

RIGHTS REPORTER FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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RIGHTS REPORTER FOUNDATION

The Rights Reporter Foundation (RRF) is a non-profit organisation founded by Hungarian activists to advocate for the human rights of vulnerable populations. We use the power of video for community mobilisation and advocacy campaigning. Our vision is of a society where policies affecting vulnerable communities are evidence-informed and respect human rights, as well as developed and implemented with the meaningful involvement of these communities. The main focus of our work is on people who use drugs, sex workers, and people who live with HIV, but we are glad to work with other stigmatised communities, such as LGBTQ people, ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, and homeless people. Our mission is to educate the public about the role of evidence in policy formulation, to provide a voice for vulnerable communities, and to improve the advocacy efforts of NGOs by providing technical assistance and training. The RRF team is based in Budapest, and most of our activities focus on Europe, but we have cooperated with a number of NGOs beyond Europe, from New Zealand to Canada, from Mexico to Indonesia.



Text: Péter Sárosi

Design: István Gábor Takács

Proof-reader: Daryl Sullivan

Pictures: István Gábor Takács, except where noted

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All the films and articles in this publication can be found at drugreporter.net.

rightsreporter.net

July 2018

THE INTERNATIONAL ROLLESTON AWARD

P.2

DRUGREPORTER

P.3

VIDEO ADVOCACY

P.4

KOSTYA PROLETARSKY - THE ANIMATED MOVIE IN THE MAKING

P.12

VIDEO ADVOCACY BEYOND DRUG POLICY

P.14

DRUG USERS NEWS

P.18

DRUGREPORTER VIDEO ADVOCACY NETWORK

P.23

EUROPEAN DRUG POLICY REFORM ACTIVITIES

P.16

VIDEO AND MEDIA ADVOCACY TRAINING

P.19

HOW WE CAN ASSIST YOU

P.26

OUR STAFF

P.27



THE INTERNATIONAL ROLLESTON AWARD

We are honoured to receive the most prestigious international award for harm reduction advocacy. The International Rolleston Award was given at the Harm Reduction International Conference in Montreal, to István Gábor Takács, RRF's video manager, and Péter Sárosi, the director of RRF, for their outstanding work in the field of international harm reduction advocacy. The International Rolleston Award was first presented at the 3rd International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm in Melbourne in 1992. Each year, it is given to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to reducing harms from psychoactive substances at an international level.

"It was 10 years ago at the International Harm Reduction Conference in Warsaw that we produced our first movies and the wisdom of the people attending this conference has been making an incredibly important contribution to what we do today." Péter Sárosi.

"I see our role as being the prism in the camera, through which your light is going through and we break it down and spread it around in a rainbow of colours. Now we help other people to become this prism by training them in making videos." István Gábor Takács.

DRUG *reporter*

NEWS AND VIDEOS FROM THE FRONTLINE OF THE WAR ON DRUGS



drugreporter.net
10,000 visitors a month



facebook.com/drugreporter
28,000 followers
facebook.com/drogriporter
30,000 followers



twitter.com/rfdrugreporter
1937 followers



youtube.com/c/drugreportertv
1,701,459 views
3236 subscribers

Our drug policy website, drugreporter.net has become an important voice in the international harm reduction and drug policy reform community.

Since the summer of 2017, Drugreporter has had a new responsive design. In 2017, we published 54 English language articles, our Drugreporter Video Advocacy network members published 8 videos, our European guest authors published 16 articles about stories and news from their countries, and our DUNews chapter published 11 Russian language videos.

We started a popular written interview series with activists and professionals who highlight some of the recent developments in local, national and international drug policies. Many of our editorials are being translated to other languages and published elsewhere.

We upload all videos not only to YouTube, but also to Facebook, where we can reach many more viewers. The number of views per movie range from 500 to more than 17,000, depending on the type of video and the targeted audience, most of our videos reach 3-4000 views.

VIDEO ADVOCACY



“A DAY IN THE LIFE: THE WORLD OF HUMANS WHO USE DRUGS” SCREENINGS AROUND THE WORLD

In 2016, we published our feature length documentary film, produced jointly with our video network members. The film shows one day in the life of 8 people who use drugs in seven cities of the world. We regard the distribution of the *A Day in the Life: The World of Humans Who Use Drugs* film a success: there were public screenings at 37 events in 15 countries. Activists all around the world still organise screenings and discussion forums about the film, using it as an advocacy tool. The film was watched online at a Hungarian video sharing site 20,000 times in a few days after publication. On YouTube it reached 11,000 views. **In July the movie won the Gold Medal for best online documentary at the webvideo contest of Kreativ.hu.**

FILMS ON THE FUNDING CRISIS OF HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

Since 2017 we have published a series of films on the funding crisis of harm reduction in South-East Europe, highlighting the collapse of services after the retreat of Global Fund as the major donor. We published short films on **Bosnia, Macedonia, and Montenegro.** We also provide financial support to our local partners, to distribute the movie among stakeholders by organising screenings. We produced a video specifically for the Global Fund to supplement their training materials. That movie was screened at a high level meeting on HIV in Estonia, for representatives of UN and EU institutions. The final version of the film will be published in 2018.



FILMING IN MONTREAL AND ORGANISING THE INTERNATIONAL HARM REDUCTION FILM FESTIVAL

In 2017 the Rights Reporter Foundation organised the **film festival** at the Harm Reduction International Conference in Montreal, 14-17 May. We launched a call for filmmakers to send their videos featuring important messages and stories of the harm reduction movement. We selected 26 films from more than 15 countries for screening at the Drugreporter Film Sessions. We also live streamed and filmed **seven full sessions** of the conference, and one **conference movie** was produced by our team and presented at the closing session. All these videos can be viewed on Drugreporter.



FILMING IN BALTIC COUNTRIES

RRF is a partner in a project of the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network, funded by the European Commission, to improve drug policy coordination in Baltic countries. Our role in this project was to produce movies in each of the countries about national drug policies with challenges and barriers. The RRF video team produced a series of films in Estonia, **Lithuania** and **Latvia**. These films will be published in 2018.



FILMING AT THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

At the 2017 CND the Rights Reporter crew was experimenting with a new technology to live stream in High Definition drug policy talk shows with key delegates to give viewers an insight to the recent trends in international drug policy reform. Our live show featured Steve Rolles (Transform), Gloria Lai (IDPC), and Ruth Dreifuss and Michel Kazatchkine (Global Commission). **The live streams could reach 5.4K and 11K views on Facebook.**



PHOTO: Washington Office on Latin America

THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF THE WAR ON DRUGS

The School of Public Policy at Central European University (CEU) contracted us to film the international workshop on the gendered impacts of the war on drugs. We learned a series of key issues while interviewing experts on how women are impacted by the drug war.

Rapid increase of incarcerated women - While the majority of those who are imprisoned for drug offences are male, the number of women imprisoned for low level drug offences is increasing rapidly, especially in Asia and Latin-America.

Gender inequalities in the drug market - While you don't find many women among the drug lords and kingpins, there are many women among low level pushers and mules who try to escape poverty and support their families. Being on the bottom of the trafficking chain makes them extremely vulnerable to violence and abuse from both traffickers and the criminal justice system.

Gender bias of eradication programs - In Latin-America many women actively participate in the family business of growing coca, which gives them a certain level of prestige and financial independence. However, when the government eradicates coca cultivations, they become more dependent on and vulnerable to their male family members. And if the government gives compensation, it gives it only to the male heads of households.

Barriers to accessing services for women - Women have much lower access to drug treatment and harm reduction services than men do. One of the key barriers is that women who use drugs don't feel safe and at home in programs where the majority of clients are males, often including their abusive partners or men with sexist prejudices. Another huge barrier is that mothers are afraid to lose custody of their children and/or nobody can take care of their children while they use the services.

Violence - Many women who use drugs are victims of domestic violence or police abuse, especially those who live on the peripheries of society. Incarcerated women are especially vulnerable to violence.

Drug use during pregnancy - Women who use drugs in some countries face imprisonment for harming their children, in other countries they face exclusion and stigma from the health and social care system.



re form



RACE & THE DRUG WAR FILMING AT THE DRUG POLICY ALLIANCE CONFERENCE

The Drugreporter video team was invited by the Drug Policy Alliance to their conference in Atlanta to produce a film about the latest developments in drug policy in the US and beyond. Many people, including the key speaker of the opening session, Michelle Alexander, are of the opinion that Jim Crow racial segregation has never been annihilated in the US – it has survived in the form of the war on drugs. The War on Drugs devastated Afro-American communities and created a system that effectively blocks their political empowerment. This is true even in our times, when 8 US states have already legalised marijuana. Although Afro-Americans were disproportionately hit by the war on drugs they are not benefiting from legalisation, and stay in prison in great numbers. Especially in the South, where the drug war, with its mass incarceration and racial profiling, is alive and well. If you would like to end the war on drugs, says Michelle Alexander, you cannot leave these communities behind.

Our video of Michelle Alexander's speech at the conference has 14,000 views on Facebook. The interview with Ethan Nadelmann on legalisation and beyond was viewed 3700 times and our movie on the drug war and race was viewed 4000 times. All the videos (13 hours of edited footage) with many sessions can be viewed on Drugreporter.



THE TIME IS NOW TO ELIMINATE HEPATITIS C

Correlation Network, together with a number of partners, organised a Hepatitis C Community Summit in April 2017 in Amsterdam, because this is an historic moment for Hepatitis C treatment. With the advent of direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) we can now massively reduce the harm from an infectious disease that affects millions of people and causes hundreds of thousands of deaths every year. Interferon-free DAA regimes are short, highly tolerable, and simple to deliver, with cure rates of over 90%. Hepatitis C elimination will require on the one hand an enormous scale-up in testing and treatment, along with comprehensive harm reduction services including in prisons, and on the other hand a sustained collaborative effort to combat the stigma, discrimination, and criminalisation faced by people who inject drugs, as well as other priority communities, like migrants and men having sex with men. Communities, harm reduction, and community representatives must participate in formulating and implementing hepatitis C prevention, testing, and treatment strategies because these stakeholders have unique knowledge about what will be accessible, acceptable, and effective. We produced a [summary movie](#) of the event with 24,000 views on Facebook and in October 2017 we organised a [panel discussion](#) on hepatitis C in Budapest.



TOWARDS HUMANE DRUG POLICIES IN ASIA FILMING AT THE IFNGO CONFERENCE IN MACAU

We were invited by ARTM Macau to attend and film the 27th IFNGO conference in Macau in November 2017. Our [summary movie](#) was viewed 17,000 times on Facebook. The movie, subtitled to Cantonese, highlights drug policy developments in East-Asia and presents the well-developed harm reduction scene in Macau.

Macau is a former Portuguese colony near Hong Kong, it was returned to China in 1999 but remained an autonomous territory. While gambling is illegal in mainland China, it is legal in Macau, and the town is full of big casinos attracting millions of gamblers every year. This is not only the most densely populated area in the world – it has the highest GDP as well. However, there are social and health problems attached to this vibrant urban way of life: behavioural and drug dependencies, risk taking in relation to sex, and drug use.

ARTM is an NGO that provides an excellent example of an integrated service model to tackle these problems. People who use drugs are guided through the system by professional helpers, adjusting services to their specific needs. They have a drop-in centre with needle exchange and outreach, an opiate substitution clinic, rehabilitation, and a halfway house to reintegrate people to the society. These services are well integrated to the general social and health care system. Drug users are still criminalised unfortunately, but service providers try to cooperate with the criminal justice system and lobby for decriminalisation.

МУ-4

ное учреждение
ральной службы
по Республике Карелия



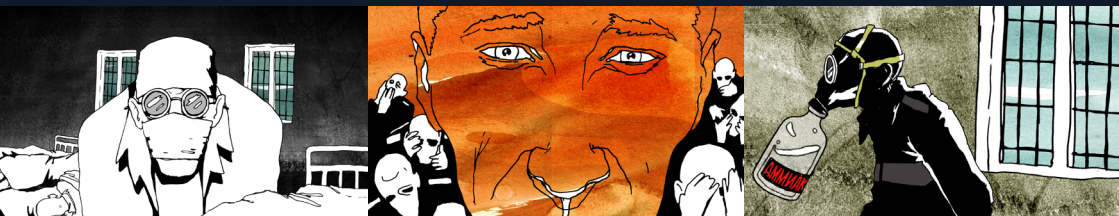
KOSTYA PROLETARSKY

THE ANIMATED MOVIE IN THE MAKING

On 19 June 2009 Kostya Proletarsky, a drug user and HIV activist, died of tuberculosis meningitis at the Botkin Hospital in St. Petersburg, Russia. His death was the result of three years of mistreatment and torture at the prison facility No. 4 in Karelia, Russia. In Russia, where drug treatment is barely available, imprisonment becomes the main “solution” to the problem of drug addiction. But unfortunately, these institutions don’t cure. Instead, prisons kill.

The animated hand drawn documentary, featuring the original audio interview with Kostya and his mother, Irina, aims to commemorate Kostya Proletarsky and many others who have not survived prison systems around the world.

The animated movie is narrated by Anya Sarang, directed by István Gábor Takács, and is hand drawn frame by frame by Lili Rontó.



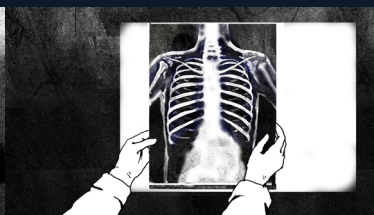


WE ARE CURRENTLY FUNDRAISING
TO FINISH THE FULL 30 MINUTE LONG ANIMATION.

PLEASE SUPPORT THE PRODUCTION OF THE FILM
WITH ANY AMOUNT YOU FEEL APPROPRIATE
AT THE FOLLOWING LINK:

[DRUGREPORTER.NET/KOSTYA](https://drugreporter.net/kostya)

If you support the film, you will receive a code
to unlock the 7 minute long pilot version of the animation!





VIDEO ADVOCACY BEYOND DRUG POLICY

RRF has been working in an increasingly authoritarian political environment in Hungary where NGOs supported by OSF are scapegoated and demonised. We cannot isolate ourselves from this hostile climate. We produced four short video clips highlighting different important social issues:

**STOP TREATING REFUGEES
AS CRIMINALS!**

A short clip raising awareness on the abuse of refugee rights in Hungary. (31K views)



**HUNGARIANS PROTEST
AGAINST THE BLACKLISTING
OF NGOS**

A film produced at a big demonstration organised by NGOs fighting the foreign agent law in Budapest. (36K views)



**HUNGARIAN PEOPLE ARE
PROTESTING AGAINST
PUTIN'S VISIT**

A film featuring the growing Putinization of Hungary on the occasion of Putin's visit to Budapest. (87K views)



NOT HIV KILLS, BUT SILENCE!

A short film on stigma attached to HIV in Hungary. (24K views)



**HUMAN RIGHTS: YOU CAN'T
HUG THEM BUT YOU SHOULD
LOVE THEM**

This movie was produced for the Civil Liberties Union of Europe (CLUE) on world human rights day. (81K views)



EUROPEAN DRUG POLICY REFORM ACTIVITIES



The director of the Rights Reporter Foundation has been serving in the Core Group of the Civil Society Forum on Drugs, the expert group of the European Commission to advise EU decision makers about drug policies. He led the working group on the EU drug strategy, which contributed to the evaluation of the previous Action Plan and the preparation of the new one. The CSF could significantly contribute to the adoption of the most progressive drug action plan in Europe. **RRF had a leading role in this process.** Unlike the previous Action Plan, this document lays great emphasis on scaling-up access to harm reduction programs – and not only the mainstream programs, such as opiate substitution and needle and syringe programs; novel interventions such as naloxone distribution, drug consumption rooms, and drug checking are also mentioned. To integrate international human rights standards into drug policies has been a civil society demand for a long time. This AP aims to create and implement tailored human rights guidelines and impact assessment tools for policy makers. While civil society almost unanimously supports it, there is unfortunately no consensus among member states about the decriminalisation of drug use. However, the AP requires member states to apply alternatives to coercive sanctions. These measures should be gender-specific, and should ensure that prison is used as a last resort and punitive measures are not used for the simple use or possession of drugs per se.

VIDEO AND MEDIA ADVOCACY TRAINING

We have been training activists in media communication and video advocacy since 2009. Since 2017 we have held annual video and media advocacy training courses at the School of Public Policy at Central European University (CEU). Working with the media is a must for NGOs in the drug field. However, very few activists and professionals have the necessary communication skills to do it effectively. With the help of our practical capacity building training, participants gain skills to use the traditional methods of communicating with the print and broadcast media, such as writing press releases, organising press conferences, and giving television interviews. During the video advocacy training, participants learn the basics of the full spectrum of video advocacy. They learn to plan their video advocacy strategy, to use their camera and make interviews, to edit their materials and to distribute them.

If you would like to organise media and or video advocacy training, do not hesitate to contact us at: rightsreporter@rightsreporter.net



DUUN

DRUG USERS NEWS



Our most active network members are Alexey Kurmanaevskii and Igor Kuzmenko of the [Drug Users News Russian language video blog](#), hosted by Drugreporter. Both of them had to leave their homes because of their human rights activism. Alexey left Russia and now lives in Israel, and Igor had to leave Crimea and continue to live in another part of Ukraine, but both of them continue their video activism with great passion and commitment. The two member video advocacy team, trained partly by us and working under our professional supervision, closely cooperates with regional harm reduction, drug policy reform and drug user networks in selecting priority issues, events and stories to film about. They have become an important voice for communities of people who use drugs in Eastern-Europe and Central-Asia. These are some of their works in detail.



FORCED TO BE HEALTHY

In this very important film, the DUNews team uncovers violence and inhumane treatment in “motivational rehab facilities” in Tatarstan, Russia. These privately run centers often kidnap people, keep them locked up against their will, torture them and beat them. They deny their HIV and other medication, make them dig holes every day while they pour cold

water on them, force them to carry water in tiny canisters from one bucket to another, or to do similar humiliating activities. In some cases beatings even resulted in death. In the film, the cruel and inhumane treatment methods are discussed with Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor Vladimir Mendelevich.

“For thinking that she was better than others, they dressed her up in rags, forced her to lie under the stairs, and they didn’t allow her to do anything, even to sleep. Only in the night she got some leftover food.”

Victim of a rehab center in Russia



A CITY WITHOUT STIGMATISATION - AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam is a city of humane drug policy, successful services, and prevention programs. Drop-in centres, shelters for the homeless with drug consumption rooms, heroin substitution therapy, coffeeshops, smart shops, very tolerant police, and adequate city authorities.

“This film is about the obvious: a state that tries to save on prevention is doomed. Each cent invested in prevention and harm reduction programs not only saves lives, but also saves money. It’s true.”

Alexey Kurmanaevskii



THE HARM REDUCER'S GUIDE TO ODESSA

DUNews filmed in Odessa, the city in which the first case of HIV infection in Ukraine was registered in 1987. 30 years have passed since then. It is difficult to imagine how Odessa would look today if it had not embraced treatment for HIV-positive people, and if harm reduction programs had not started their work there. Unfortunately,

despite all the efforts of the state, activists, and professionals from non-governmental organisations, the AIDS epidemic still could not be overcome there.



HARM REDUCTION IN KAZAKHSTAN: THE OPPORTUNITY IS IN THE AIR

DUNews also covered the state supported development of harm reduction in Kazakhstan. In Almaty there are 18 points in the city where clients can be tested for HIV, HCV, and other diseases, get expert advice, and exchange syringes.

DUNews have produced [many more Russian language films](#), among them on education about quality rehabilitation centers, community involvement in drug policy making, the harm reduction scene in Georgia and Moldova, and the history of drug policy from the 19th century to our present. In addition, they filmed at various community meetings, conferences and protests. They also launched a 'conversations on drug policy' video series, in which they discuss drug policy with activists in the region.

DRUGREPORTER VIDEO ADVOCACY NETWORK

We are maintaining a network of video activists who are engaged in harm reduction advocacy and drug policy reform activities. The number of members of our video network in 2017 has reached 39 people from 21 countries. With our financial and technical support, our members produced 8 videos in 2017, and 5 more are in production phase. There are films that we supported in 2017, but will only be published in 2018. One of them features the support services that pregnant women who use drugs receive in Berlin. The other project on Nigerian drug policy was delayed because the Nigerian police confiscated and never gave back the camera and footage of our partner, Kola Oreoluwa. The third project features mothers who lost their loved ones in the war on drugs in Mexico, produced by Karina Muscarina.



Our member from the Czech Republic, David Pešek, produced a film on the harm reduction football cup, a friendly soccer game between people who use drugs and social workers. He also filmed a debate on the consequences of drug use during pregnancy, and two films on Café Therapy, which is a restaurant in Prague, that employs clients of drug rehabilitation services provided by the NGO SANANIM.

“I remember from talks with a lot of users that soccer was an important and positive part of their memories and childhood. Addiction is almost always connected to some traumatic experiences in the past, or loneliness, or both. I like the definition of addiction as “deficiency of relationships”. So soccer is a fun game, and it is also a medium for recalling nice memories.”

David Pešek



Our partners from Slovakia, Iveta Chovencova and Miroslava Zilinska from Odyssey, produced a film about how people who use drugs clean-up their neighbourhood with the support of the municipality of Bratislava.



“We wanted to show to the whole neighbourhood that people who use drugs are not indifferent and have a great power to do great things. It is only a matter of opportunity.”

Iveta Chovencova



Our Mexican partners, Karina Muscarina and Brun Gonzales, produced a beautiful film in Oakland, California, on the biggest international psychedelic conference that has ever taken place.



“Psychedelic plants and substances have been a major influence and a key element in the unfolding of human evolution and our cultural development. Now more than ever they are playing a crucial role in the paradigm shift thanks to Psychedelic Science.”

Brun Gonzales



Andrea Olieandri, from Associazione Antigone, published their **short animated video** on cannabis reform in Italy.

“The question is no longer whether cannabis will be legalized, but when.” Andrea Olieandri



Irena Molnar, from ReGeneracija, Belgrade, **filmed** the desperate situation faced by injecting drug users in Serbia.

“The last grant from the Global Fund ended in June 2014. The government made no commitment to continue funding the programs, and there are no other international donors available to step in and cover the harm reduction funding gap. This resulted in closing of all needle and syringe projects except one, which is operated by Association Prevent, in Novi Sad. Three years later, the government has changed but the programs are still out of focus when it comes to national funding!” Irena Molnar

HOW WE CAN ASSIST YOU

If you are a community activist or work for an NGO, we can help you in multiple ways.

We can provide you with technical support in designing and implementing awareness-raising campaigns, to address barriers to services, systemic discrimination, or criminalisation.

We can travel to your country and produce a film about current advocacy issues, including human rights abuses, effective services, campaigns, etc.

We can produce a video about your organisation, highlighting your key activities and successes. The video can be used for promoting your NGO, mobilising members, fundraising, or other purposes.

If you are organising a major conference or other event, you might consider contracting us to film key sessions/speeches, as well as to produce and edit a short conference video on site, to be screened at the closing session (in case your event lasts for more than one day). Videos can reach people who could not attend the event, with key messages.

We can train you or your staff members and peers to use the camera, to use editing software, to do interviews, and to produce and distribute videos. No need to have any special technical skills, apart from a basic knowledge of computer use.

We can train you or your staff members about how to communicate more effectively with the mainstream media - our training includes practical exercises, such as writing test press releases and giving test TV interviews, which can be discussed with the group.

OUR STAFF



Péter Sárosi
Executive Director



István Gábor Takács
Video Manager



Magda Major
Head of Office

RIGHTS REPORTER FOUNDATION

[RIGHTSREPORTER.NET](https://rightsreporter.net)

DRUG *reporter*

NEWS AND FILMS FROM THE FRONTLINE
OF THE GLOBAL WAR ON DRUGS

SUPPORT US!

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[GLOBALGIVING.ORG/PROJECTS/DEBUNKING-THE-WAR-ON-DRUGS](https://globalgiving.org/projects/debunking-the-war-on-drugs)

Supported by the Open Society Foundations.

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RIGHTS REPORTER FOUNDATION
BUDAPEST, 2018.