

INFORMATION DIGEST

JULY 2019



ENPUD
country news

FREEDOM ANDRII YAROVYI

Andrii Yarovy, a member of the Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs, (ESLUN), CONTINUES TO BE CONCLUDED.

Andrii Yarovy, a citizen of Ukraine and a participant in the OST program, was arrested on July 27, 2018 while crossing the border in the territories of Donetsk and Lugansk regions not controlled by Ukraine. As a specialist in organizing HIV prevention and treatment programs, since 2015 Yarovy traveled to the war-torn Donbass and helped the remaining drug users.

At the time of his arrest, Andrii had 38 tablets of buprenorphine hydrochloride with him, which he had legally received for personal use the day before in a medical facility in Kiev.



FREEDOM ANDRII YAROVYI



Andrii Yaroviychuk was convicted and sentenced to lengthy imprisonment under part 3 of article 282 (illegal drug smuggling) and part 2 of article 276 (large-scale drug trafficking) of the LNR Criminal Code. At the moment, Andrii is being held in the Sverdlovsk correctional colony of the Office for the Execution of Sentences of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the LPR.

The humanitarian activities of Andrii Yaroviychuk are recognized by the international community. On April 28, 2019, during the grand opening of the 26th International Conference on Harm Reduction in Porto, Portugal, Andrii Yaroviychuk was awarded the authoritative international Carol and Travis Jenkins Award as a victim of human rights violations related to illegal imprisonment for possession of a legally obtained replacement drug. This award has been awarded annually since 2005 to people who use drugs, who make an outstanding contribution to reducing the possible harmful effects associated with the use of psychoactive substances.

MOLDOVA: REFORM REQUIREMENTS DRUG POLICY AND THE RELEASE OF ANDRII YAROVYI

On June 4, the PULS Initiative Group, which unites people who use drugs, held an action near the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and handed over a letter to the MPs containing the community's demands to reform drug policy based on Moldova's association in the EU, taking into account agreements under associative membership and international agreements.

Primary requirements:

1. To review threshold values in Government Decision No. 79.
 2. Conduct an audit of the list of narcotic drugs.
 3. To exclude from the legislative acts the concepts of "derivatives" and "analogues".
 4. Develop alternative penalties for drug possession, for personal use.
 5. Cancel any liability for the use of any psychoactive substances.
 6. When making decisions, ensure the wide participation of the medical and scientific community, experts and representatives of the community of people who use drugs.
 7. Immediately hold a broad amnesty for those convicted of non-violent offenses
- articles about drugs.

Letters were also sent to the official addresses of key departments and ministries of Moldova: the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, the Ministry of the Interior, the Prime Minister and the President of Parliament.

On the same day, activists organized and held a picket at the embassy of the Russian Federation in support of Andrii Yarovy. A letter was sent to the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Moldova to notify Olga Kobtseva, representative of the LPR in the humanitarian subgroup of the Trilateral Contact Group for the Settlement of the Conflict in the Donbass, to take control of the issue of the speedy release of Andrei and his return to his family, friends and his professional humanitarian activities .

MOLDOVA: REFORM REQUIREMENTS DRUG POLICY AND THE RELEASE OF ANDRII YAROVYI



GEORGIA: PROTEST INSTEAD OF PUNISHMENT

On July 12, GeNPUD (Georgian Network of People Who Use Drugs) and the Initiative Group of Patients of the Substitution Therapy Initiative Program, as well as family members of people who use drugs, held a rally in front of the Georgian government.

Georgia still has repressive legislation in the field of drug policy, under which thousands of people who use drugs are targeted. Prisoners are serving sentences for possession of a small amount of drugs. High fines are imposed, which aggravates the socio-economic living conditions of their families and society as a whole. This also applies to substitution treatment programs that are currently operating in the country and where clients also face many challenges. This is especially true for the use of buprenorphine.

Although this year the buprenorphine program has grown to 400 people, demand is much higher. There are very few opportunities to get into these programs. In addition, there are several commercial programs in the country where the price is high and monopolized. The lack of substitution therapy in the women's prison remains a problem.



GEORGIA: PROTEST INSTEAD OF PUNISHMENT



Activists filed a petition to the Prime Minister of Georgia as part of a protest rally with the following requirements:

1. Resume consideration of the bill initiated by the National Platform for Drug Policy in Parliament in order to complete this process and adopt a balanced drug policy.
2. To expand the state program of substitution therapy with buprenorphine and ensure a wider geographical coverage of the programs.
3. Simplify the practice of prescribing drugs exactly as the Western civilized standard works.
4. To substantiate the position of the prohibition of driving cars to patients with substitution therapy who take a stable dose as prescribed by the doctor and do not experience euphoria.

BELARUS: **NEW PSYCHOACTIVE** **SUBSTANCES:** **STUDY**

New psychoactive substances - a new threat to the health of people who use drugs: overdoses, psychotic reactions, a high risk of HIV infection due to the large number of injections, an increase in the number of sexual contacts - this is not an exhaustive list of possible risks.

The widespread use of nonionic surfactants leads not only to a change in the clinical picture of anesthesia, but also to the emergence of new social problems. It is necessary that specialists of harm reduction and drug addiction treatment programs be ready to provide people who use “designer” drugs with quality support and counseling to reduce risks, and help in solving medical and social problems.

The organization "Your Chance" continues to investigate the situation in connection with the consumption of nonionic surfactants. It's important for activists to know how the drug scene is different in different regions of Belarus: what people use, what they “take off”, etc.

Such information is especially relevant for understanding the readiness of OST programs to accept people with combined addiction, to facilitate the process of implementing the OST Instructions, the draft of which spells out the possibility of including patients with polydrug abuse in the OST program if there is a history of opioid dependence. With an integrated approach, this will reduce risks and improve the quality of life of people who use drugs.

Surveys have already been conducted in Grodno, Zhodino, Minsk, Vitebsk, Bobruisk, Svetlogorsk and Gomel. Interviewees - Active Substance Consumers and Patients OST.

To be continued!

BELARUS: NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES: STUDY



RUSSIA: **THE SILENCE OF OFFICIALS** **LEADS** **TO DEATH FROM OVERDOSE**

Andrey Rylkov Foundationis (ARF) engaged in the humanization of drug policy, including street social work with drug users. ARF takes to the streets every day, to people who use drugs, and distribute clean syringes, condoms, test for HIV and hepatitis, advise on health and rights, and do many other useful things.

An important task for ARF is the prevention of overdose. In Russia, about 8 thousand people die every year from overdoses. In recent years, the situation with opioid poisoning has become especially critical as a result of the appearance on the market of synthetic opioids: fentanyl and carfentanil (“white Chinese”), which are hundreds of times stronger than heroin. The drug “naloxone” can significantly reduce the risk of death from overdose, which helps save a person in case of an overdose of opiates. Unfortunately, now in Russia “naloxone” remains inaccessible to people who use drugs, their relatives, as well as social organizations due to its prescription.

For more than five years, the ARF has been distributing naloxone on the streets of Moscow. Last year, thereby, 605 lives were saved. Also, the ARF is conducting a dialogue on this issue with relevant institutions. And largely thanks to this, as well as the support of activists of the community of people who use drugs, the ARF managed to achieve a change in the normative act and ensure the issuance of naloxone in the hands of drug dispensaries at the request of the patient. Several years ago, after pickets by the ARF with the requirement to provide naloxone to patients of drug treatment hospitals, naloxone was also given to those who left the drug treatment hospital after discharge. After all, these people are at risk in the context of overdoses.

RUSSIA: THE SILENCE OF OFFICIALS LEADS TO DEATH FROM OVERDOSE



Currently, the ARF is trying to conduct a dialogue with the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, as well as the Moscow Department of Health, regarding the insufficient availability of naloxone and the need to expand overdose prevention programs to reduce mortality.

In June, the struggle for access by drug users to naloxone with government officials continued. But this dialogue resembles a conversation with a wall in the context of the wall's ability to hear and think. You can read more about what and how to write to officials on the ARF website (<https://rylkov-fond.org>).

ESTONIA: FREE LEGAL AID FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS AND THEIR FAMILIES

In July, the LUNEST SIDIV Project to form a system of providing free legal aid turned six months. The project is implemented with the financial support of the Gambling Fund (Hasartmängumaksu Nõukogu).

The project provides legal assistance from the Estonian Community of People Using Psychotropic Substances (LUNEST) with the participation of OÜ Sidiv Õigusbüroo lawyers, people who use drugs and / or live with HIV and their families who live in the North-East of Estonia . Legal aid relates to the protection of rights, the protection of rights, freedoms and legitimate interests in government and in courts. When a person loses children, property, freedom, just because he is not able to protect himself, the project employee (support person) helps to solve life issues, gain social skills and increase self-esteem.

With the help of support persons, the person is accompanied and supported throughout the entire process. Legal assistance in this project is free for the client. Also within the framework of this project, LUNEST conducts questionnaires to find out the problems faced by people who use drugs and offer assistance mechanisms.

The dreams of LUNEST activists come true - the project works for the benefit of people. The results exceeded all expectations - there are dozens of people who received help and support!

ESTONIA: FREE LEGAL AID FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS AND THEIR FAMILIES



LITHUANIA: "YOUNG WAVE" VS SYSTEM

The Young Wave organization, which works with young people who use drugs, took part in a competition for proposals on preventive projects, social information campaigns, and research projects announced by the State Foundation for the Promotion of Public Health.

The activists' application was aimed at raising awareness of the risks associated with substance use and harm reduction among guests of festivals and parties, thereby encouraging the target group to make responsible decisions regarding the use of psychoactive substances and their health. Moreover, the purpose of the application was to raise awareness about drug use, reduce harm among organizers and employees of festivals and parties, as well as to break stereotypes about drug use in society.

The application received 0 points, so Young Wave sent a request to justify the results of the competition and received a response from the State Public Health Promotion Fund under the Ministry of Health to promote harm reduction services for injecting drug users in Lithuania.

"The proposed harm reduction tools (kits for testing reagents, gelatin capsules, straws, etc.), as well as their distribution and information about common tools during music festivals and night clubs are not enshrined in Lithuanian legal acts, therefore their use and distribution is illegal," the response to the request says.

The Young Wave, as well as organizations in other countries of our region, expressed deep concern about the position of the State Fund for the Promotion of Public Health. In connection with these, a joint statement was sent to the Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania with a request to inform whether this position coincides with the official position of the Ministry of Health.

Email is currently sent. The answer from the Ministry of Health will determine the next step for further action.

LITHUANIA: "YOUNG WAVE" VS SYSTEM



KAZAKHSTAN: INTERRUPTIONS IN THE PROVISION OF SUBSTITUTION THERAPIES: COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The situation with interruptions in methadone in the city of Ust-Kamenogorsk began in early July. Patients of supportive substitution therapy programs in the East Kazakhstan region were worried about the situation as a result of an unsigned license to use the drug (methadone) due to the combination of narcological and psychiatric services.

To date, there are 39 people on the site of substitution therapy in Ust-Kamenogorsk, the treatment is left for 5 days, and to say that patients with OST were worried - this is to say nothing, not even expressing the essence of the situation. RTA patients made four messages to the site pereboi.kz., Also from Temirtau there was a message about the denial of access to the RTA program.

“Guys, the treatment remains for 5 days, and you need to voluntarily-forcibly reduce the dosage of the medicine by 50%. Please support us, we are doing our best and have everyone connected. ”

Activists, including the Kazakhstan Harm Reduction Initiative Group, which began its activity in June 2019, prepared a letter addressed to the head physician of the Regional Center for Mental Health with a request for clarification on the situation with obtaining a license, and what actions are being taken. Letters were also prepared and sent to the Minister of Health. In addition to this, Facebook posts were organized.

No answer was received from both structures, but the situation in Ust-Kamenogorsk was only resolved to date, a license has been received, the site continues to operate normally, and patients are being received.

KAZAKHSTAN: INTERRUPTIONS IN THE PROVISION OF SUBSTITUTION THERAPIES: COMMUNITY RESPONSE



UKRAINE: ANALYSIS OF OPIOID SUBSTITUTION THERAPY DRUGS - THIS IS NOT MEDICINE

Headache, poor appetite, insomnia, increased sweating, but the main "side effect" - withdrawal symptoms when taking the usual dosage - these are the main complaints about Buprenorphine, which patients in Ukraine have received for more than two years. Two years from different parts of Ukraine, from different people they heard the same thing: the drug is ineffective! Together with partners from the National Hotline for Drug Dependence and Substitution Drug Stabilization, almost every day, VOLNA activists (All-Ukrainian Association of People with Drug Dependence) received and recorded messages and complaints!

Repeatedly, VOLNA applied to the Center for Public Health of Ukraine and the State Expert Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine with official letters regarding the inadequate quality of ZST drugs and requests for additional medical checks!

In August 2018, activists personally transferred 171 complaint cards to the Expert Center from patients receiving treatment at 11 healthcare institutions in seven regions of Ukraine (Zhytomyr, Zaporizhzhya, Lugansk, Odessa, Poltava, Kharkiv Oblasts and Kiev). The statements said the inefficiency of Methadone-ZN and Buprenorphine hydrochloride and adverse reactions due to their use. In order to confirm complaints, the Expert Center sent requests for each patient to all medical institutions on the basis of which they received treatment.

However, according to the results of the assessment (doctors' responses regarding each patient), the Expert Center did not confirm a single complaint regarding side effects or inefficiency of PST drugs. "But I always knew that the truth is on our side, and here is our key hypothesis about the lack of the active substance in ZPT preparations — it was confirmed! This is our first, but very important victory," said Anton Basenko, chairman of the board of VOLNA.

In May of this year, activists initiated an examination of the drugs Methadone-ZN (20 tablets) and Buprenorphine hydrochloride (30 tablets). To do this, they transferred to the State Service for Monitoring drugs and medicine, samples of drugs that are received, treatment prescription sheets and official complaints about the deterioration of well-being and withdrawal symptoms.

UKRAINE: ANALYSIS OF OPIOID SUBSTITUTION THERAPY DRUGS - THIS IS NOT MEDICINE

In July, VOLNA received the results of a laboratory examination of OST products manufactured by the Kharkiv Plant Health of the People. Despite the tremendous pressure and extreme difficulties that activists still have to face along the way, they unveiled the truth and continue to fight for the rights of people who use drugs.

So, the results of the examination of drugs transferred to the laboratory of the State Service of Ukraine for Medicines and Drug Control prove the low quality of the drug used for the treatment of substitution maintenance treatment of patients with opioid dependence in Ukraine.

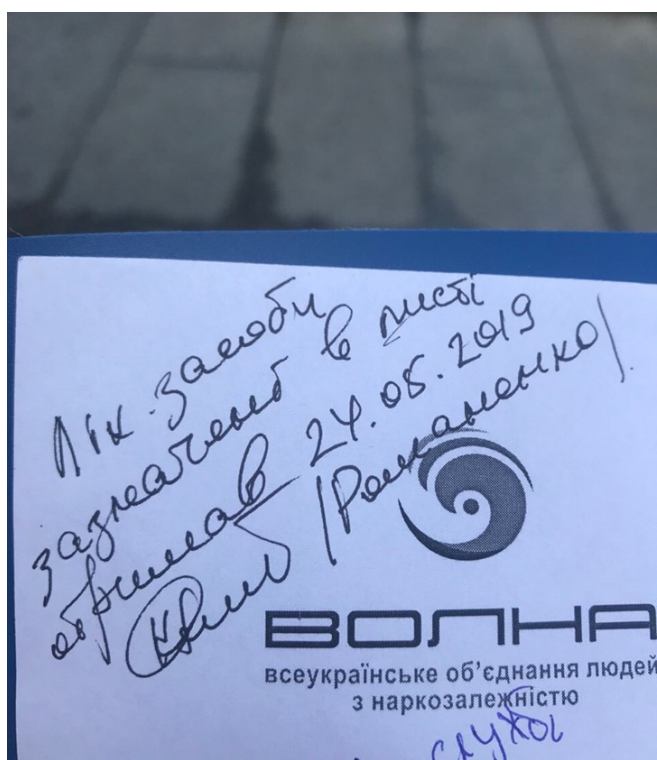
"Samples of the drug" Buprenorphine hydrochloride ", 2 mg sublingual tablets. production of LLC "HFP" People's Health "does not comply with the methods of quality control in terms of the indicator" Quantitative determination ", - said in an expert opinion.

In simple words, a tablet given as a medicine is not really a medicine, because it consists of only 75% of the active substance. At the same time, the results of the methadone test are quite satisfactory: "According to the results of the laboratory analysis, the samples of the drug Metadon-ZN, 10 mg tablets meet the requirements of quality control methods according to the tested indicators," the State Service said.

"Our results can be a precedent for checking the quality indicators of all OST drugs produced by People's Health LLC," says Igor Kozak, Advocacy Advisor at VOLNA.

Now the State Service of Ukraine for Medicines and Drug Control imposed a complete ban on the sale, use and storage of one series of the drug "Buprenorphine hydrochloride" in a dosage of 2 mg - exactly that series in the dosage that was tested in the laboratory. However, the purpose of VOLNA is to achieve a complete verification of all series and dosage forms of drugs used to treat patients with opioid dependence.

UKRAINE: ANALYSIS OF OPIOID SUBSTITUTION THERAPY DRUGS - THIS IS NOT MEDICINE



“Now the whole low-quality series of Buprenorphine is under arrest, but we still have a long struggle to prevent the purchase of taxpayer funds future deliveries of low-quality drugs that “kill” our health and kill our people,” said Anton Basenko.

The main risk remains the threat of interruption of the OST program at the all-Ukrainian level due to the technical impossibility of promptly conducting public procurement of a high-quality batch of drugs. At the same time, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine recently announced another tender for the purchase of a batch of OST drugs.

“We are confident that the Ministry of Health of Ukraine should take this case into account when making a decision and choose a high-quality and safe drug so as not to endanger thousands of drug-addicted patients,” said Pavel Skala, associate director of Alliance for Public Health.

VOLNA and Ukrainian community activists will continue to defend the rights of people living with drug addiction and will keep abreast of current events.

CONTACT INFORMATION



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ENPUD website: <http://enpud.net>

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