

PRESS RELEASE

SUPPORT.DON'T PUNISH DISCUSSING FOR MATTERS THAT MATTER TO US

Athens, 21/06/ 2018



The member organizations of the Greek NGO Platform for Psychoactive Substances (Peer Network of Users of Psychoactive Substances, Diogenis Drug Policy Dialogue, Positive Voice, Centre for Life, Hellenic Liver Patient Association “Prometheus”, PRAKSIS and Steps) invite you to a joint event, being implemented in the framework of the global campaign "Support.Don't Punish" on the occasion of the Global Day of Action on 26 June.

In several countries, June 26 has been established as World Anti-Drug Day and unfortunately is the cause of populist scaremongering to justify state and institutional violence against addicted, marginalized and socially stigmatized people. It is a day against people! To compensate for all this, the Global Day of Action and the "Support.Don't Punish" campaign were set up to raise awareness of the harms being caused by the criminalization and punishment of people who use drugs. At the same time, the campaign is calling for changes to existing drug laws, for the decriminalization of low-level, non-violent drug offences, and for investments in effective and cost-effective harm reduction responses for people who use drugs.

The NGO Platform for Psychoactive Substances advocates for reform in the existing legislative framework and national drug policy towards a pragmatic approach that is consistent with the protection of human rights, promotes autonomy and leads to personal and social security.

Globally a large number of international recommendations underline that the issue of substance dependence is a matter of public health rather than criminal repression, whereas punitive methods have long been proven to be insufficient in addressing the problem, on the contrary they have a major impact on its social implications. Continuous and equal participation of the affected population of PWUD in the design of drug policy – prevention, harm reduction, treatment and social reintegration – is a prerequisite for the success of any plan.

We invite you on **Tuesday, June 26, 2018, at 7 pm, at the Athens Municipal Cellular Market (42, Fokionos Negris str)** in an open dialogue regarding: current public health and drug policies applied in addressing the issue of psychoactive substances, the way users are being treated by the state and society, the issue of combating crime that accompanies drug use by law enforcement, and finally the removal of unjustified social stereotypes at the expense of PWUD, the importance for the provision of substantial support, as well as the need for equal, meaningful and substantial participation of users community in procedures totally concerning them.

Along with us will be: Mrs. Katerina Konidari, psychologist, social researcher and writer, who will talk about the representation of addiction treatment on art; Mr. Michalis Lolis, Police Lieutenant of the A' (First) Police Department for Combating Racist Violence, who will communicate his experience on human rights' issues and the protection of people with different identities and Mr. Yannis Kissas, representative of the Peer Network of Users Psychoactive Substances, who will specifically refer to the Network's proposals for supportive policies rather than the punishment of drug users. The discussion will be co-chaired and coordinated by Mr. Christos Anastasiou, member of the Peer Network of Users Psychoactive Substances.

At the end of the event, following an online vote among members of the Network a prize will be awarded at the OKANA Substitution Unit which according to Peers' view provides the most friendly and integrated services to PWUD.

Contact: Greek NGO Platform for Psychoactive Substances nqoppsqr@gmail.com

More information on the global awareness campaign "Support.Don't Punish.": www.supportdontpunish.org

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