

The DPNSEE statement on Drug checking

Around the World, 31 March is celebrated as the **International Drug Checking Day** - an initiative conducted by a [diverse group of organizations](#) that all play an active part in the delivery of harm reduction services pertaining to substance use. This year's goal is to raise public awareness of the availability of drug checking services. Supporting this goal, DPNSEE is publishing this statement in order to stress the importance of implementation of drug checking services as an early intervention in different drug use settings.

At the General Assembly held in December 2017, DPNSEE member organisations listed number of benefits and challenges linked to implementation of drug checking services as an integrative harm reduction intervention. This statement outlines the attitudes of the Network following that drug checking represents an essential aspect of public health policy as recommended by the World Health Organization¹ and has been further developed by both EU agencies and various European nations².

Even there is little evidence on the effectiveness of drug checking services on drug use behaviour or health outcomes, a history of drug checking services in other countries may help to guide good practice. Based on the results and the evaluation of the projects implemented in Europe, the drug checking service's integrative parts ideally but not necessarily include the monitoring of drug markets for new/dangerous drugs, as well as high level potency of a certain substances. They also involve data collection on drug-taking patterns. Designing of a service that appeals to the target group offering them a full range of educational information, the recognition of early signs that might lead to problematic relation to substances, counselling and referral to services that focus on effective methods of treatment within the existing drug care system should enhance the better understanding the key population and offer the answer to an emerging crisis³.

There is a growing interest for implementation of these services in most South East European countries. Legal barriers can be solved with adjustment of the current laws. That will make space for basic harm reduction program implementation within recreational settings, in places and cases where drug checking cannot be provided. Having drug checking services supported by the Government shows that the national states are taking drug use problem seriously. It also creates a path through which effectiveness of mandatory national Early Warning System, that currently lack connection to key population, can be improved. That way it can support creating clear picture about drug use on the ground, wider than only focusing on data collected through police raids, or hospital records of overdose cases or high intoxicated individuals.

The Drug Policy Network strongly supports developments towards better addressing the problem of new psychoactive substances. We invite all civil society organisations, governments and health institutions to overcome the obstacles for implementation of drug checking programs in order to create multispectral systematic response to an emerging crisis, to potentially diminish the harm and save lives.

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¹ http://www.who.int/medicines/access/controlled-substances/FactFile_NPS.pdf

² <http://newip.safernightlife.org/pdfs/news/Factsheet on Drug Checking in Europe.pdf>

³ ibid

