

**Statement on the Greek positions for the UN Special Session  
of the General Assembly on Drugs (UNGASS)  
New York, 19-21 April 2016.**

On April 7 (World Health Day), the open informational meeting on the occasion of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS 2016) organized by DIOGENIS-Drug Policy Dialogue, concluded in great success, with the participation of more than 50 guests.

Attended the event were representatives from organizations, civil society, local authorities, secondary education, professionals working in the field of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and social reintegration, and from the office of the National Coordinator for Drugs.

During the meeting, lots of information, suggestions and experiences were presented by the speakers and the participants on the background, objectives, preparations and expectations concerning the upcoming UN Special Session on Drugs, the current drug policy and the challenges both in international and national level. As a result, the discussion revealed the need to create a statement which will include the main proposals raised during the meeting, to be taken into consideration by the Greek delegation at the UNGASS 2016, which will be sent within the next few days to the relevant government agencies. We hope that the Greek delegation will take into account and include in its positions during the Special Session the following proposals:

- 1.** The UN Special Session of the General Assembly on Drugs should provide new guidelines for drug policies to effectively address and encounter the world drug problem. It is necessary to shift from repressive measures to policies oriented towards health, security and respect for human rights.
- 2.** Currently, governments allocate disproportionate amounts of resources to repression than to prevention, treatment and social rehabilitation. This has to change. A Balanced and comprehensive approach to drug demand and drug reduction requires an equitable distribution of resources.
- 3.** The use of punitive measures, prosecution and imprisonment for people who use substances promotes stigma, marginalization and has been proven to be ineffective. They should not be punished, but, on the contrary, be supported and promoted to ensure a life with dignity, respect and perspectives for social inclusion. Criminal sanctions for personal possession and use should be removed and be replaced by measures that promote and enhance health and social integration.
- 4.** Necessary is the cooperation among the competent service providers and law enforcement authorities in order to effectively and properly respond to people who use substances. The relation of all involved parties must be based on trust and mutual support.

5. It is necessary to effectively address problematic substance use and the related negative and harmful consequences, such as the spread of HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and other infectious diseases. The existing legislation is, in many cases, an obstacle towards the implementation of harm reduction practices. Harm reduction should be legally regulated and all the related interventions, such as, inter alia, supervised injection sites, to be included in the national law (Law 4139/2013 on Addictive Substances).

6. Support the abolition of death penalty for offences related to psychoactive substances.

7. The UN Special Session of the General Assembly on drugs will work on the issue of the availability of controlled substances to treat and fight pain. The Greek delegation should strongly support the proposal for their availability. The Greek Law concerning the availability of controlled substances should be evaluated and adapted according to modern standards.

8. Cultivation and supply of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes is consistent with the three international drug control conventions. The Greek state should, immediately, legally establish the use of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes, following the example of many European countries.

9. Increase the access to medication-assisted treatment of addiction for those who need it, including access to such services in prisons and hospitals, taking also into account the specific needs of women and youth.

*April 11, 2016  
Athens*

**The statement is supported and signed by (in alphabetical order):**

- **DIOGENIS** - Drug Policy Dialogue
- **ELEY.SY.NA** (Libertarian Association of Independence)
- **POSITIVE VOICE** (Association of seropositive Greece)
- **CENTRE FOR LIFE** (For the support of the people living with HIV/AIDS)
- **PARI.SY.A.** (Hellenic Association of pain control and palliative care)
- **PROMETHEUS** (Hellenic Liver Patient Association)
- **Greek Drug and Substitute Users Union**
- **PRAKSIS** (Programs of development, social support and medical cooperation)