

# **Motivation letter from Aleksey Kvitkovskiy for participation in the Steering Committee of the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association**

I, Aleksey Pavlovich Kvitkovskiy, born on 2 July of 1975, started injecting drugs in 1993. Since 1998 I was registered at the Luhansk Regional Narcological Dispensary, since that time I have been treated in a narcological dispensary 19 times and have been in different rehabilitation centers five times. I underwent treatment with droppers and pills, occupational therapy and prayers and even hypnosis, but there were no results until 03/07/2008, when the substitution therapy program began to be implemented in Luhansk and I became the first drug dependent person in the Luhansk region who began to receive the substitution drug buprenorphine (methadone program in the Luhansk region began in April 2009).

The OST program has changed my life. We can say that everything that the drug destroyed was returned to me by the OST program, thanks to which I was able to find a job in a year, I was able to give the opportunity to get a good education for my eldest son, in 2011 I got married and in 2014 (my partner) gave birth to my second child, and then the third. But, unfortunately, on OST we faced various problems (linking to the site and, as a result, difficulties with employment, violations of patients' rights, law enforcement agencies and medical staff, imperfect legal norms and orders regulating the operation of the OST program, etc.) To resolve these issues in 2010, we decided to unite into an initiative group (IG), the leader of which I was chosen by the members of our IG. Since 11.02.2011, our IG has registered as a regional representative office of the Association of Participants of OST "ASTAU", in which I was chosen as a regional representative in the Luhansk region. We began to mobilize the community of OST participants, and by the end of 2011 we had an IG, in which there were 11 active participants. We were able to initiate the creation and implementation of such important regulatory documents as the order on the continuity of substitution treatment in health care facilities, and in June 2013 the order on the prescription form for the issuance of buprenorphine and in April 2014 an order for outpatient delivery of methadone from a healthcare facility. After the events of 2014, when, as a result of the occupation of Luhansk and part of the Luhansk region, five out of seven OST sites were closed, I was forced to move to the territory of the Luhansk region controlled by the Ukrainian authorities in the city of Lisichansk, where I began to work as a case manager of the OST sites in Lisichansk and Severodonetsk.

While participating in the community of people with drug dependence, I have often met people from other key communities - sex workers, ex-prisoners. Analyzing the problems of different key communities, I saw many common problems, such as stigma and discrimination against key communities by society, government agencies and even health workers. Then I began to learn how to conduct trainings and began to conduct them for law enforcement officers, doctors, and OST patients. I have delivered thirteen police awareness sessions on "Rule of Law, Countering Stigma and Discrimination against Key Communities by Police Officers" and over 10 "Police and OST" trainings. Our IG signed a memorandum of cooperation with the human rights ombudsman in the work of the police and together advocated a mechanism to ensure the continuity of OST patients during arrest and detention in a temporary detention facility, as well as the issuance of OST for 10 days in a pre-trial detention center to reduce the dosage.

In 2013, I became interested in the problems of the community of people who use drugs in the EECA region and became a member of the ENPUD. Since then, the Network has become my home and the members of the ENPUD Network have become my family. Since February 2021, I have become a member of the Expert group on Access to Treatment of the Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs. Working in this expert group at ENPUD, I felt like a part of a team of

professionals, with whom I will continue to work with great pleasure and devote my energies to developing the potential and uniting the efforts of communities.

All this time I studied and watched the processes of growth and strengthening of the Network, experienced all the joys with everyone and went through difficult moments. Taking part in the mailing list, and observing the activities of organizations and the IG community in the region, I saw how the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association has always been a reliable partner and financial agent of ENPUD and has done a lot of good for the community of people who use drugs in the EECA region.

I am proud and responsible to take part in the EHRA Steering Committee, to act responsibly and actively represent the interests of the community of people who use drugs in the EHRA SC. I am ready to represent the interests of the Association in my region and in Ukraine, and to take part in promoting priority issues of the Association, if the community entrusts me to represent its interests in the EHRA SC.

I have experience in organizing and mobilizing the PLWHIV community, I have a successful experience in advocacy and protection of the rights of not only drug users, but also representatives of other communities. I am a member of the Coordinating Council on Counteracting Drug Addiction, Substance Abuse and Alcoholism and a member of the Coordinating Council on Counteracting Tuberculosis and HIV / AIDS under the Luhansk Regional Military-Civil Administration.

Aleksey Kvitkovskiy