

DPNSEE report for 2021

Summary

The coronavirus pandemic and its devastating effects to different elements of our lives continued in 2021. After a short relaxing summer period, the wave that lasted from autumn until the end of 2021 (and later) left the most consequences in numbers of infected people around the World and high death toll. People from populations at risk, our organisations and staff continued using protection measures, but the focus or healthcare was far from them. Still, DPNSEE and our member organisations managed to operate in a solid way, although the space for our work is more and more shrinking.

Shrinking space for civil society is more and more reality in our region, even wider. Several organisations and networks from South East Europe have indicated this. Our colleagues from wider Europe too. Even, the Open Society Foundations closed their Health Program, which affects significantly many people in need in various corners of the World. This also affected DPNSEE, who expected extension of the operational grant which will not happen.

DPNSEE have managed last year to reach the new horizons. We have been welcomed to the EU Civil Society Forum on Drugs. Our representatives spoke on important events, our colleagues elected to other important positions. We joined Correlation, EHRA and other organisations and networks in joint advocacy to fight harm reduction crisis in our region and preparing project proposal for project submitted to the EU for Health programme.

Most of our work in 2021 was dedicated to young people. We implemented the "No risk, no borders for young people" project with our 5 member organisations. We already have a large group of engaged young people, many of whom takes important roles in their organisations and internationally. We hope that they bring a new spirit and engage their peers.

Member organisations

At the General Assembly held on 21 March 2021, DPNSEE discussed membership situation of several member organisations.

Unfortunately, the Assembly confirmed cease of membership of Initiative for Health Foundation, Bulgaria and Diogenis, Greece due to their closure.

Membership status of the organizations Aliat, Romania and Viktorija, Bosnia Herzegovina from ordinary to associate due to a very difficult sustainability situation they experience.

The Assembly accepted membership application of Peer Network of Users of Psychoactive Substances - PeerNUPS, Greece and granted the ordinary status but without the obligation to pay membership fees.

The Network maintained regular contacts with its member organisations, through usual channels: mails, webpage, social networks. In addition, during the first wave of the pandemic, the Board decided to have voice calls with member organizations by countries to get a better insight into situation, problems and solutions to them and invited to share information with EMCDDA and our partners in Correlation Network and EHRA. The video calls with member organizations were held in two weeks.

Activities

DPNSEE and Trimbos Institute hosted the Webinar "**Drug Policy evaluations: opportunities to support inclusive, effective and evidence-based public policy**" on Wednesday 10 February 2021. The aim of the Webinar was to provide information on drug policy evaluation as an effective instrument to guide, manage and support effective policies and services. The Webinar was supported by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and the European Civil Society Forum on Drugs. The Webinar included an introduction on drug policy evaluations and presentations on approach and methods and experiences from the evaluations performed in Croatia and Cyprus. Discussions in three separate discussion rooms followed on different segments of a policy/strategy cycle. More than 90 representatives of governmental organisations, both on national and local level, academia, civil society organisations, coming from 31 countries, and international organisations participated.

DPNSEE held the promotion of the **Analysis of the data on drug-induced deaths in Serbia 2008 - 2019** on 10 March 2021 with the support of the Office for Combating Drugs of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. More than 30 representatives of governmental organisations, civil society organisations, media and international organisation from Serbia and other countries participated. DPNSEE has prepared the analysis using statistic about the drug-induced deaths managed by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. The data used are segmented using codes of the causes of death, agreed with the Ministry of Health and the Institute for Public Health "Dr Milan Jovanović Batut", in accordance with the standard protocol of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

Presentation of the budget analysis in Montenegro was organised by organisations participating in our project on 17 March. DPNSEE contributed to the presentation.

DPNSEE hosted the **Webinar on EU Drugs Strategy 2021 - 2025** on 24 March 2021. The Webinar was supported by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). The webinar was supposed to serve as a source of inspiration to support all those involved process of design, implementation and evaluation of drug strategies. More than 70 representatives of governmental organisations, both on national and local level, academia, civil society organisations, international organisations and donor community participated.

The EU Drugs Strategy 2021 - 2025 was presented by Danilo Ballotta, Coordinator - Institutional relations at the EMCDDA. Discussions in three separate discussion rooms followed on three main pillars of the Strategy.

On 30 March we published a collection of slides under the title **Decades of delusion** to commemorate 60th anniversary of the UN Convention on drugs, the first international document which opened the door for the War on Drugs.

The **Committee on Narcotic Drugs (CND)** was held online for the first time 12 - 16 April and it was a completely different event. It was full of presentations but they were only one-way. DPNSEE fully participated in the **Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs** conference which included partial elections of the Board.

For the fifth time, DPNSEE was the coordinator of the **Support. Don't Punish** campaign in South East Europe. DPNSEE signed memorandums of understanding with leading organizations in each of the countries involved: Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia. Unfortunately, an agreement was not achieved only for the campaign in Bulgaria, while Greece made a separate memorandum of understanding directly with IDPC.

In 2021, the campaign in South East Europe involved 14 cities, 15 host organisations, 33 social media accounts, 46 activities, 500+ volunteers, 5.000+ participants in events and 200.000+ impressions at social networks.

On the occasion of 26th June, the United Nations' International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, as part of the Support Don't Punish campaign's 'Global Day of Action', DPNSEE prepared the **Appeal to the governments in South East Europe** to ensure that people who use drugs are safe from discrimination and enjoy care which is needed.

The campaign was held in very difficult circumstances, but participating organisations managed to find a way to hold activities and continue contributing to achieving its goals.

DPNSEE was elected to the European Commission expert group **Civil Society Forum on Drugs**. The Forum membership comprises 45 civil society organisations coming from across Europe and representing a variety of fields of drug policy, and a variety of stances within those fields. Its purpose is to provide a broad platform for a structured dialogue between the Commission and the European civil society which supports drug policy formulation and implementation through practical advice. We felt that this is a great acknowledgement of the work we did in the last 5 years and a promising opportunity to represent the region in this important EU body.

At its first meeting, (6 and 7 October), DPNSEE Executive Director was elected Chair of the Working Group 4: Emerging drug policy issues and cross-cutting issues. At the second day of the meeting, on the request of the Slovenian EU Presidency, situation in South East Europe, including DPNSEE presentation, was the agenda point at the meeting with the EU Horizontal Group on Drugs (comprised of national responsible for drugs).

Milutin participated in the **Executive Course on Global Health and Drug Policy** offered by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies and the Chair, Global Commission on Drug Policy (11 - 13 October, Geneva). The Course offered very interesting presentations on health and human rights aspect of drug issue and was an excellent opportunity for promoting DPNSEE work.

At the **TACSO Community Resilience Forum** (19 - 21 October, Belgrade), DPNSEE and representatives of Cazas, Duga and HOPS were speaking at the session Vulnerability in the time of crisis providing information about support to vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. The key word used at this event and wider in the region now is "resilience" of the civil society which is a potential answer to the shrinking space for our work.

The Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs appointed proposed DPNSEE to present about Social use of confiscated property from criminal proceedings at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (**CND Thematic Intersessional meeting** (19 - 20 October, Vienna). This was also an opportunity for an interesting exchange of ideas with the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime (GI TOC).

Nenad Maletin from the DPNSEE Office participated in the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) **Regional Strategy Forum** aimed at gathering inputs from the region for its new three-year strategic plan. The three-day event was held in Fruška Gora, Serbia, 8 - 10 November, and gathered more than 70 representatives of civil society, governments, international and regional organizations and youth.

The **5th European Harm Reduction Conference** (10 - 12 November, Prague) brought together around 300 participants, out of which more than 30 were from our member organisations. In communication with organisers, we ensured support for 4 people from the Network. It was the first large meeting after the breakout of the coronavirus pandemic. We held a meeting with MO representatives, Milutin was part of the panel at the opening, several our representatives were speaking at workshops and we had an opportunity for good exchanges and sharing about common projects during the Conference.

The most important result is that we had an open discussion with Alexis Goosdeel, Director of the EMCDDA, and André Noor, Head of the Estimates, Statistics and Data Management sector. We agreed that the next Government - Civil Society Dialogue on Drugs, which we traditionally organise with the Office for Combating Drugs of the Government of Republic of Serbia, will be dedicated to monitoring and evidence

base for drug policies. EMCDDA will invite and cover expenses of all governmental Reitox Network focal points.

Several participants of our member organisations, including Nebojša Đurasović, Marios Atzemis and Nicoleta Dascalu, participated in the **Workshop on civil society advocacy** organised by the CSFD (24 - 25 November, Madrid). It was also the opportunity to visit one of thousand cannabis clubs in Spain.

Marios and Milutin participated in the **Training course on substance abuse treatment, harm reduction and humanitarian drug policy** (29 November - 3 December 2021, Villa Maraini Foundation, Rome). It was an excellent opportunity to visit this very well organised centre which provides a variety of services to different needs of people who use drugs, to present our work and share with representatives of several national Red Cross societies and to discuss future cooperation. We also discussed cooperation the Rome Consensus 2.0. DPNSEE should sign the Consensus and be their ambassador in the region.

Together with Correlation and EHRA, we are active in **advocacy about harm reduction crisis** in some countries of the region - Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Romania. We had a few online meetings recently, discussed it in Prague with partners, and a document with regional overview is to be published.

We participated in the Vienna NGO Committee Working group on nominations to the Steering Committee.

DPNSEE joined various **appeals and open letters** including: CSOs Response to Global AIDS Strategy, violence against civil society organisations in Serbia, boycott of the CSO Strategy in Serbia, Decriminalization of the possession of small amounts of psychoactive substances in the Republic of Lithuania, Letter to United Nations Secretary General on censure of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at the Reconvened Session of the 64th CND, etc.

Activities in Serbia

DPNSEE and our member organisations participated in several events and structures in Serbia: CCM, National Convent on EU accession, Working group on Hepatitis strategic plan, Action plan on National drug strategy implementation, media interventions on cannabis regulation, Re Generation's project on women who use drugs, etc.). DPNSEE and all 4 member organisations from Serbia keep good and fruitful contacts with the Office for combating drugs of the Government of Serbia.

The most important was the **Bio-behavioural survey** in Serbia which was done for the first time since 2013. For 8 years there were no valid information on situation with HIV. Besides people who use drugs, the research was also done for MSM and sex workers communities. The Institute for Public Health will process the data by the end of the year. OSF supported the survey through DPNSEE, with 24.000 USD for vouchers which were distributed to people surveyed.

As part of the **Serbian Visions Multicongress**, organised by the German-Serbian Chamber of Commerce (AHK) from 1 to 5 February 2021, DPNSEE hosted an online discussion "*Cannabis - narcotic drug or/and medicine*" on Friday 5 February. 18 participants from Serbia, Croatia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia joined. Most of them were from civil society organisations, but also we had those from the Office for Combating Drugs of the Government of Serbia and the Institute for Public Health in Serbia.

Representatives of DPNSEE, Prevent and Re Generacija participated in the **National dialogue on resilience to organized crime** in Serbia. Similar dialogues were also organised in Bosnia Herzegovina and Montenegro. As a result of our advocacy, decriminalisation of use and possession of drugs for personal use is new point in their strategy. Social use of confiscated property from organised crime is also part of their strategy. The Observatory is conducting a survey on drugs in the Western Balkans for the EMCDDA, where our member organisations in 5 countries were involved. The Board discussed about the idea that DPNSEE collect such kind of data in all SEE countries.

DPNSEE, Prevent and Re Generation have contributed to the **evaluation of the implementation of the National Drug Strategy**, done by the team from the Office for combating drugs in Croatia engaged by the EMCDDA.

We have informed colleagues from Serbia about the **draft Changes of the Law on volunteering** which includes provision that people who used drugs will not be permitted to volunteer with young people at least three years after they successfully complete addiction treatment.

DPNSEE Executive Director actively participated in the work of the **Working Group for Chapter 24 - Justice, Freedom and Security** within the National Convent on the European Union in Serbia as the representative of civil society organizations in the area of drug policy, while President Nebojša Đurasović participated in the work of the **Working Group for Chapter 28 - Consumer and health protection**.

Our President, Executive Director and representatives of member organisations were guests or interviewed by several media (mainly TV and news agencies) on different issues from our scope of work: regulation of cannabis, illegal cannabis production in Serbia, drug-induced deaths, youth and drugs, regulation of sex work, organised crime, drugs and sexism in nightlife and festivals, HIV prevention, etc.

Projects

Throughout 2021, from February to October, DPNSEE implemented the "**No risk, no borders for young people in South East Europe**" project in partnership with our member organisations Aksion Plus (Albania), Margina (Bosnia Herzegovina), Juventas (Montenegro), Prevent and Re Generation (Serbia) and supported by the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) within its 4th Open Call co-financed by the European Union. The project directly addressed present and increasing stigmatization of the marginalized youth groups targeted by the project – youth at risk (young people who use drugs, youth in conflict with the law and youth with alternative lifestyles and identities: sex workers, LGBTI population, young people in conflict with the law, and others), as also lack of the visibility and mutual understanding of their needs, lack of the regional youth cooperation on the issue of the targeted marginalized youth groups and lack of the active youth participation and leadership in CSOs.

25 activists, youth leader and youth workers aged 18 – 28 from the Western Balkans participated. Activities of the project included two workshops, pre-task activity, youth exchange and production of the [Curriculum for working with youth at risk](#). In addition, at the end of the Workshop 1, the project partners have agreed to prepare a publication with analysis of the cases of discrimination. The publication "Documenting cases of discrimination of youth at risk in Western Balkans" is available [following this link>>>](#).

More about the "No risk, no borders for young people in South East Europe" project is available at our webpage [following this link>>>](#).

DPNSEE was among 10 selected civil society organisations from the Western Balkans and Turkey Region for the Strategic Mentoring Programme. The Programme is a part of **EU TACSO 3 Capacity Development and People to People (P2P) Programme**. It enables interested and qualified organisations to get an in-depth mentoring support to improve areas of their work according to their needs and in line with EU TACSO 3 project priorities.

DPNSEE have gained consultancy to review the network's Strategy and develop the Public Relations and Communication Strategy. The Strategic Mentoring support was provided from June until November 2021 and included desk work and online and insitu consultations with DPNSEE Board and other representatives. It resulted in two documents: DPNSEE Strategic Framework and DPNSEE Communication and External relations Strategy. In addition, several focus groups were organised in preparations for the General Assembly in 2022.

The **regional multi-country project** "Sustainability of Services for Key Populations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia" managed by the Alliance for Public Health started. Our member organisations are recipients of the grant in Montenegro (Cazas) and Serbia (Timok Youth Centre), and involved in the projects in North Macedonia (HOPS). They also actively participated in preparing the new project for the next triennium.

In 2021, our projects to the **Belgrade Open School** Call "Support to civil society for advocacy" was again not supported.

Also, our **Robert Carr Fund** Open Call application was not successful, like many others coming from Europe. This will significantly affect DPNSEE sustainability.

DPNSEE bodies

The DPNSEE **General Assembly** was held on 29 March 2021, via Zoom. The Assembly adopted operational and financial reports, discussed and decided about membership status of several member organisations and co-opted one Board member.

The **DPNSEE Board** held five meetings. Four of them were held online due to coronavirus restrictions. Finally, after a year and half, the Board met in person in September 2021. The Board members were active and contributing to the activities of the Network, especially online

Board member Ilinka Serdarević submitted her resignation due to personal reasons which prevent her to perform this position in full capacity. In accordance with the Article 18 of the DPNSEE Statutes, the Board invited member organisations to propose candidates for co-opting. ARAS proposes that Nicoleta Dascălu, their advocacy manager, is co-opted to the DPNSEE Board. This was unanimously approved by the General Assembly.

The DPNSEE **Staff** included Executive Director and Administration and Financial Officer. The DPNSEE Office operated regularly, with Administration and Financial Officer mostly working from home and once a week in the Office.

Others

DPNSEE application (submitted in 2018) to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was two times more differed in 2021 (in total, it was differed 5 times). We were hoping that it will be accepted because we worked a lot with UNODC and we updated the application, and we sent a message expressing our disappointment. A [recent study](#) prepared by the International Drug Policy Consortium have confirmed that no less than 41 NGOs experience the same obstacles to obtain **ECOSOC accreditation** mainly due to obstructive practices within the UN Committee which is used by some countries as a tool to limit NGO participation in UN policymaking processes.

DPNSEE extracted segments related to drugs from the **European Commission annual assessment** of the implementation of reforms in the **Western Balkan** partners and Turkey and published a document which is available at [our website](#).

DPNSEE extracted segments from the **Global Organized Crime Index**, produced by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, related to drugs in countries of South East Europe. The report is the first tool of its kind designed to assess levels of organized crime and resilience to organized criminal activity. The Index is the result of a two-year endeavour to evaluate levels of crime and resilience. The document is available at [our website](#).

Finances

DPNSEE held the first **audit of the Network's work**. Recently it was only as part of the large project led by Diogenis. The audit was a big challenge for the Staff and it took six months to complete. That included production of the by-law on accounting policies and organisation of accounting. The auditor's report was adopted by the Board.

We obtained again the **Equivalency Determination certification** to prove that we are a civil society organisation by the laws in USA. This was an extension of the status we obtained when we received the support from OSF.