

# Newsletter

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## Drug Policy Network South East Europe



The Drug Policy Network in South Eastern Europe publishes this quarterly Newsletter in order to facilitate a more regular communication between the Network organisations and inform in general those who are interested in developments related to activities of NGOs active in the field of Drugs

The Newsletter is prepared and published by the Diogenis Association, Drug Policy Dialogue in South East Europe.

Members of the Drug Policy Network feed into the newsletter, focusing on the following topics:

- Criminal justice
- Social and health programmes
- Human rights
- Events of interest

Each edition of the newsletter will focus on 2 or more countries.

The newsletter is posted on the Diogenis website.

Reactions, contributions can be sent to: [drugpolicy.see@diogenis.info](mailto:drugpolicy.see@diogenis.info)

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#### **Organisations of the SEE Drug Policy Network**

- Aksion Plus, Albania
- Association Margina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- NGO Victorija, Banja Luka, Bosnia Herzegovina
- Initiative for Health Foundation (IHF), Bulgaria
- Udruga Terra Association, Croatia
- Healthy Options Project Skopje (HOPS), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Udruga Terra Association, Croatia
- NGO Kentro Zois, Greece
- Association DIOGENIS, Drug Policy Dialogue in SEE, Greece
- Juventas, Montenegro
- Romanian Harm Reduction Network (RHRN), Romania
- NGO Veza, Serbia
- Association Prevent, Novi Sad, Serbia
- The "South Eastern European and Adriatic Addiction Network", SEEAN
- Harm Reduction Association, Slovenia

## SERBIA

### NGO VEZA

*By Miodrag Atanasijevic, director Veza*



### Harm Reduction Services in Serbia

Although NGO Veza was formally registered in 2005, its team had been active since 2002 on the first Needle Exchange program in Serbia, implemented by Medicines du Monde - France at the time. We had started out as a grass roots-organization and developed into the Harm Reduction Training Centre for governmental structures and NGO's, also as a basic medical, social and legal services provider for the IDU beneficiaries and a researcher of this population.

The four largest cities are covered by Needle Exchange in Serbia (Belgrade, Nis, Novi Sad and Kragujevac). So far the state has not contributed at all. At the moment all of the Harm Reduction NGOs are financed solely by the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Round 8), for their activities. Core funding is not covered which is taking its toll on the degree to which these

organisations can develop their capacities in order to have an impact on the decision making processes in the country, create coalitions / plans and submit viable project proposals in order to sustain themselves along with the entire Harm Reduction approach which operates separately in these few cities at the moment. With an estimated IDU population of about 32.000 individuals in Serbia it is clear that these preventive services need to be standardized, more available and decentralized. However, it is obvious that the State doesn't have any plan to sustain these activities beyond 2014, after the Global Fund definitively withdraws from the country.

### EMCDDA focal point

There is an ongoing process of creating a governmental body to gather all relevant information on the drug issue and coordinate future preventive actions including Harm Reduction. This process was started by EMCDDA and the Serbian Ministry of Health through the IPA 4 twinning project, with Germany and Czech Republic as the main partnering countries. The project was officially initiated on 27 September 2012, through the opening-meeting in which all of the stakeholders regarding drug-use issue in the country participated.

### Legal highs

Legal highs are available in a few smart shops. The mix of spices is mostly sold as a substitute for Marijuana (officially as an air freshener). Herbicides are being used (Mephedrone), as well as some home-made "amphetamines". Also various prescribed medications, which are obtained with or without prescription, are being misused, but are not subject to criminal law.

The Home Affairs Ministry has acknowledged an agreement with the Pharmaceutical Chamber which should impose stricter medication-prescription

control, thus obtaining the legal grounds to arrest people who possess medication without prescription and process them in the same way as those who possess illegal drugs.

## HIV and IDU

The prevalence of HIV among IDU in Serbia is still low according to the national serological survey performed by the Institute for Public Health "Dr. Milan Jovanovic - Batut" this year among the high risk groups. It showed a 1.7% of HIV prevalence (on the sample of 500 IDU) so it is estimated to not be higher than 3%. The cases of new infection in Serbia are now mostly MSM and among the general heterosexual population. Our direct experience from the Needle Exchange in Belgrade, during the past four months shows that five beneficiaries got rapid positive HIV test results, two of whom have been confirmed so far. Both are girls also engaged in sex work and not practicing condom use regularly, so we could be on the verge of a negative trend regarding new-infected HIV cases among most-at-risk groups with overlapping vulnerabilities in the coming years. Hepatitis C was not screened for during this last national survey among vulnerable groups, but regarding IDU, the last year's estimate of 75% prevalence on a national level remains supported by the facts gathered through NEP and shows an even higher rate in Belgrade (over 80%).

## Association PREVENT, Novi Sad

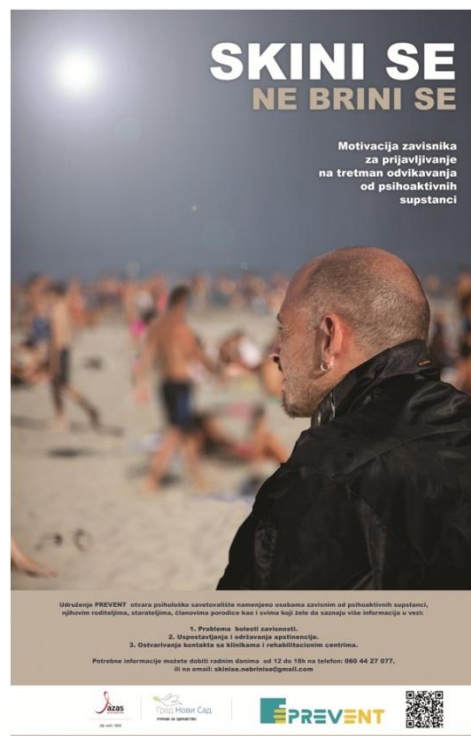
*By Ivana Jovanovic*

"Skini se ne Brini se" (Step out, do not worry)

In 2012 the Association PREVENT received financial support from the City of Novi Sad to implement seven projects for prevention on drugs and rehabilitation of Drug Users. "Skini se ne Brini se" (Step out, do not worry) is one of the seven

projects and is financed by the department of Health (Novi Sad, Serbia).

The project focuses on IDUs who want to stop using drugs. They are supported in this choice by the psychosocial help of the psychologist of Prevent.



The psychologist works on Fridays from 3-6 pm and is available for discussion and consultation. She provides the IDUs with information about places where they can go for treatment. The project started in August and will end in December 2012. Until now, four motivated IDUs who wanted to stop using drugs, have been helped. IDUs can contact her via the social network when they need psychosocial support. (<https://www.facebook.com/skini.se.nebrini.se?ref=ts> , <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Skini-se-ne-brini-se/275688099198975> ) and by phone during working hours.

International Exhibition of Printed Materials about HIV

The Association Prevent in Novi Sad has organized an international exhibition of printed materials about HIV on December 1st 2012. The exhibition took place in Studio M (Radio Television Vojvodina) as part of the event called a Positive Concert.

## FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

*By Vlatko Vekov,  
Program manager of CEDI - Center for  
Education, Documentation and Research*

### Summer school on drug addiction



A lack of specialized professionals in the area of addiction, in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, is a key issue in dealing with the drug addiction problem, especially in dealing with illegal drug addiction. This gap is a result of the fact that no specialized studies on addiction exist in the country. An additional issue is the lack of representation of topics on addiction in the study curriculum of the faculties that offer studies for professionals that include work with addicts.

Relevant to the current problems in the sphere of addiction was the organizing of the First Summer School on Addiction, implemented from 27.06.2012 till 04.07.2012. The Summer School was intended for:

- Graduate students or students in the final year of studies in social work and social policy, law studies, studies for



safety and studies of medicine;

- Post graduate students in the faculties/ institutes of social work and social policy law studies, studies for safety and studies of medicine;
- Professionals that work in the field of addiction

Special focus of the Summer School were drug policy models and examples, evidence based treatments, harm reduction, psychosocial support and the concept of human rights of drug users.

Topics covered in the Summer School:

- Global situation on drugs in the world and in the FY Republic of Macedonia
- Problem definition, drug use, drug dependence/addiction, types of drugs
- Addiction treatments
- Harm reduction in relation to drug use
- Psychosocial services for drug users
- Drug problems in prisons
- Gender perspectives in development of programs for drug users
- Drug users and human rights
- Civil research on drugs, drug users' needs, methodology and practices
- HIV/AIDS, prejudices and VCCT services
- Field visit of the Center for prevention and treatment addictions to the City of Ohrid
- Field visit of the Programme for Harm Reduction to the City of Ohrid

20 participants have successfully obtained certificates from the Summer School.

## Research Publication Community monitoring

In November NGO HOPS and Coalition "Sexual and health rights of marginalized communities" published the report, "Assessment of the quality of drug dependence treatment programs with a community based monitoring by persons treated for drug dependence". It is the first country report on the quality of drug treatment.

The report is based on two mutually related researches pointing to the need for improving the quality of drug dependence treatment programs operating in Skopje, and financed by the budget of the F.Y. Republic of Macedonia. The first research analyzed the laws and related documents that regulate the treatment of drug dependent individuals in FYR of Macedonia. The second research is actually a community based monitoring by people treated for drug dependence and it provides insight into the manner in which the legal provisions for treatment of drug dependent persons is carried out in practice in Skopje.

Some of the conclusions are:

- In the drug dependence treatment programs in Skopje there is no discrimination on ethnic, religious, racial or political grounds, but certain patients receive preferential treatment because of personal or family acquaintances and contacts with employees in the programs.
- Patients have access to additional information regarding their treatment, rights and obligations in dependence programs, but the information they receive is not always complete or appropriately provided. Patients feel that some of the employees in dependence programs have a sense of animosity towards them.
- Treatment for drug dependence is carried out voluntarily, upon the request of persons who want to be treated.

- In the drug dependence treatment programs in Skopje there is a lack of legal counselling for patients, although the engagement of such a professional is foreseen with the Law on Protection of Patients' Rights.

- Patients are not well acquainted with the field of the profession of employees at the drug dependence treatment programs.

## Gender and HIV

In October HOPS published a research report, "Assessment of gender related vulnerabilities regarding HIV transmission and barriers concerning unequal utilization of HIV services". The report focuses on injecting drug users, sex workers and people living with HIV/AIDS.

A general conclusion from the analysis of policies and programs is the absence of a systematic approach regarding the treatment of gender issues in the context of prevention and treatment of HIV. Namely, gender issues in strategic documents are treated on the level of principle/declarative commitment, which has not been turned into specific measures and activities.

Of greatest concern is the absence of an explicit obligation for collection and analysis of gender-sensitive data, preparation of gender analysis or estimation of the effect of policies and activities from the gender perspective.

Information from field research indicates that some relationships based on stereotypical gender roles among drug users may result in limited access to specific information and services and increased likelihood of risky behaviour.

It is worth emphasizing that the rate of use of used injecting equipment by women, especially equipment already used by their intimate partners, is higher than that of men.

The Guide for integration of the gender perspective in the national HIV/AIDS

response of the F.Y. Republic of Macedonia was developed as a result of these research findings.

## Drug law analysis in the F.Y. Republic of Macedonia

HOPS has been actively involved in the Drug Law Reform Project of the Diogenis Association. HOPS contacted Prof. Dr. Nikola Tupancesky of the Law Faculty of the University of Skopje and asked him whether he was willing to cooperate with this project. The country report has been written by Natasha Boskova the legal adviser of HOPS in cooperation with Prof. N. Tupancesky. The report is an overview of the current legislative framework related to drug policy and laws regarding drug use and its adjustment relating to the contemporary drug policies on a regional and international level. The report also aims to identify the key obstacles in the implementation of current laws and strategies that have an impact on drug policy. The overview of the current legislative framework regarding drug policy and laws related to drug use highlights inconsistencies in the laws and strategic documents. The National Strategy is in line with the European Drug strategy but the drug related laws are inconsistent with the National Drug Strategy. Therefore it is necessary to review current drug laws and to adjust them according to the National Strategy related to sanctioning policy.

The on-going process of bringing national legislation in line with that of the Europe is significant for reviewing the current drug policy and its impact regarding the people who use drugs. This analysis in the report gives preliminary findings on the general situation related to regulation of drugs and opens up issues for further more in-depth analysis in the field.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

### NGO MARGINA

*by: Natasa Dedajic*

## Mary Richmond Project: new perspectives in social work with people who use drugs

This project was devised to examine the knowledge, attitudes and practice among the professional staff working in the centres for social welfare in relation to their work with people who use drugs in the Tuzla canton. Based on the results obtained from this study, the project action led to the improvement of the existing skills of professional staff and through that to building up the capacity of professional staff working with people who use drugs and raising the provision of professional assistance to a higher level than before.

The project was implemented through three phases:

In the first phase of the project, cross-sectional research was conducted in the social welfare centres in the Tuzla Canton.

The aim of the study was to determine the current level of knowledge, attitude and to identify the ways / forms of care provided to people who use drugs, once they enter within the system of social protection. There were 64 respondents from 12 centres for social welfare that participated in this survey. The results showed that 47% of respondents rarely work with PWID. Most of the respondents couldn't list the symptoms of abstinence crises, none of the respondents knew the principles of motivational counselling, and nor the meaning of substitute treatment for opioids. Regarding applied techniques in working with PWID, we were particularly surprised by the responses relating to the above question. Concerning the used techniques applied by social workers in their work with PWID, 4 responded that they applied consultation,

13 respondents conducted interviews, and as many as 38 respondents stated that they do not apply any techniques in their work with this population. 9 more respondents said that in his/her work with PWID they use the technique of providing material assistance, which is completely absurd, because this belongs to the field of social protection, rather than techniques in social work. Regarding the application of genogram and eco map, 90% of respondents answered that they never use these two techniques in their work with PWID.

A certain stigma is evident from the area relating to the assessment of attitudes. It was devastating to see that the greater responses were "not sure" and "do not know", which devalues the professionalism that should be at the forefront when it comes to this kind of philanthropic profession.

In the second phase of the project, educational training for all professional staff from the centres for social welfare which was included in the research was provided. The Agenda itself was designed to correspond with questions from the survey: definition of addiction, harm reduction methodology of drug use, substitution therapy, motivational counselling, ASPIRE, techniques of working with people who use drugs, genogram and eco-map.

The third phase was related to the creation of a Manual (handbook) for work with PWID, for social workers and other professionals who work in institutions and a dictionary of slang. The handbook is distributed to all social welfare centres in Tuzla Canton, as supplementary literature in working with PWID.

## **NGO VIKTORIJA**

*by Tatjana Preradović-Sjenica, NGO Viktorija*

### **10 YEARS OF WORK**

**NGO "VIKTORIJA", Banja Luka**

NGO "Viktorija" was established in 2002, and as part of its program in the same year, made the decision to open the Counselling Centre for the prevention and treatment of addiction, based in Banja Luka, with the right to act across the whole of BaH. The work program in Counselling for the prevention and treatment of addiction NGO "Viktorija" includes: working with the drug-addicted population in the City of Banja Luka, as well as other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a wider, non-accusatory approach that includes members of all nations, a prevention program and a therapeutic program, free counselling and testing for the presence of psychoactive substances.



A fundamental point of prevention and treatment in our work is: to discover addiction as early as possible, to start treatment with as many addicts, users and experimentalists as possible, keep them as long as possible under professional supervision (counselling and individual therapy and / or treatment in our Therapeutic community, followed by a phase of re-socialization), the coordination of activities of NGO "Viktorija" with activities within state institutions, organizations and public institutions, engaging representatives in coordination bodies at national and local levels.

NGO "Viktorija" is working to establish a multidisciplinary integrated approach to the prevention and treatment of the diseases of addiction. One part of this

approach is achieved through establishing cooperation with the: Department of Infectious Diseases, University Clinical Centre (UCC) of Banja Luka, which provides ambulatory and hospital services to patients in the field of infectious diseases, the Criminal Correctional Centre (ORC) in Banja Luka, through the project "Institutional and post-penal treatment addicts of psychoactive drug substances ". Access is provided through medical and psychosocial services that are available in general society. The Department of Psychiatry of the UCC in Banja Luka advises users who have completed detox treatment programs to go for treatment in our therapeutic community, the Centre for Social Work, in order to establish a re-socialization program for these people and direct users to a therapeutic community.

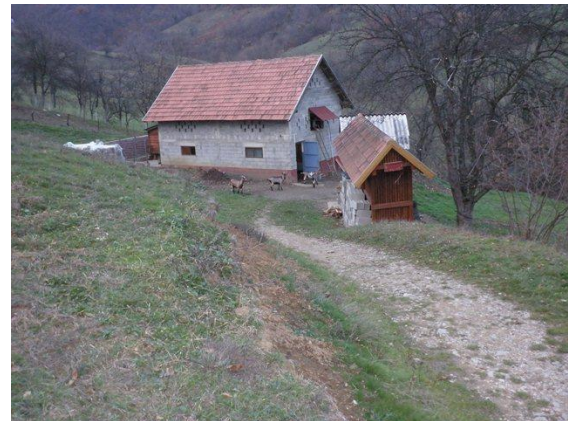
As a part of the implementation of the Global Fund programme and the UNDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Viktorija" has established four Drop-in centres with appropriate medical and psychosocial support for risk behaviours for the population of injecting drug users.

The crown of our decade of work in the field of the multi-disciplinary approach to treating addiction, was the organization of the First Symposium on Addictions which was held in cooperation with the Commission for the suppression of Drug Abuse by the Republic of Srpska Government, Bosnia and Herzegovina, with international participation on the theme: "Multi-sectoral contribution in the fight against addiction".

The Symposium was held on 7th and 8th June 2012 in Banja Luka (Republic of Srpska -Bosnia-Herzegovina), and Symposium presenters were eminent professionals (doctors, psychologists, lawyers, police officers) from various regions and countries.

## Program of re-socialization

The beginning of each treatment of addiction involves a certain period of isolation and some types of exclusion from the environment, but it's just one of the steps that should lead to the stabilization of former addicts, and consequently to the goal of treatment, that is social re-integra-



tion, return to society and the environment and a sense of well-being. Most addicts who are treated initially have a problem with the lack of socialization and lack of friends in the first period and eagerly await the day when they will once again be able to socialize and go out. When that time comes however, many realize that it is not easy to re-engage in society this time, as a normal, healthy person.

## Project: "An investment in the future"

With the project "An investment in the future" the training of former drug addicts with new knowledge and work engagement is foreseen, both during the course of the project and afterwards.

Considering that the beneficiary population is very specific, especially in terms of their facing big problems finding employment, this project is an ideal opportunity for this population. Mainly, the types of activities carried out in the project are: supplying equipment for CNC laser for the engraving



of different types of materials (wood, plastic, leather, etc.) and the launch of the complete production and placement of products. The total value of the project amounts to € 20, 512 for the period from 15th June 2012 to 15th January 2013. The target populations are marginalized former drug addicts, and the number of direct users is 15 former addicts (males) and 5 former addicts (women) who completed a program in therapeutic communities and are in a re-socialization program. As mentioned above, the direct beneficiaries will be all new users that come to the centre of addiction treatment in the Therapeutic community "Victoria" and successfully complete the same programme there.



Achieving specific goals through the implementation of project activities, former drug addicts will be educated in the new technical field of CNC machine as well as in the field of commercial sales of products manufactured on a CNC machine. These two fields of education are new to our users, as so far in their education and life they have not faced these types of jobs.

On the basis of conducted education, a number of the users will, in line with market needs, produce required products, and the second group will distribute them. Through these activities, users will be able to generate sources of cash income that will ensure their own survival, so that will be a positive step towards maintaining abstinence from addictive substances

among addicts who have undergone rehabilitation and reintegration programmes towards re-entering society. Through user involvement in the "investment in the future" project, they will gain the necessary work habits and professional attitude towards work tasks and team problem solving that is of essential importance for their full social rehabilitation and return into society as full members of the community. Also, acquisition of their own sources of legal earnings will help them take responsibility for their own survival and the survival of their families.

### Project: "Support ex drug addict in their abstinence"

The purpose of the project is to help marginalized populations of drug users who are being treated in the Therapeutic community "Victoria" and addicts who, after completion of the program in our Therapeutic community, are placed in a re-socialization program, which is more focused in terms of acquiring new knowledge and professional skills that will help them to become successfully employed after treatment and re-socialization, and for some of them to be employed in this project.



The implementation of the project, which runs from 15th June to 15 November 2012, will expand the capacity of the existing barn and set breeding farm of

fattening pigs. Through the project "Support ex drug addicts in their abstinence" we want to provide: the quality of infrastructure, purchase of livestock and fodder, provide quality education for users from specific experts and the labour-hire of former drug addicts which will provide them with adequate financial reward for their work in accordance with the actual profit from the sale of animals and animal meat for which there is an assured market.



The implementation of these projects or re-hiring of former addicts and evidence of their productivity break the prejudices and false beliefs about this population. Former addicts become active members of society and this reduces the likelihood of their regression.

In this way we make an impact on reducing the number of addicts in the community as well as the number of criminal activities that are directly related to the use of narcotics. Also, by providing former addicts with support in their sobriety through a working arrangement, this reduces the number of risk behaviours in the community and the number of people who are infected with HIV and hepatitis



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