

Advocacy for drug policy reforms at high political level in the EECA region



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Context in the EECA region

- Drug legislation is primarily repressive and punitive, imposing severe criminal sanctions on people who use drugs;
- Geo-political factor/ influence of RF: shrinking space for civil society:
 - ‘foreign agent’ laws adopted in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia (the same as in Russia): no possibility to work with support of international donors, control over civil society;
 - zero tolerance to LGBT: so-called ‘gay propaganda’/ ‘pornography distribution’ laws are under consideration in Georgia and other countries. It will increase stigma and discrimination towards LGBT community, human rights violations;
- Increased influence of Islam in Central Asia countries. Prevailing of so-called ‘family values’ (Russian narrative) which totally opposite to tolerance and acceptance of KPs. ‘Family values’, ‘tradition values’ and religion impact policies much more than rule of law, human rights, evidence-based data;
- EU accession perspectives for candidate countries: Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. EU perspectives provide window of opportunities to make policy reforms, including in drug policy sphere.

The Central and Eastern European and Central Asian Commission on Drug Policy (ECECADC)



- was initiated by **Alexander Kwasniewski, former President of Poland** and was created in 2021
- gathering **nine opinion leaders** from the region in order to inspire better drug policy based on scientific evidence and human rights
- The core role of the Commission is **advocacy** for better drug policy **at the high political level**
- Inspired by and works in cooperation with the **Global Commission on Drug Policy**



Mr. Vytenis Andriukaitis

Member of the EU Parliament, WHO Special Envoy for the European region, former European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Lithuania



Mr. Pavel Bem

former Mayor of Prague and former Head of drug policies, Czech Republic, member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy



Professor Michel Kazatchkine

Special Advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, Course Director, Global Health Center, the Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Development, Geneva, Switzerland, member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy.



President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, (Chair)

former President of the Republic of Poland, member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy



Mr. Andris Piebalgs

former European Commissioner for Development, Professor at the European University Institute, Latvia



Mrs. Olena Pinchuk

founder of the Olena Pinchuk Foundation, Ukraine



Mrs. Natalia Nikitenko

Former member of the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan. Member of the socialist party “Ata meken”



Mr. Volodymyr Tymoshenko

Professor, PhD in law science, Academic of the Political Science Academy of Ukraine, General of the Security Service of Ukraine

2021-2024



country missions to Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Georgia
to get political commitments for drug policy reform



High political level advocacy resulted with political support to progressive reforms:

- Seimas (Parliament of Lithuania) Committee on Legal Affairs approved amendments to the Administrative and Criminal Code that propose **to decriminalize possession of small amounts of cannabis without intent to distribute it (2022);**
- Kyrgyzstan has **abolished compulsory narcological treatment** by changing Criminal Code (2024);
- In June of 2024 Commissioners met with President Tokayev (President of Kazakhstan) to **support OAT programs there;**
- Moldovan Government considers creation of an **independent state institution dedicated to work on drug policy issues and development of a new National Drug Strategy.**

EU level advocacy: EU Parliament, EuroCommission, DG NEAR, DG SANTE, EU Drugs Agency (former EMCDDA)

EU accession perspectives provide a great window of opportunities for the candidate countries: **Western Balkans, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia.**

ECEACD works with respective EU institutions to make drug policy reform to be part of 'negotiation package' with candidate countries

ECEACD provides expertise and support to governments to reform drug policies in compliance with EU requirements and standards



ECECADC has unique and special role: advocacy at high political level that is very effective in targeting top officials and facilitating reforms.

ECECADC aims to inspire an open and honest debate, and promote evidence-based drug policy approaches across the region. Working closely with partners, the Commission engages with a broad audience and play a catalytic role in strengthening alliances between communities, civil society, international organizations, academia and governments of the region.

Thank you!

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