been uniting efforts to create and strengthen the regional movement #From street to government, by focusing on issues related to the influence of current drug policies on wellbeing and safety of people who use drugs in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) region. The aim of the movement - to reform drug policies in the countries, based on the values of each person's life, human rights and evidence-based practices.



The activities have been implemented thanks to supportive leadership and friendly mentorship of the  [International Drug Policy Consortium](#) team, partnership support of members of [the International Harm Reduction Consortium](#) and thanks to financial resources for community needs and approach for reflecting (MEL) by [the Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund](#).



¹ [The Part 1 of EHRA report](#) about international activities within the Consortium.

Table of Content

1. EHRA Joint Position on Drug Policy	3
2. Capacity building of peer advocates and street lawyers to protect against and monitor human rights violations against people who use drugs.	5
3. Mentorship and technical support from EHRA to ENPUD and national experts of community of people who use drugs.	9
Small grants for country-level advocacy action led by the community: From street to government : Young Wave - Jauna Banga, Lithuania, Kyrgyzstan Association of Network of Harm Reduction, “White Noise Movement”, Sakartvelo/Georgia, “Your chance” Belarus National community-led NGO	
5. Speak out	13
International Support Don’t Punish Day 2018 in EECA.....	14
The International Overdose Awareness day 2018.....	16
Womxn take drugs. Deal with it. #Narcofeminism as a movement	17

1. [EHRA Joint Position on Drug Policy](#)

Joint position of EHRA on drug policy reflects organizational vision of drug policy in the countries of CEECA region and identifies key approaches to realize that vision with the help of EHRA members at the national level and by common efforts at the regional and global level².

Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA) launched a regional online consultation to define its priorities in the area of drug policy and human rights of people who use drugs in CEECA that would guide EHRA future activities in 2018 – 2020. The strategic framework of the organization contains the objective to advocate for non-repressive drug policy in CEECA, based on public health and human rights. EHRA has needed a more detailed general position of the organization on drug policy supported by the majority of EHRA members.

  [BECOME A MEMBER](#) [NEWS](#) [ABOUT US](#) [PROJECTS](#) [COUNTRIES](#) [LIBRARY](#) [BLOG](#) [DRUG LAWS](#)



[HARM REDUCTION](#) [DRUG POLICY](#) [FUN](#)

[EHRA Position Paper on Drug Policy](#)

Use of psychoactive substances can be observed at different stages of civilization development. Traditional use of drugs – for example, of coca leaves in South America or cannabis in the Middle East, – has been largely displaced by alcohol and tobacco as a result of the expansion of tobacco and alcohol companies. Nowadays people use psychoactive substances, including drugs, for various reasons – for some it can be an important part of socialization and recreation, for others drugs help to cope with trauma or stress. It is a mistake to believe that drugs are used only by dependent or mentally unstable people or criminals. Only a small proportion of people who use drugs are in fact addicted to them. However, the current international legislation and the laws of the CEECA countries ignore this fact and are based on the assumption that any drug use is extremely dangerous for health, leads to lack of control and dependence and can't be considered a "normal behavior".

We want to ensure that international and national drug policies reflect in the legal frameworks that:

[Steps how we created Drug policy Position Paper:](#)

Step 1: Analysis of human rights violations. The consequent working stage of this activity took place in May 2018 when the Global Commission on HIV and the Law announced its call for submissions of complaints and best practices, and EHRA applied together with its partner organizations led by people who use drugs / OST patients by submitting [descriptions of situations in 5 EECA countries](#).

Step 2: Webinars “Drug Policy: threats and opportunities”. EHRA conducted [a series of webinars](#) that allowed its members to learn more about drug policy and voice questions and opinions. It also helped to ensure that EHRA position is based on scientific evidence and analysis of the consequences of repressive drug policy as well as the experience of countries with progressive drug policy.

Step 3: [Face-to-face consultation](#) during the XXII International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam: “How does the repression of people who use drugs interfere with the response to HIV, TB and viral hepatitis in EECA? Are we ready to change the situation?”

² With main financial support by FOSI

Regional & National levels advocacy for progressive drug policy Within International Harm Reduction Consortium

The main goal of the consultation, eventually achieved, was to identify the common attitude of the EHRA members to pushing of de facto decriminalization. Which means, to create special conditions in the countries of the region, when any action related to the production, purchase and possession of drugs is not punished. Neither in criminal proceedings or penalties, which are often even more burden than imprisonment. But ways to achieve this goal will differ in countries of CEECA.



Step 4: Online discussion of the draft drug policy position - a draft of EHRA drug policy position was shared online for review by the members of the association and partner organizations.

Step 5: Approval of EHRA Drug Policy Position by the Steering Committee.

On 29-30 October, 2018 all 13 members of the Steering Committee (SC) and 3 Advisory Board (AB) members of EHRA, as well as the core staff of EHRA gathered for the annual meeting in Kyiv (Ukraine). One of the key discussions was around the organizational position on drug policy and key program activities of EHRA on drug policy. After wider consultation EHRA SC approved [the Position Paper on Drug Policy](#).

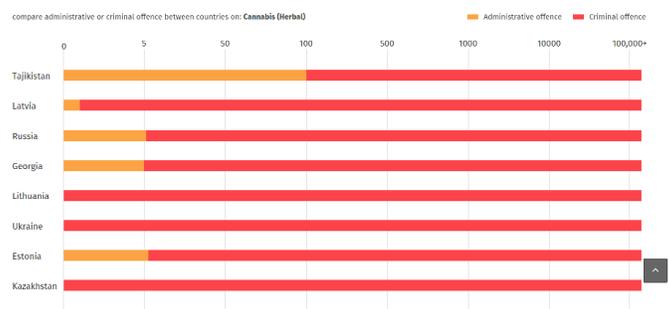
EHRA has been becoming the center of information and technical support, accumulating the best regional and international experience of actual decriminalization.



2. Capacity building of peer advocates and street lawyers to protect against and monitor human rights violations against people who use drugs.

Decriminalization is the first task for budget advocacy projects. EHRA has been developing the methodology and assessment of situation related to drug policy in the project countries. From street to government Movement has been strengthened by **facts** which have been identified and made public during wider consultations, conference for Parliamentarians and so on. The following messages were highlighted: countries where EHRA members are located have public money for harm reduction. Government just must decriminalize use and possession of drugs and redirect recourses to healthcare supporting services such as drop-in-centres, shelters, drug checking and safe drug consumption locations and other harm reduction services.

The Drug Laws. This tool lets examine and compare the penalties or other important legal aspects related to core offences for drug use, possession for personal use and supply-related offences, across countries in EECA region.



“Criminalization costs” – simple assessment conducted by EHRA members to compare state spending on the criminalization of the drug possession in CEECA countries, versus support of person, who use drugs with social and healthcare services in freedom. It is the community-based research where NGOs, communities of people who use drugs and community experts helped EHRA to collect data by using publicly available official documents, requests from officials and data from service providers.

The tool is divided into two parts – freedom costs and costs of keeping person in prison.

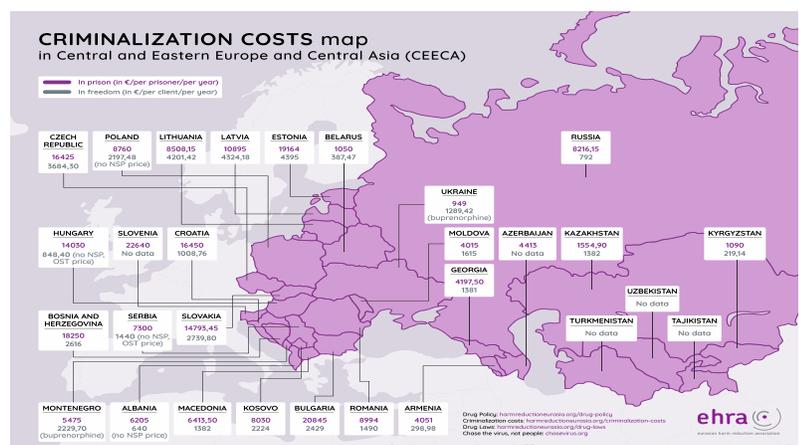
Criminalization costs method

Data collected and verified by **EHRA members** – civil society and community of people who use drugs;

Open documents/official reports are the main information source;

Requests for financial information from governments;

Verification/triangulation of data from different sources by community members.



No data – means that community and civil society have no access to information about cost of the programs or expenditures.

Data for changing or how EHRA used the Criminalization costs for advocacy. The Criminalization costs and the Drug Laws tools data are useful remedy to prove the interdependence between Drug policy and resources for harm reduction programs (budget advocacy).

Activities within the International Harm Reduction Consortium during AIDS2018:

EHRA collected facts on states' waste of public resources for repressive approach instead of investing in harm reduction. By AIDS2018 EHRA had collected and compared data from 9 countries. Data collection is still in process. More details about **Criminalization costs** can be found [here](#).

Sessions organized jointly with ENPUD, IDPC, HRI, INPUD, Youth Rise:

"Support. Don't Punish" campaign in EECA region, organized at the EECA Communities Networking Zone, in collaboration with Juan Fernandez Ochoa (IDPC);

"Narconomics: from street to government" session on collection and use of EHRA Criminalization costs and Drug Laws [data](#) for advocacy;

[Session on best practices for young people who inject drugs in the EECA](#) region from a harm reduction network perspective;

Session on IDUIT and [3 practical components](#) how to create the workshop based on IDUIT;

Session "We are killed not by HIV, we are killed by repressions!" conducted by ENPUD.

EHRA as part of the team³ of regional community networks of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, joined forces with other regional networks during the XXII International AIDS Conference (July 22-27, 2018, Amsterdam, the Netherlands) in the campaign – ["Chase the virus, not people!"](#) .

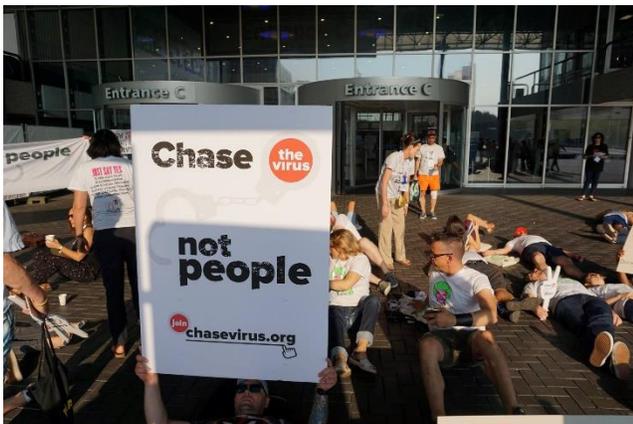
The main campaign activities took place during AIDS2018 in East Europe and Central Asia Communities Networking Zone and beyond it. Over 500 communities' activists participated in actions of the campaign, over 1,500 participants took part in the events in EECA Networking Zone events. Around 50 leaders of community of people who use drugs got scholarships thanks to mentoring support of EHRA staff and AFEW's financial co-support.

³ EECA communities team: Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM), East Europe and Central Asia Union of People Living with HIV (ECUO), EECA Sex Workers' Alliance, Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA), Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD), Eurasian Union of Adolescents and Youth "Teenergizer", Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS (EWNA), Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN). Organizational partner – AFEW International (the Netherlands).

Regional & National levels advocacy for progressive drug policy
Within International Harm Reduction Consortium



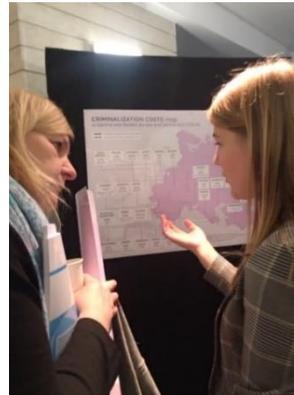
Eurasian Network of People who Use Drugs (ENPUD) and Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA) activists were mobilized for a joint harm reduction, drug policy and drug user networks action to highlight killings of drug users in Philippines and cut in harm reduction funding when the need is so great.



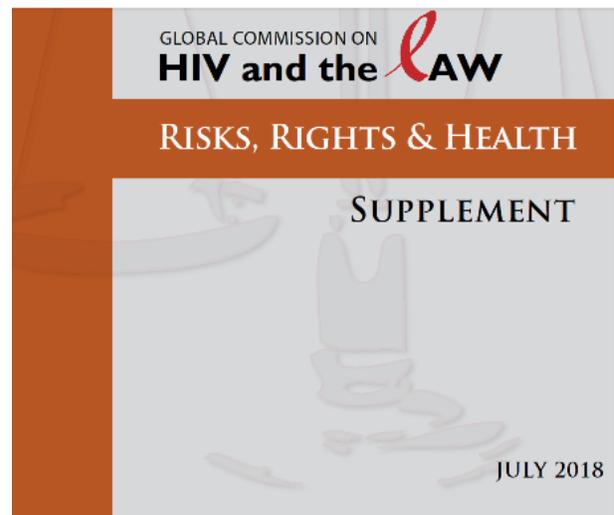
[Criminalization costs](#) database was also presented during the [4th European Harm Reduction Conference](#) with topic is “Time to Act!” as compelling evidence and financial argumentation for harm reduction and drug policy reform. DU_news created [the movie](#) about the main topic of 4th European Harm Reduction Conference for Russian speaking audience and constituencies.



4-я Европейская Конференция Снижения Вреда
182 просмотра 15 0 0 ПОДЕЛИТЬСЯ СОХРАНИТЬ



EHRA, together with national organizations led by people who use drugs / OST patients, has developed [descriptions of situation in 5 EECA](#) countries to show the negative influence of law enforcement agencies authority within harm reduction programs on lives of people who use drugs. The case of LUNest from Estonia was the only one included in [HIV & Law 2018](#) report. **That means that more advocacy efforts need to be undertaken for decriminalization of use and possession of drugs to become the main goal to end HIV epidemic among people who use drugs.**

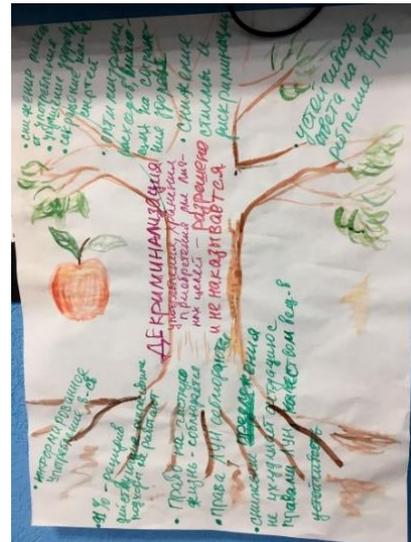


3. Mentorship and technical support from EHRA to ENPUD and national experts of community of people who use drugs.

Get ready – building community capacity for advocacy actions

Any actions on national level are targeted to priorities defined by community leaders and responding to the most drastic problems for people using drugs in country. The project started with the joint workshop to define needs and priorities, then community groups and organizations' advocacy were supported with capacity building and resources for national activities.

June 2017, Moldova: community of people who use drugs with technical support of ENPUD, EHRA and IDPC created the conception of the project **#From street to government**. Community team has checked the national laws, and based on Jamie Bridge (IDPC) explanation of the international drug policy tendencies, INCB, UNODC and CND in particular, and then chose the law which should undergo changes in a period of 2-3 years (2017-2020).



National targets to advocacy based on community needs:

Belarus – take away OST, OST in hospital or in case of detention in new guide of OST as people-oriented approach of harm reduction program.

Kyrgyzstan – change the articles in new codes of misconduct and crime based on community led monitoring;

Lithuania – implementing drug checking services and education of the Members of Parliament;

Sakartvelo / Georgia - support the White Noise Movement activities to abolish all punish for possession of any drugs.

**Regional & National levels advocacy for progressive drug policy
 Within International Harm Reduction Consortium**

Community needs and problems

One of the main issues for leaders is **who defends drug policy changing leaders**. Many of people who use drugs were born and still live in repression, double standards, corruption and totalitarianism which is legitimated by governments. It means people often have deep fears to face system, and those fears aren't a paranoia.

In 10 days after "Your chance" was established, Community leader Sergey Kryzhevich was stopped by traffic police. "We have suspicions that you are under drugs. You must go to the state lab for drug intoxication test. I refused. They realize that I'm going to protect my rights and they showed me on the phone the orders of the administration of the drug control department of the city of Minsk. And there it is clearly stated that Sergey Kryzhevich is a client of the substitution therapy program, and order was given to bring me for drug intoxication test". That was the start of litigation strategic case (ENPUD article in Russian is [here](#))



Only in the few weeks in November-December 2018, two HIV prevention organizations in Russia – in [St Petersburg](#) and in [Siberia](#) – were announced "foreign agents" and imposed exorbitant fines, that already led to the closure of one of the organizations. The most concerning are the reports requiring all HIV NGOs to get governmental approval for any HIV prevention programs or initiatives that are funded internationally, which in its turn, if introduced, would severely restrict any HIV prevention activities currently implemented by civil society.

Andrey Yarovoy was arrested when he had been monitoring the services for people who use drug in under the war area in Lugansk, Ukraine. EHRA jointly with ENPUD have been sharing the information about the [situation with Andrey Yarovoy](#) among colleagues to keep focus on Andrey's safety and freedom. Andrey's unlawful arrest was recorded (without indicating personal data) in a recent regular report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the situation in Ukraine ([see paragraph 52](#)). Several times per month, deliveries with food, clothing and essential items are transferred to Andrey. In the coming months, the "criminal case" is expected to be sent to the local court for consideration.



Police officers in Tbilisi, Georgia, blocked a street on Monday to separate protesters calling for the legalization of recreational drug use from their opponents. Dutch Karimkhan/CPA, via Shutterstock

Georgian police provoked a split among the White Noise movement partners, by manipulating the safety of the participants of the action, distorting the essence of the reform proposed by the White Noise Movement.

EHRA's regional and national partners are community-led NGOs who play a significant role in joint advocacy campaigns on national level.



Young Wave, Lithuania: The [first information platform](#) in Lithuania for sharing evidence-based information about drugs and harm reduction was created. [“PsyHelp”](#) and harm reduction services were provided at two music festivals in 2018. Conference “Reform of the psychoactive substances: support, don’t punish” was organized in the Parliament of Lithuania. *Young Wave Case study is [here](#).*

Kyrgyzstan Network of Harm Reduction put on national and international agenda the issue about the intended negative consequences on practical level of new Code of Misconducts and Crime Code and created the groups of allies for changing the laws. Community developed the monitoring system of expected negative consequences of new Codes application in 2019 and rose resource for community-led monitoring. *Case study is [here](#).*

White Noise, Georgia: For the last four and a half years, White Noise has been creating noise in society to challenge drug laws in Georgia. White Noise has an excellent experience in inspiring 10,000 people to come together for drug policy changes. *Time line of WNM is [here](#).*

Your chance, Belarus, was established in 2017 by people who take OST. ‘Your chance’ is leading in national advocacy process to implement the new services including take home doses, drivers' licences, OST in prison. New OST Law is coming into power. ‘Your chance’ also included the peer-to-peer services in new national Global Fund grant thanks to the efforts of CCM members. *Case study is [here](#).*

In 2017-2018 EHRA worked jointly with ENPUD Secretariat in all project activities through **mentorship and technical support** and as a fiscal agent. That was the period when ENPUD created the core team, finalized the documents for ENPUD registration in Georgia. ENPUD Coordinator Tanya Kochetkova presented on behalf of EECA community during the 4th European Harm Reduction conference and work during the 61st Session of CND.



**Regional & National levels advocacy for progressive drug policy
 Within International Harm Reduction Consortium**

EHRA organized **two study-visits** to Czech Republic and Portugal for people who use drugs community leaders from CEECA and Baltic countries.

To increase capacity of EHRA team to know more about drug policy in **Czech Republic**, the study tour for small grantees of Harm Reduction Consortium within the project **#Narconomic: from street to government** was conducted. Information about [Czech Republic drug policy](#) and [sustainability of low threshold harm reduction services](#) is shared with partners of EHRA in EECA region.

In Czech Republic the study-tour participants have learned from international and national drug policy experts how they have changed drug policy in the last two decades. Participants got advices from experts what next steps in national and regional advocacy process should be undertaken. One of them is to create the possibility to get allies among Members of Parliament on national level with the support from the Global Commission on Drug Policy. **EuroNPUD and ENPUD members** had time and space to work together during the study-visits.

December 2017, Portugal: nine people who use drugs community leaders from Belarus, Lithuania, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, EHRA and ENPUD regional networks Secretariats visited Portugal with the study visit. The main objective of the study visit was to [learn the Portuguese model](#) of decriminalization and to understand on the practical level the approach of CDT (Dissuasion of Drug Abuse Commission). The study tour helped the community leaders to create the direct connection between communities from EECA region and Portuguese community [leading NGO CASO](#). [EuroNPUD](#) provided technical support and co-financing for the study tour.



«After 10 years of work as an outreach in Belarus I’ve got an understanding what harm reduction approach really means, noticed how friendly and safely so many people feel In-Mouraria Drop-in center in Lisbon. Decriminalization of use and possession of drugs on practical level is the basic condition for effective harm reduction programs,» Sergey Gartcev, Your Chance, Head of the Board of Community-led National NGO.



4. Speak out

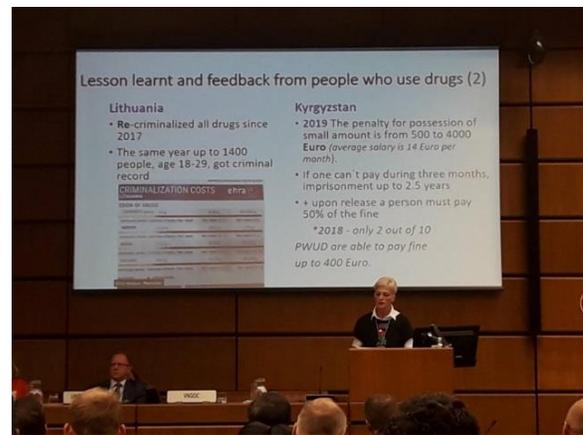
EHRA is a liaison for community **for establishing relationship and dialogue between community and governments, UN agencies, donors**. EHRA helps to create the connection and arrange the meetings for the government, UN or donors with the community leaders to give resources and work on community's agenda, not vice versa. It needs in-depth mentoring. When people who invest each day of their life for fighting for their rights are supported, without even basic resources for action, it's an inspiration for the community and gives energy to go ahead to change criminalized and corrupted drug policy system in such a way that each and everyone be freed, happy, healthy and wealthy.

61st CND Intersessional meeting

INPUD

23 October, 2018

Olga Belyayeva represented the community of people who use drugs in CND Intersessionals, and gracefully dodged attacks from prohibitionist states questioning the relevance of the presence of people who use drugs in #drugpolicy debates. #NothingAboutUsWithoutUS



Key analytics and blogs of Consortium members IDPC and HRI and partners such as Release were translated, provided with additional explanations and disseminated to strengthen the Russian-speaking allies and audience with facts of the results of progressive drug policy [London Drug policy Museum](#), [IDPC policy briefs](#), [IDPC Shadow Report 2018](#). Thanks to International Harm reduction Consortium members' strong position of national community leaders and willingness to work together, helped the community representatives to be [effectively involved](#) in international drug policy debates; [created a new contacts](#) with UN, multilateral donors and member states representatives, who make decisions.

International Support Don't Punish Day 2018 in EECA

EHRA has encouraged the region to stand up for [preserving substitution maintenance therapy in Kazakhstan](#). [Advocacy actions of EHRA and its partners](#):

- January - April, 2018: EHRA, together with the Canadian HIV / AIDS Legal Network, filed a complaint based on the documented cases of violations to the UN Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights;
- The threat of closure of substitution treatment programs was announced by EHRA at the April, 2018 meeting of the Committee's Working Group. As a result, the questions were asked to the government of Kazakhstan about the plans for the expansion of the program;
- EHRA experts analyzed the arguments of the opposition with respect to their scientific validity, interpretation, and evidence. Based on the analysis, EHRA published the explanatory note "Why you shouldn't rely on the special opinion of a group of committee members on the continuation of OST".

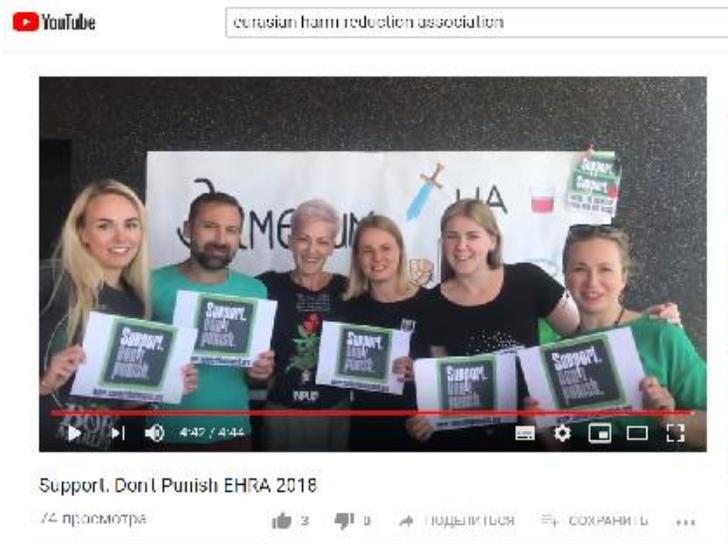
On 26 June 2018 the International Campaign "Support, Don't Punish!" defended OST in Kazakhstan. Based on the appeal of the patients of the substitution therapy program and the Kazakhstan Union of PLWH to decision-makers in Kazakhstan, the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association appealed to the international community and civil society in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia to sign an appeal to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan to sustain the substitution therapy in the country. As a result, 64 international and national organizations have signed the appeal. This appeal was circulated to media and announced at a press conference by Oksana Ibragimova on June 26, 2018 in Astana, on behalf of the Kazakhstan Union of People Living with HIV.



Support. Don't Punish Day. Kazakhstan OST

On June 26, 2018, participants of substitution therapy programs, along with harm reduction organizations in [Lithuania](#), [Estonia](#), [the UK](#), [Ukraine](#), [Moldova](#), [Belarus](#) and [Russia](#), held rallies near the embassies of the Republic of Kazakhstan and published photo and [video messages calling to save the OST program in Kazakhstan](#). A community of people who use drugs and people living with HIV in Kazakhstan, our friends and partners held the event in Astana to support the program.

EHRA team created the video [Support. Don't Punish EHRA 2018](#) about people who use drugs community's efforts on national level to get freedom, access to quality harm reduction services in Belarus, Lithuania, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Tajikistan and Russia.



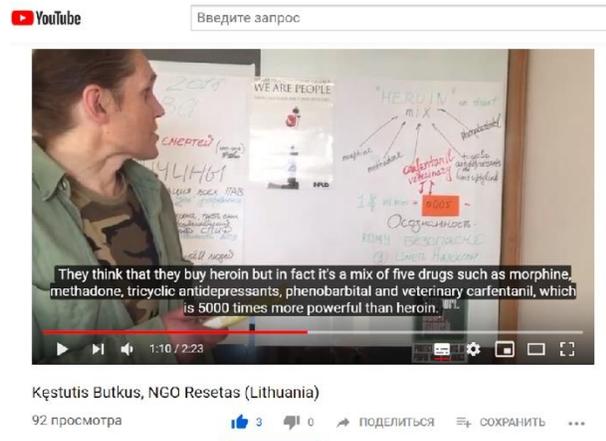
Partners from International Harm Reduction Consortium, **Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs** have supported national and local community to join the Support Don't Punish Campaign. 11 countries, 25 local community groups in 25 cities stood up for people who use drugs rights and freedom. The [ENPUD report about Support Don't punish 2018](#) included ENPUD position and fun quiz "what's SDP day?" and documentation of people who use drugs community histories. Lithuanian Community & EHRA team activities were also reflected in the ENPUD report.



A global advocacy campaign
Support. Don't Punish
Eastern Europe and Central Asia
(EECA)

On the International Overdose Awareness day 2018

"We can take our naloxone and should be ready to use it!"



EHRA presented a [short video](#) from Lithuania by Kęstutis Butkus (NGO Resetas) telling how Naloxone can help, on the eve of International Overdose Awareness Day, to let everyone know that naloxone saves lives! Overdose is still one of the leading causes of premature death in the region of CEECA. Despite the scarcity of regional statistics that don't allow to carry out a proper analysis of the causes of death, it is clear that overdose among other causes like HIV and viral hepatitis continues to take thousands of lives of people who use drugs in CEECA region.

On the International Overdose Awareness Day EHRA declared⁴ once again – preventing overdose without allowing free access to Naloxone is the same as trying to reduce HIV rates without ARV!



⁴ <https://harmreductioneurasia.org/overdose-awareness-day/>

5. [Women take drugs. Deal with it. #Narcofeminism⁵ as a movement](#)

Together with feminist movement AWID, partners from Spain, Germany and government representatives from Estonia EHRA co-organized discussion around lessons learned and next steps for harm reduction services for women who use drugs during the 4th European Harm Reduction Conference 2018.



Womxn and Drug policy. EHRA team has been improving its capacity in supporting the movement and learning from experts of The Association for Women's Rights in Development ([AWID](#)) - global feminist membership movement-support organization.

Women's and feminist movements and organizations have turned out to be very resistant to include the issues of women who use drugs in their agenda. Due to the de facto criminalization of people who use drugs, they are perceived as criminals and failed women who chose this path and deserve the consequences.

- To address this issue in May 2018, the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) in collaboration with EHRA organized the meeting in Berlin for feminists and activists from the community of women who use drugs. Participants discussed intersectional feminism, the inclusion of women who use drugs in the global feminist movement, and the gender consequences of repressive drug policies.
- The core team of #Narcofeminism movement was created. The group composed of women from Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Estonia and Lithuania;
- A webinar about feminism was organized, and now EHRA together with activists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Estonia are conducting a survey on gender consequences of repressive drug policies. The results of this research will be presented at the second joint convening in February 2019.
- During 4th European Harm Reduction Conference, EHRA organized a parallel session "Gender consequences of repressive drug policies". Partners from Estonia, Spain and AWID provided space for women who use drugs and specialists working with this group to share and discuss gender specific consequences of repressive drug policies and the availability and quality of existing services, and inclusion of the community in the global women's movement.



⁵ Activities have been supporting by FOSI co-funding