



OKANA's concept for a holistic and people-centered policy: New entries and facilities based on people's needs

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Greek Organization against Drugs



Belgrade, 21/2/2023

Regional round table
“Community-led consultative process on the importance of human rights and evidence-based national drug strategies in HIV response.”

Organisation Against Drugs (OKANA)

the **biggest public service provider** on the field of addictions and behavioral addictions in Greece

4 main pillars: Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction-Direct Access and Social Reintegration

- 75 Prevention Centers
- 64 facilities providing OST treatment with the 2 of them to provide OST treatment within Prisons
- 7 Drug-free treatment programs
- 24 Harm Reduction – direct access programs
- 7 Social Reintegration programs all over Greece

More than **9000 beneficiaries** in treatment programs / **20.000** in Harm Reduction / **400** in Reintegration

More than **1000 employees** (psychiatrists, pathologists, anesthesiologists, nurses, social workers, administrative staff and specialized therapists), covering the full spectrum of the needs of the beneficiaries

Expanding the purpose and services of OKANA...

Law **4737/2020** expands OKANA's purpose to **include all addictions and addictive behaviors**. The organization takes on the extremely important task of **dealing with legal addictions such as alcohol, gambling and internet/gaming**. Addictions that have increased in Greece in recent years.

16 NSRF programs:

- 6 Day Centers
- 5 Mobile units
- 5 Centers for addictions
- 1 shelter/day center for homeless drug users
- 1 alcohol and legal addiction detox
- 1 social reintegration program
- 2 programs for young people arrested with drugs in order to avoid arrested and enter psychosocial support in an early stage
- 3 programs for parental support
- 3 social reintegration programs with legal support

✓ **15.944.975,05 €**
✓ **303 new employments**



Expansion of
OKANA:
130 services and
facilities for 240.000
beneficiaries all
over Greece

Prevention:

- **210.000** beneficiaries, **424** people occupied

Harm Reduction:

- More than **20.000** beneficiaries

Treatment:

- **7.600** (monthly average) in OST treatment programs – (73% buprenorphine, 27% methadone)
- From the 7.600 people in OST treatment 4,7% are HIV positive while 60% are HCV positive; **27,3%** of the beneficiaries has already been treated the last year
- **580** (monthly average) in drug free treatment programs

Social Reintegration:

- **367** (monthly average) beneficiaries

Harm reduction policy:

The key to achieve
the holistic and
people-centered
approach

Before three years there was a gap of:

- Covering the needs of more than **2000 active drug users (hidden population)**
- Reducing the concentration of the **high-risk population**
- Reducing **transmitted diseases** and preventing diseases' outbreaks among drug users.
- Treating of **overdoses**
- **Reducing crime** that may be associated with drug use at meeting places
- **Lack of services and facilities** such as Naloxone and DCR
- **Access for immigrants** to the services and facilities of OKANA due to the lack of information
- **Covering basic needs** which were even more intensified by covid19 pandemic

Harm Reduction in Athens

In order to meet the needs of more than 2000 drug users and the community,

OKANA the last three years:

- *Intensified streetwork actions*
- *Streetwork actions within immigrants' campus*
- *Opened the DCR "STEKI 46"*
- *Opened the new Shelter*
- *Opened Day centers*
- *Participated in programs for HIV/HCV*
- *Made a positive statement for the expansion of the framework of Naloxone use*

Essential was the contribution of the Government and the Ministry of Health. There was also support by the Police and Municipality of Athens

- ✓ *The **government instantly recognized the need** to establish and operate these facilities*
- ✓ *The legal framework of Naloxone and DCR's were supported by the government and local authorities*
- ✓ *Close collaboration of all was the key to succeed.*

➤ *Today, harm reduction completed the network. OKANA is now providing an integrated and holistic network of services in prevention, harm reduction, treatment and social reintegration, ensuring access for all!!!*

Harm Reduction

New entries:

- Stable DCR
- Intensified streetwork actions
- Inhaling KITS
- Nasal Naloxone
- Shelters
- Day Centers
- HIV/HCV programs (Tityos and Hippocrates)
- ESCAPE project
- Supplementary programs based on the risk reduction philosophy

New services:

- + Safe supervised use
- + Overdose treatment
- + Access for all
- + Protection of Public Health
- + Primary Health Care services
- + HIV/HCV outbreaks monitoring / HCV eradication
- + Social care
- + Hygiene
- + Covering of basic needs (food, clothing etc)
- + Housing homeless drug addicts
- + Psychosocial support
- + Legal support
- + Parental support
- + Referrals to treatment programs
- + Connection with primary health care services
- + Realtime feedback on new entries in the field of addiction

**Holistic and
people-centered
network**

Intensified Streetwork Actions



More than 8000 inhaling use KITS for shisha (methamphetamine-based substance)

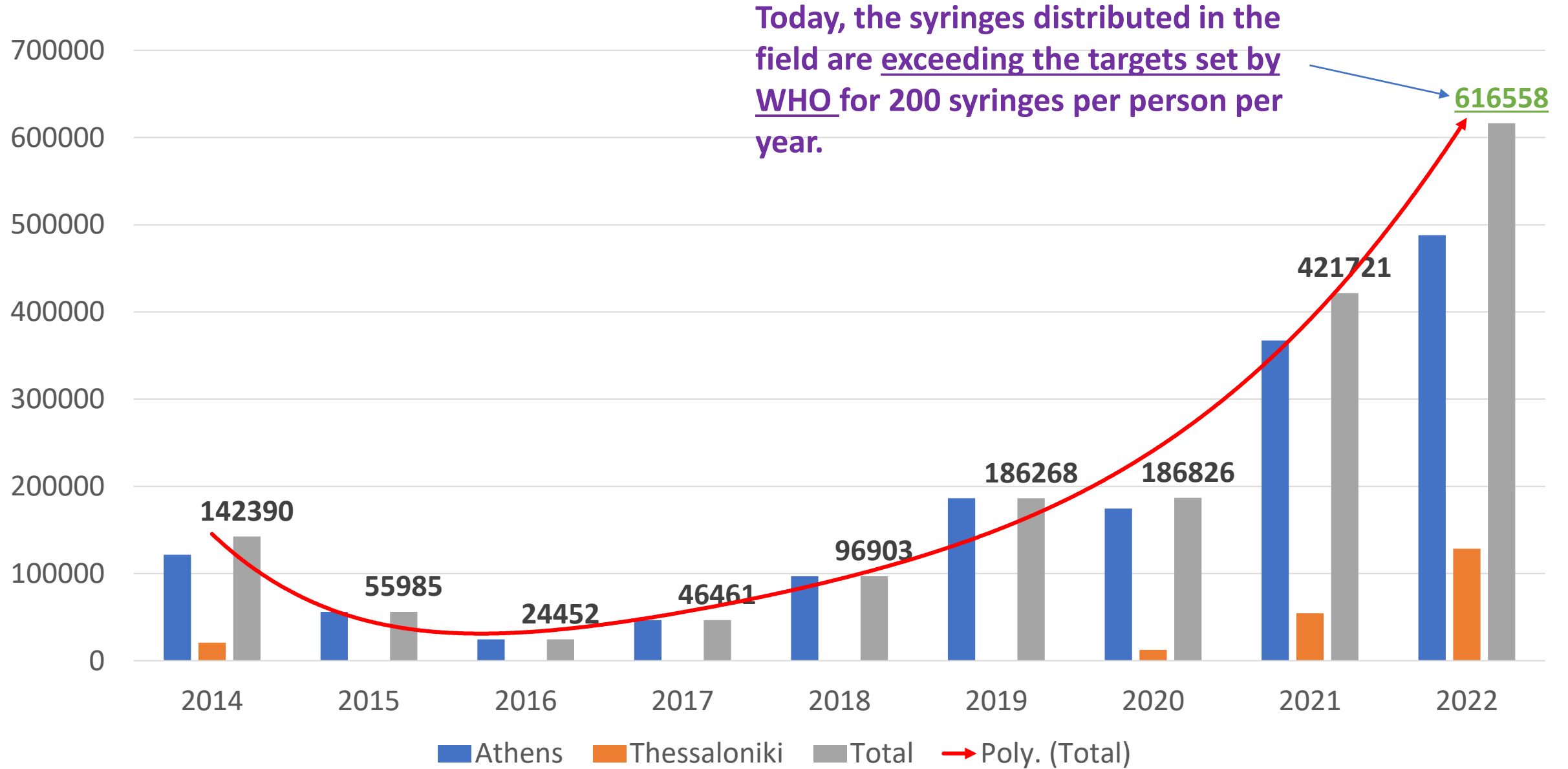


More than 600.000 syringes distributed for 2022



Distributions of Syringes per Year:

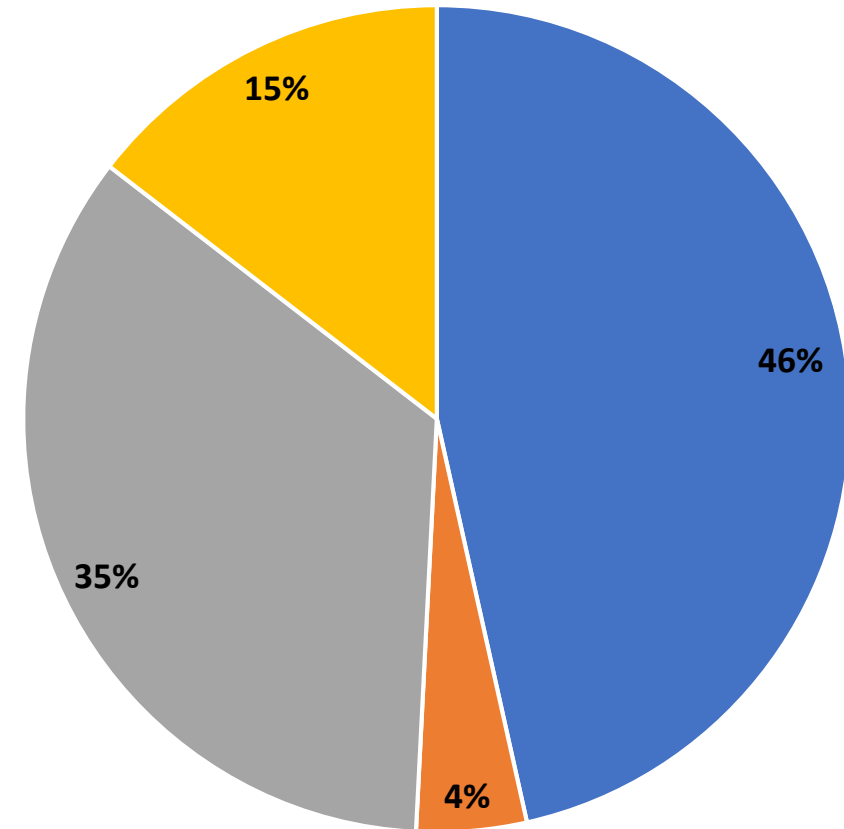
Intensified streetwork actions



Direct Assistance and Support Unit

- ✓ Harm reduction services
- ✓ Syringe exchange services: exchange of used syringes for new sterile syringes
- ✓ Prevention of communicable diseases
- ✓ Primary health care: pathological care, dental care, microbiological tests, HCV testing
- ✓ Social care services: counseling, psychological support, mobilization for treatment, referral of drug users to treatment programs, information about services offered by MABY and other health services, guidance on safe use and behavior

Persons visited MABY: 3737



■ Pathological care ■ Dental care
■ Microbiological care ■ Primary Health care

(data: 2022)



Welcome to DCR STEKI 46

STEKI 46: Supervised drug use...



...with safety

The first DCR in Athens...

12 spaces for safe injecting and/or inhaling use

- ✓ a **waiting room** for the beneficiaries of DCR services,
- ✓ a **fully equipped infirmary** for primary health care and overdose treatment,
- ✓ and a **room for counseling and psychological support**.

Data (from 18/4/2022– 31/1/2023):

- **19.630 total visits**
- **760 individual registered persons**
- **7.421 cases of supervised use within DCR**
- **9.975 other services** were provided to beneficiaries within DCR (primary health care, hygiene, medical monitoring, psychosocial support)
- **Prevention of overdose in 56 individuals**, with close supervision (monitoring)
- **43 cases of overdose were treated with naloxone use**



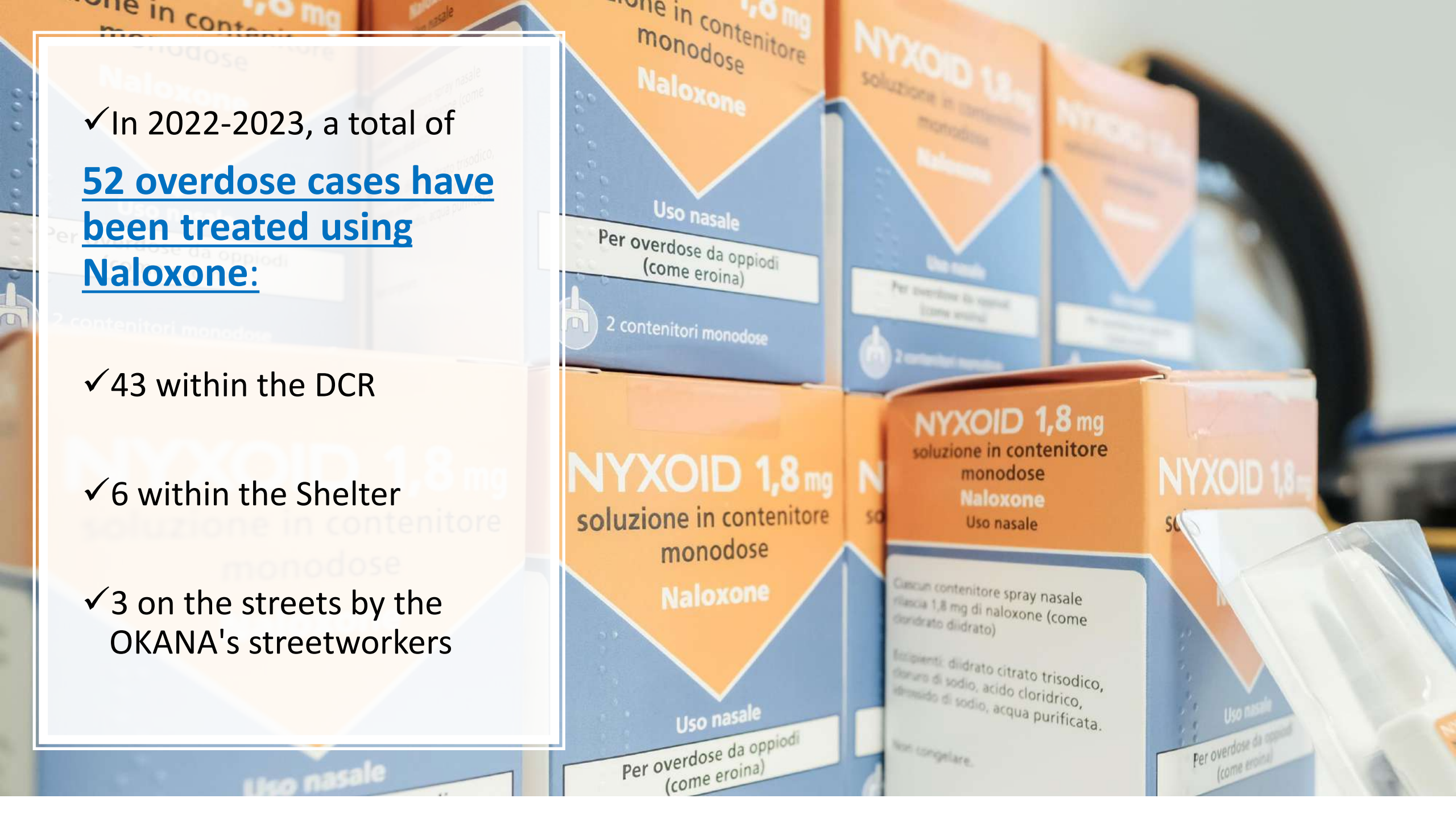
OKANA officially operates the first Drug Consumption Room (DCR) “STEKI 46” in Athens on 18/4/2022

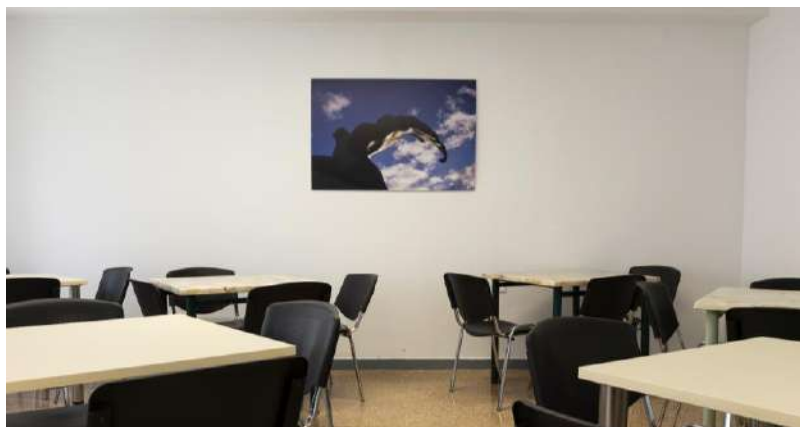
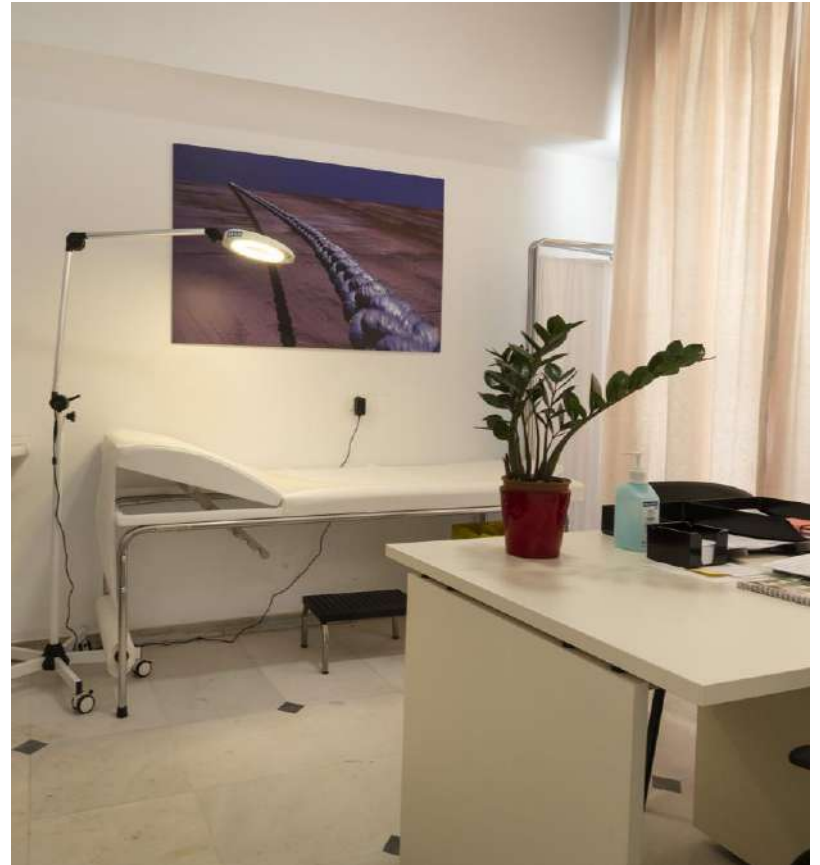
✓ In 2022-2023, a total of **52 overdose cases have been treated using Naloxone:**

✓ 43 within the DCR

✓ 6 within the Shelter

✓ 3 on the streets by the OKANA's streetworkers



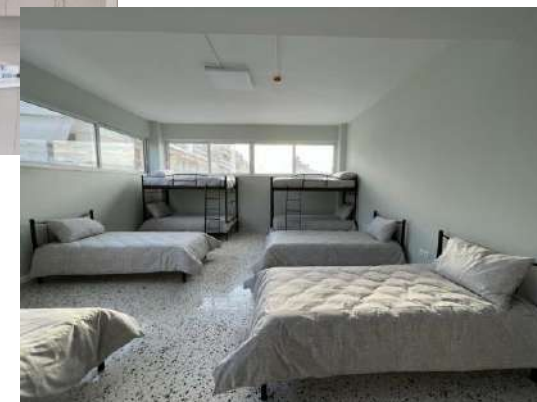


The new Shelter/Day center of OKANA



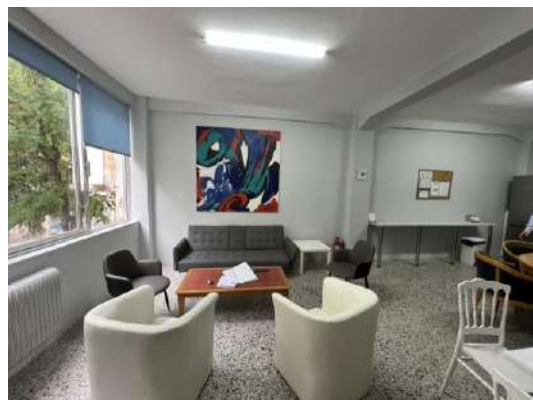
*Already **2026** people are benefited by the Shelter/Day center services during its operation till now:*

- 1) **764** connections with treatment programs were implemented
- 2) **226** people spent the night in the Shelter
- 3) Food was provided to **2158** people
- 4) Personal hygiene care services were provided to **932** people
- 5) **771** people received counseling and psychological support
- 6) **1160** people received primary health care



New Day centers
(Ilion-West Athens, Thessaloniki
and Patras)

✓ **More than 1500 beneficiaries**



TITYOS Program

Program to eradicate Hepatitis among beneficiaries of the organization's OST programs

The 1st Greek Hepatitis Elimination Program

All beneficiaries of the organization's OST programs who have HCV will be monitored

Access to treatment within 1 year.

The program will prevent 180 cirrhosis, 82 cases of hepatocellular carcinoma and 26 deaths by 2028.

Savings of 8 million in the health system by 2028.

- ✓ **Already cured 1595** OKANA members
- ✓ **Still to receive treatment 2500-2600** OKANA members (TITYOS project)

HIPPOCRATES Program

- A program to create a complete automated system for timely and reliable detection of epidemic outbreaks.
- The program includes the development of an algorithm for assessing individual risk of infection with a focus on HIV and Hepatitis B, C.
- It will be applied to OKANA beneficiaries who inject opioids.
- ✓ To date, 1902 people have been examined in 20 OKANA Structures



Ιννοκπάτνς
Σύστημα
Ανίχνευσης
Επιδημιών

Department of Hygiene
Epidemiology and
Medical Statistics,
Medical School of
Athens

INOVATIVE PROGRAMS

ESCAPE Project: Syringe residues analysis

Participation of OKANA for the first time in the project ESCAPE for the analysis of 300 syringes from different locations of the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki (150 each), in order to study the substances contained in the syringes, to identify new trends in drug substances and to determine the extent of use of the already known substances in these cities

The 1st time that Greece participates in this global project



OKANA participates with two cities, Athens and Thessaloniki, collecting 300 syringes (150 in each city)



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

the syringes collected by OKANA streetworkers were analyzed by the Laboratory of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology of Aristotle Medical School in Thessaloniki



ARISTOTLE
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE

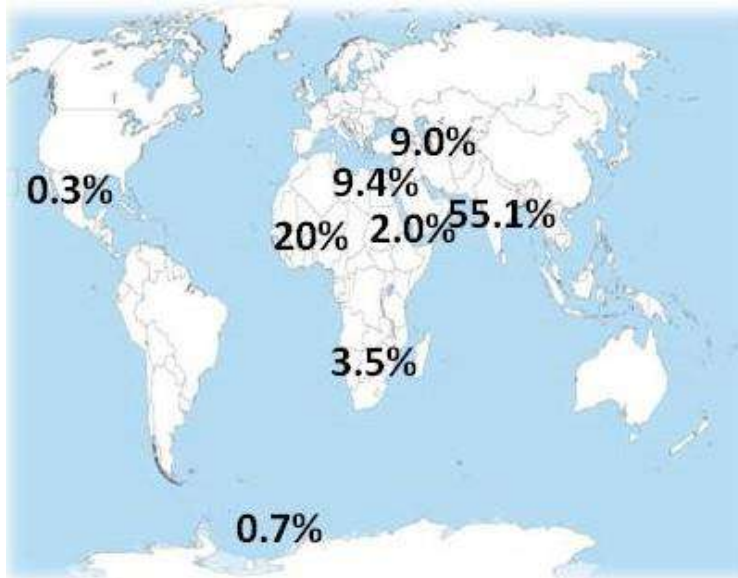
INOVATIVE PROGRAMS

Pilot program intervention within detention centers for immigrants – Outreach actions

13.01.22 - 31.08.22

- ✓ Total number of beneficiaries: **784**
- ✓ Psychological sessions: **554**
- ✓ Psychiatric sessions: **286**
- ✓ Group motivational sessions: **5**

Countries of Origin %



IMMIGRATION

Countries of Origin %

1	Egypt	2,8	16	Libya	2,4
2	Albania	2,4	17	Mali	0,3
3	Algeria	10,0	18	Morocco	2,4
4	Afghanistan	8,7	19	Bangladesh	3,8
5	Bulgaria	1,4	20	Nigeria	0,6
6	Georgia	4,9	21	Ukraine	2,0
7	Gambia	0,3	22	Pakistan	27,0
8	Ghana	0,3	23	Palestine	0,3
9	U.S.A.	0,3	24	Rwanda	1,0
10	India	0,7	25	Romania	0,7
11	Iraq	4,5	26	Russia	2,1
12	Iran	10,4	27	Syria	1,7
13	Cameroon	0,7	28	Turkey	4,2
14	Congo	0,3	29	Tunisia	2,4
15	Croatia	0,7	30	Other	0,7

Next steps..

- ✓ There are already **3 mobile units** in the cities of Patra, Rethymno and Tripoli providing harm reduction services
- OKANA, in collaboration with the Municipality of **Athens**, plans to establish **5 mobile DCRs** that will operate 24/7.
- In addition, OKANA plans to establish one **mobile DCR in Thessaloniki**.
- More **intervention within detention centers** – plus providing OST treatment
- **Low threshold units** providing treatment with methadone
- **Syringe collection** programs
- **Expansion of DCR working hours** (8.00-22.00) every day
- Reinforcement of **social reintegration** - provide legal support



Today...

the complete, integrated and holistic network of services and facilities of OKANA provides

- ✓ *prevention*
- ✓ *harm reduction*
- ✓ *treatment and*
- ✓ *social reintegration*

covering the full spectrum of people needs!!!

Thank

you!
Atanasios Theocharis
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