



**HARM
REDUCTION
WORKS –
FUND
IT!**

CONCEPT NOTE

**Regional Harm Reduction Conference 2017
Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

HARM REDUCTION IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

4-6 April 2017, Vilnius, Lithuania, Radisson Blu Hotel, Konstitucijos pr. 20

INTRODUCTION

The economic and political factors of the current decade of the XXI century are shaping the new environment for health and social policies in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA). A clear tendency is being observed of decrease in funding, available from international and bilateral donors for middle-income countries on the health related responses, including for HIV, hepatitis C and tuberculosis. Though, at the same time, the economies of the region are growing, countries are not yet well prepared for ensuring sustainable transition from donor support to national funding of health programs, especially those targeted at key affected populations (KAPs), and face serious challenges.

The new environment, identified first of all by transition from external support to domestic resources, dictates new approaches in addressing health and social problems of KAPs and clearly assessing the transition consequences for the region, governments, communities, and donors on the one hand, and for sustainability of harm reduction services on the other.

Harm reduction services in CEECA during last years were seen mainly as HIV prevention, but in the new environment they are playing the role of a vehicle, which allows people using drugs to access all continuum of services from prevention information to testing for HIV and tuberculosis, STI and hepatitis treatment, and development of adherence to ARV treatment. In the new circumstances, harm reduction has to be integrated into health and social care systems and needs to be recognized by governments and local communities as essential for achieving social changes.



REGIONAL HR CONFERENCE 2017 DESCRIPTION

The Regional Harm Reduction Conference will be dedicated to the results, lessons learnt, and perspectives of civil society and community-driven advocacy for sustainable and high-quality harm reduction programs in CEECA. The conference will provide an opportunity to discuss the progress of regional, national and local advocacy efforts, undertaken in the region during the last three years, and examine perspectives of these results from both community/NGO and state actors' point of view to agree on further actions to sustain harm reduction services in CEECA region in the new environment.

REGIONAL HR CONFERENCE 2017 GOALS

The goal of the Conference is to build productive regional dialogue of the drug user community, governmental, social and healthcare professionals, donors and technical partners in order to come to a common understanding of the public health and social importance of harm reduction programs, possible consequences of transition processes, and to reach a consensus between all stakeholders on their key roles in increasing the quality and ensuring the sustainability of harm reduction programs in the context of transition to domestic funding, new drug policy challenges and public health needs.

REGIONAL HR CONFERENCE 2017 OBJECTIVES

- (1) To present the current status of harm reduction programs in the new environment in the CEECA region;
- (2) To explore the challenges, opportunities and lessons learnt on regional/national advocacy to ensure the sustainability of harm reduction programs;
- (3) To explore harm reduction response and needed adaptation to the context of new epidemiological, social and political challenges, and new public health opportunities.

REGIONAL HR CONFERENCE 2017 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The conference participants representing civil society organizations, state bodies, expert and donor organizations, are aware of the status and the role of harm reduction in public health and social care systems, challenges and problems faced at different stages of harm reduction programs' integration into health and social care systems, and the key instruments and mechanisms to address these challenges for the benefit of the communities and society at large.

REGIONAL HR CONFERENCE 2017 FRAMEWORK

Day 1, April 4, 2017

9:00 – 11:00 Opening session – overview of the current status of harm reduction, goals, objectives and key topics of the Conference.

Topic of the day – FUNDING OF HARM REDUCTION IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

Key issues to be covered:

- financial sustainability of harm reduction programs;
- transition from donors' support to domestic funding;
- harm reduction funding mechanisms in CEECA region;
- allocative efficiency;
- national and local budget advocacy experience, including the results of the Regional Program "Harm Reduction Works – Fund It!".

11:30 – 13:00 - Plenary session

14:00 – 17:30 - Working sessions, workshops, side events.

Day 2, April 5, 2017

Topic of the day - THE ROLE OF HARM REDUCTION IN SOCIAL AND MEDICAL CARE FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

Key issues to be covered:

- integration of harm reduction services into national health/social systems as a way to insure access of PWUD to HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis C treatment;



- *ensuring quality of harm reduction services;*
- *access to services by youth, women and imprisoned populations;*
- *linkages with social support services.*

9:00 – 11:00 - Plenary session

11:30 – 17:30 – Working sessions, workshops, side events.

Day 3, April 6, 2017

Topic of the day - HARM REDUCTION AS HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED DRUG POLICY

Key issues to be covered:

- *the role of harm reduction in the provision of non-punitive measures of drug control;*
- *drug policy barriers related to effective harm reduction service provision;*
- *human rights instruments to address discrimination of PWUD in health system;*
- *regional feedback to the UNGASS on the World Drug Problem.*

9:00 – 10:30 – Plenary session

11:00 – 13:00 – Working sessions, workshops, side events

14:00 – 15:00 – Conference closing session

15:30 – 18:00 – Meeting of EHRN members, side events.

As a result of the Regional HR Conference 2017, participants will issue a Joint Statement, reflecting their concerns regarding threats and opportunities created by the new environment for harm reduction, and addressing national governments and key donors on urgent steps needed to be taken to ensure its sustainability in the region. The Joint Statement will be widely disseminated through social networks and mass media. The conference will also serve as a regional discussion platform in advance to the 25th International Harm Reduction Conference to be held in Montréal, in May 2017 and the 22st International AIDS Conference to be held in Amsterdam, in July 2018.

DATES, LOCATION AND PARTICIPANTS

The conference will take place on April 4-6, 2017 in Radisson Blu Hotel, Vilnius, Lithuania. The expected number of participants is 200, including representatives of CEECA state bodies, experts, donors, technical agencies, civil society and communities.



THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITTEE

The Regional Harm Reduction Conference 2017 is organized by Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) in the framework of the Regional Program "Harm Reduction Works – Fund It!", funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The International Organizational Committee, initiated by EHRN, includes the representatives of the following organizations: the Global Fund, UNAIDS, WHO, UNODC, UN Secretary-General Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, The Open Society Foundations, HRI, AFEW International, ENPUD, EHRN's Steering Committee, representative of the Lithuanian Government. The Organizational Committee will have monthly calls to discuss the Conference content development. Key sponsors and supporters will be identified by January 1, 2017.

The Lithuanian Organizational Committee, initiated by EHRN, will include representatives of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Criminal Police of Vilnius, Vilnius Center for Addictive Disorders, Logistic Company 'West Express', to ensure logistic and technical support to the preparation and smooth conduction of the Conference. The Lithuanian Organizational Committee has been established at its first meeting on November 8, 2016, and will further meet per EHRN's request for technical and administrative coordination of the Conference preparation.