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EHRN organized informal consultation on violence against women who use drugs in EECA in the framework of UN CCPCJ

On April 24, 2013 EHRN together with UNODC and ACUNS organized an Informal Consultation on Violence against Women who Use Drugs in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) in the framework of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). At the meeting harm reduction organizations raised drug policy issues, provided speaking opportunities to drug users' activists and advocated for the respect of human rights of people who use drugs. It was agreed by consultation participants to launch 3 pilot projects in two cities of Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek and Osh) and in Poltava (Ukraine) to address more effectively issue of police violence against women, including women who use drugs.

The main objective of the Consultation was to bring together representatives of international agencies, human rights and other civil society groups to discuss strategies to address cases of state-inflicted violence against women who use drugs in EECA. The focus of EHRN's initiative was on police violence and on violence against women in custodial settings. The meeting was attended by representatives from EHRN, Georgian non-governmental self-organization of women using drugs „Aseco“, UNODC, Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS), Law Enforcement and HIV Network (LEAHN), International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA), International Scientific and Professional Advisory Council of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme (ISPAC), Open Society Foundations, Penal Reform International, Amnesty International, International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care (ICPPC), and Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.

EHRN deputy director for policy and advocacy Dasha Ocheret presented key finding of assessment conducted in 6 EECA countries on violence against women who use drugs (WUD) highlighting police violence as a major problem which becomes even more acute if WUD are also sex workers. According to the assessment, most widespread police practices in the region are beating up WUD to get them sign a confession; so called “Subbotnik” when police demand sexual services from sex workers; blackmailing when police demand bribes from WUD; and drugs planting. Women do not report about those cases because they don't see any potential positive outcomes from filing a complaint and fear of policemen revenge.

Consultation participants shared their experiences and visions in addressing cases of violence by police officers and prison staff on national and international level. Among ideas the proposal to establish municipal intersectorial working groups to monitor cases of violence and develop model of effective solution of the problem was discussed. At the meeting it was agreed to jointly launch three pilot projects of establishing such intersectorial working groups in two cities of Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek and Osh) and in Poltava (Ukraine).

Consultation participants also agreed to cooperate more closely and to push the issue of police violence against women higher on international agenda, for example by organizing a thematic event at the next session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). It was also agreed to create an international advisory group for EHRN's Initiative on violence against women who use drugs. ACUNS offered to facilitate an event with UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and the Special Rapporteur on Torture at the margin of their meeting in Vienna in June to address the issue of violence against women at the international level.

Please read also follow up article about CCPCJ prepared by EHRN steering committee member Aleksandr Zelitchenko:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/aleksandr-zelichenko/rethinking-policing-in-th_b_3156145.html

Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) is a regional network with a mission to promote humane, evidence-based harm reduction approaches to drug use, with the aim of improving health and protecting human rights at the individual, community, and societal level (www.harm-reduction.org).

ССПСЖ – established by ECOSOC Res. 1992/1 of 7 February 1992, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice of 40 Member States replaced the expert Committee on Crime Prevention and Control, with responsibility to provide policy guidelines for States, develop and review the United Nation's crime prevention programme, facilitate regional and inter-regional cooperation, and prepare U.N. congresses on crime prevention and criminal justice.

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