



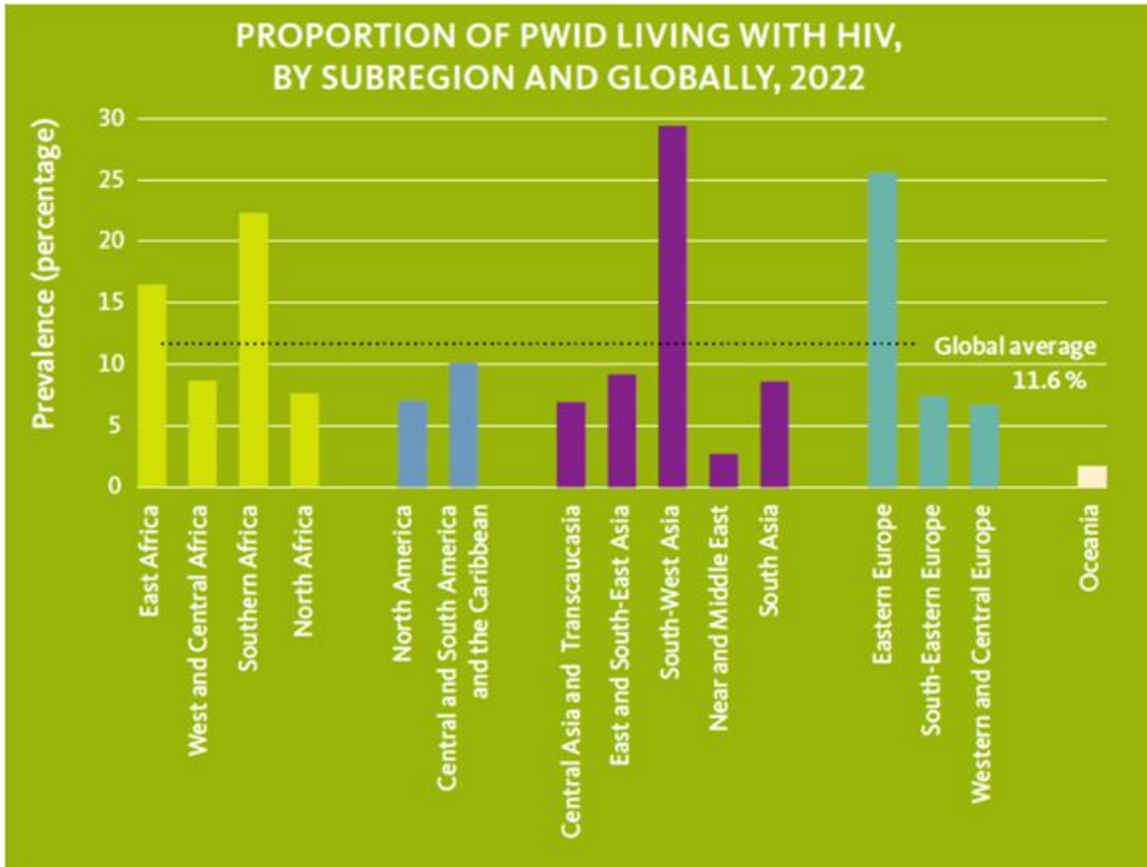
# Harm reduction in EECA: Drug use trends, responses and results

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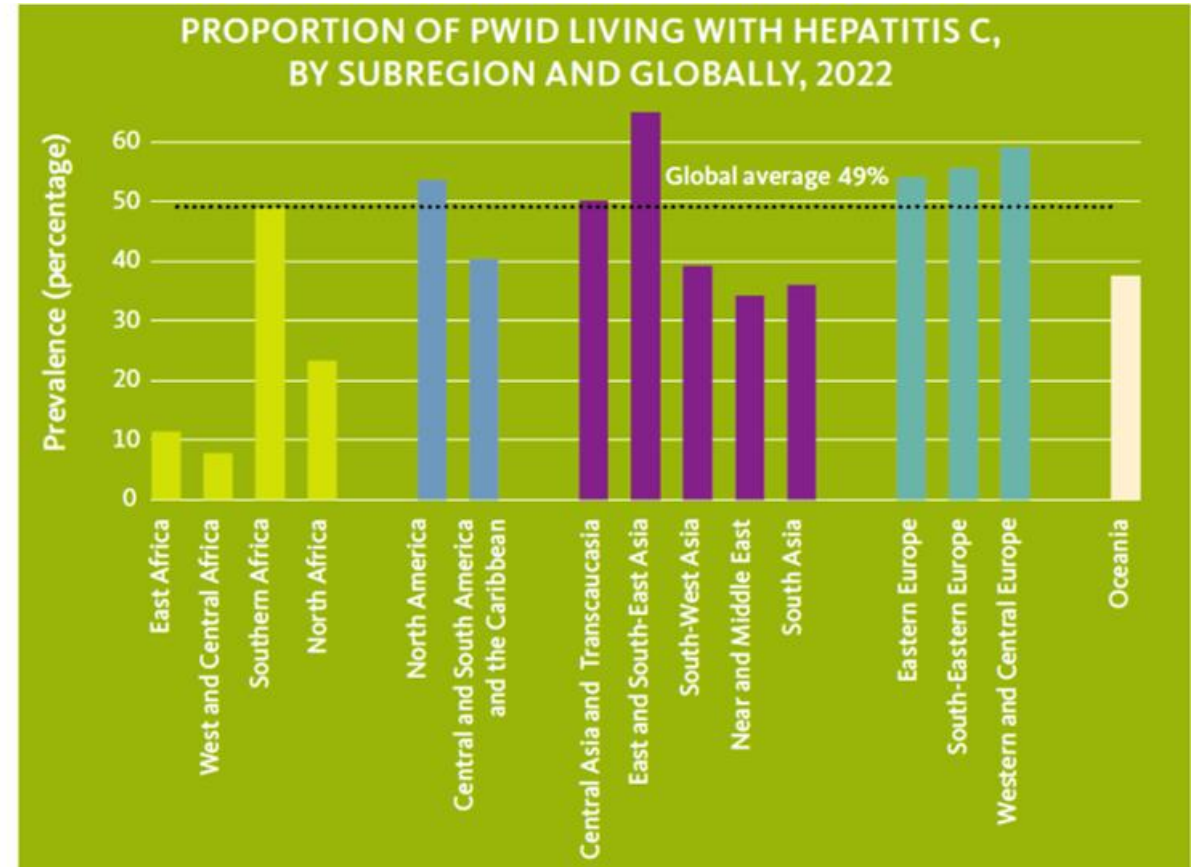
## Drug use in Eastern Europe & Central Asia (EECA)

- Eastern Europe is one of the subregions with the greatest number of people who inject drugs (1.68 million) and has the **highest prevalence of people who inject drugs** (1.3 per cent) worldwide (2023),
- **Opioids continue to cause significant health burden** across the region, use of **synthetic stimulants and amphetamine-type stimulants is increasing**
- Drug markets are increasingly shaped by synthetic substances, making them more **adaptable, harder to disrupt, and capable of rapidly changing** in response to law enforcement and market pressures.
- A **high prevalence of people who inject drugs living with HIV** (25.5 percent) and the largest number - (430,000 people) - in 2022, **43%** of new cases were **attributed to injecting use**
- Contribution of **injecting drug use to new hepatitis C infections in WHO European region is 72.9%**. Ten countries are estimated to account for nearly 80% of all global hepatitis C infections among PWID, in descending order of absolute numbers of hepatitis C infections among PWID United States of America, China, **Russian Federation**, India, **Ukraine**, Italy, Viet Nam, **Kazakhstan**, Japan and Pakistan (*World Drug Report 2024*)

## PWID with HIV

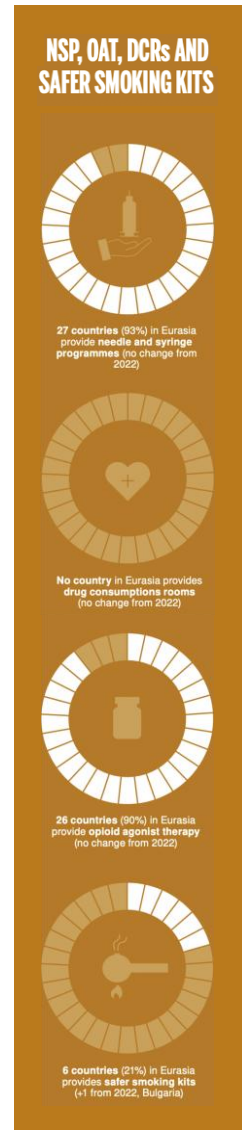


## PWID with HCV



# Harm reduction in EECA

- A median of **52% of people who inject drugs** (eight reporting countries) reported receiving at least **two HIV prevention services** in the past three months (*Global AIDS update 2024*)
- **NSP coverage is below recommended** public health levels in most settings ( $\approx 100-200$  sterile syringes per PWID/year not consistently achieved)
- Use of **OAT** low: among reporting countries, regional median in EECA makes **7.8%** (nine reporting countries) (*Global AIDS update 2024*)
- **Criminalization of possessing small amounts of drugs for personal use** in almost half of the countries in the region (**44%**) (*Global AIDS update 2024*). PWID with incarceration experience per IBBS: Belarus - 76.2% (2020), Kazakhstan - 43.6% (2018), Kyrgyzstan - 46% (2016) (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited 2021)
- Harm reduction systems **remain highly dependent on external funding**, with increasing sustainability risks due to donor transition and instability
- Globally, in 2022, only USD 151 million was allocated to harm reduction in low- and middle-income countries. This represents  $\sim 6\%$  of the estimated need
- USD 2.7 billion annual need by 2025. Resulting in a  **$\sim 94\%$  global funding gap**
- **Stimulant Agonist Therapies (SATs)** are **underutilized globally** - widespread lack of access; **need to expand availability** of programs tailored to the specific needs of stimulant drug users.



# Availability of HR services in EECA

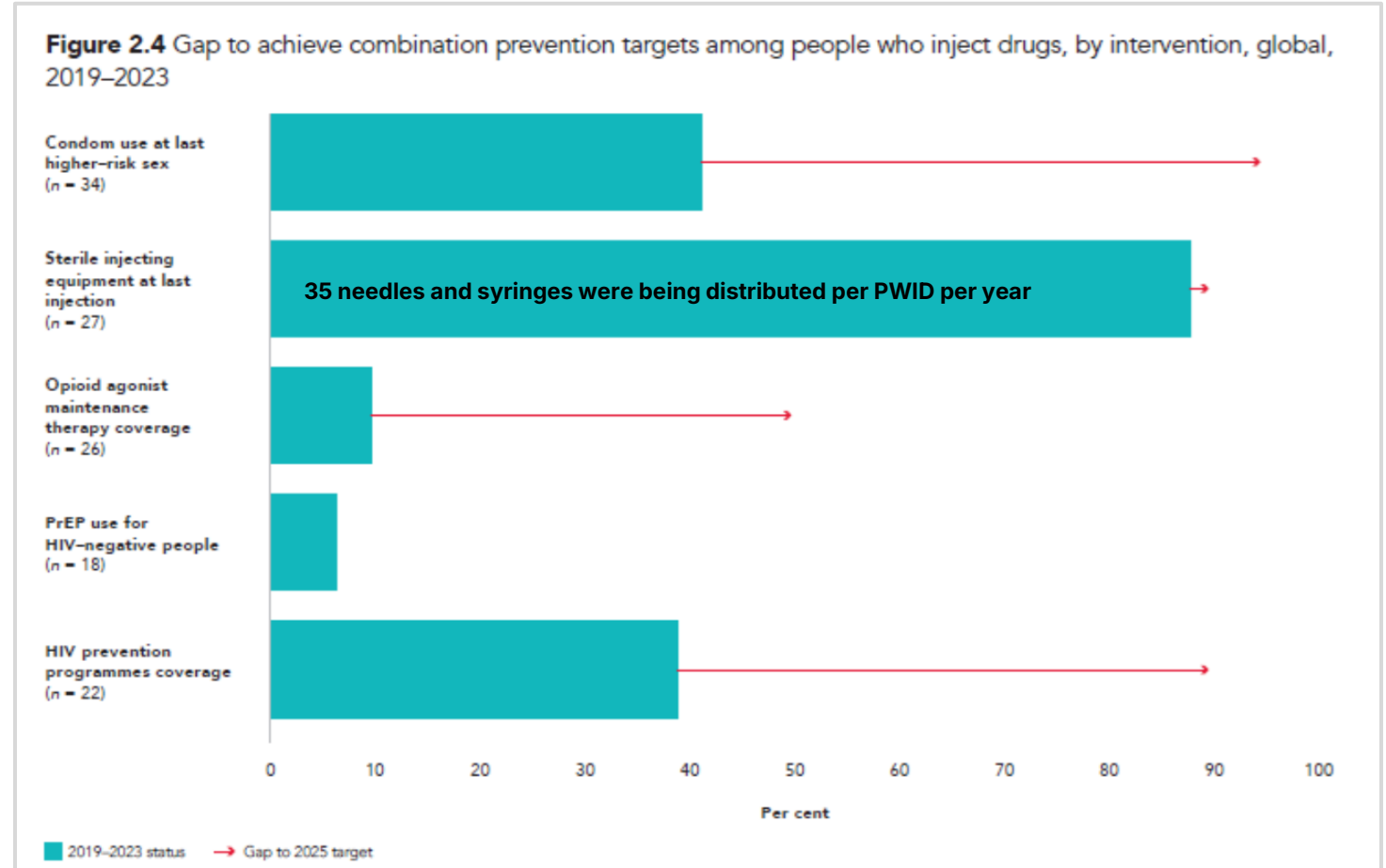
- Both NSP and OAT available
- OAT only
- NSP only
- Neither available
- Not known
- Peer-distribution of naloxone



# Global AIDS update 2024 on PWID - missed targets

## 2025 TARGETS

- **Condoms and lubricant use: 95%**
- Use of **sterile needles and syringes: 90%**
- Receiving **opioid agonist therapy: 50%**
- **PrEP use: 15% (very high risk), 5% (high risk)**
- Regular access to appropriate health system or community-led **prevention services: 90%**

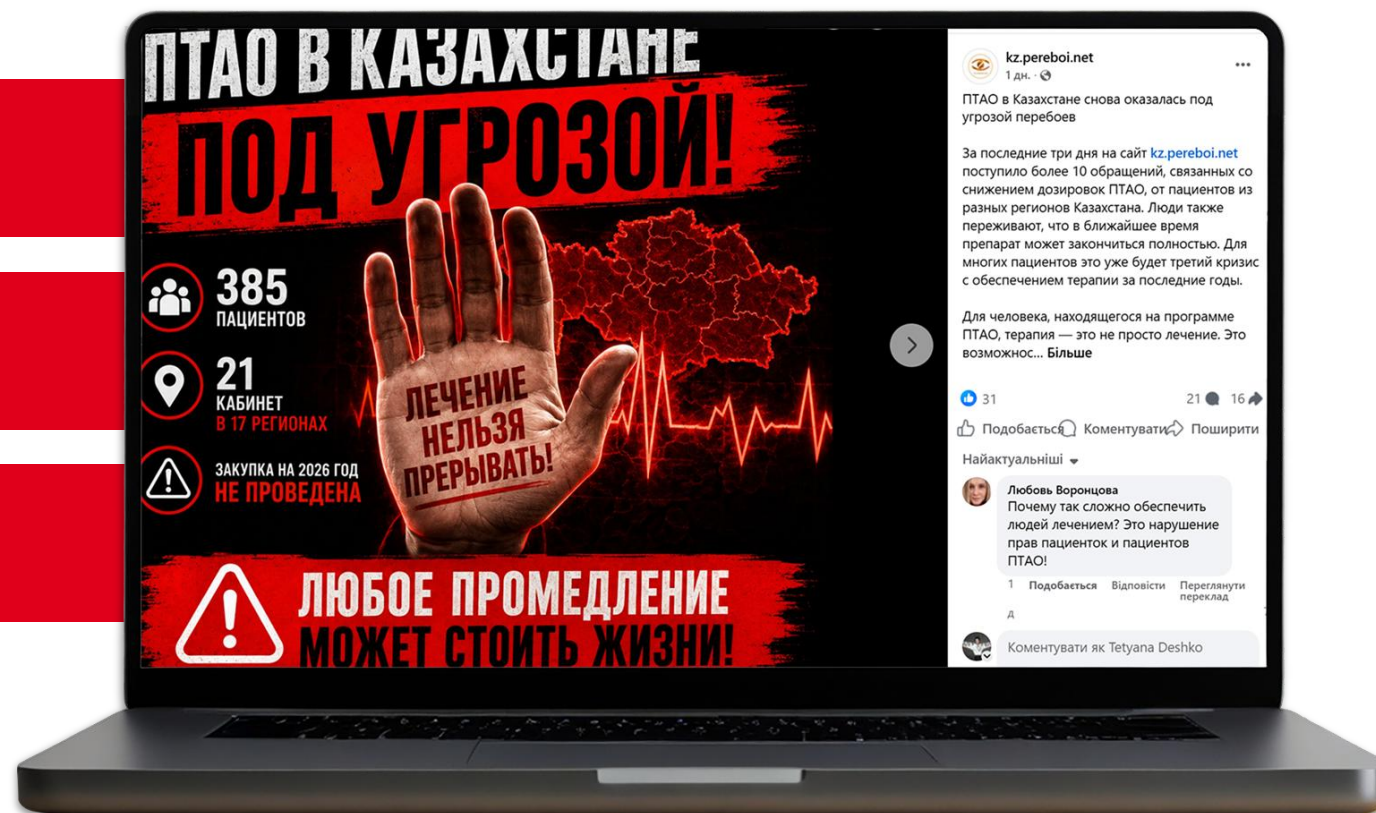


# Regularly under risk and in crisis

**Kyrgyzstan** - stopped NSP in prisons in 2025

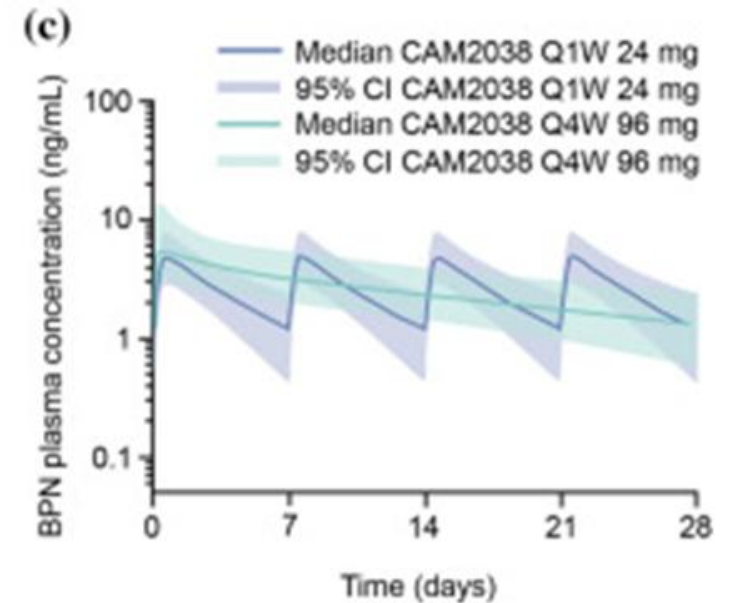
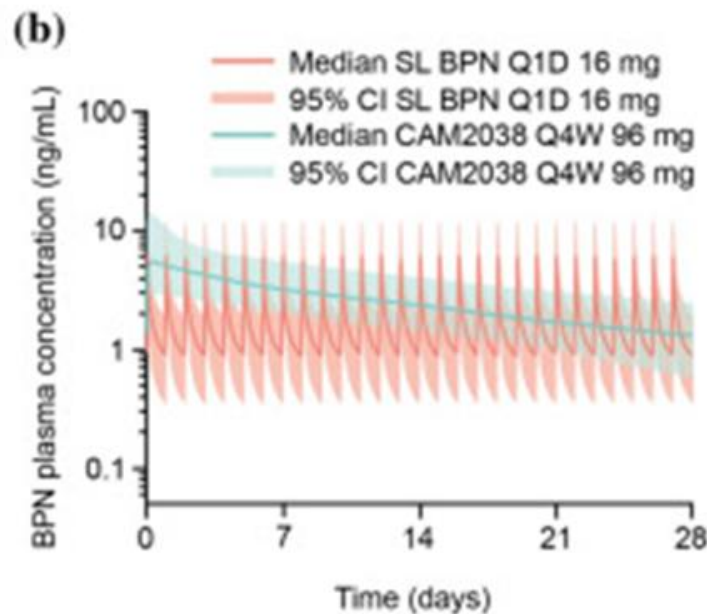
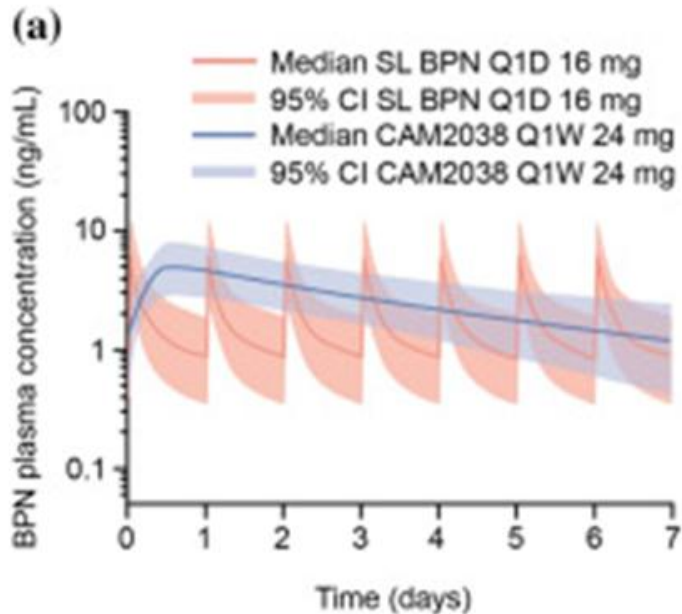
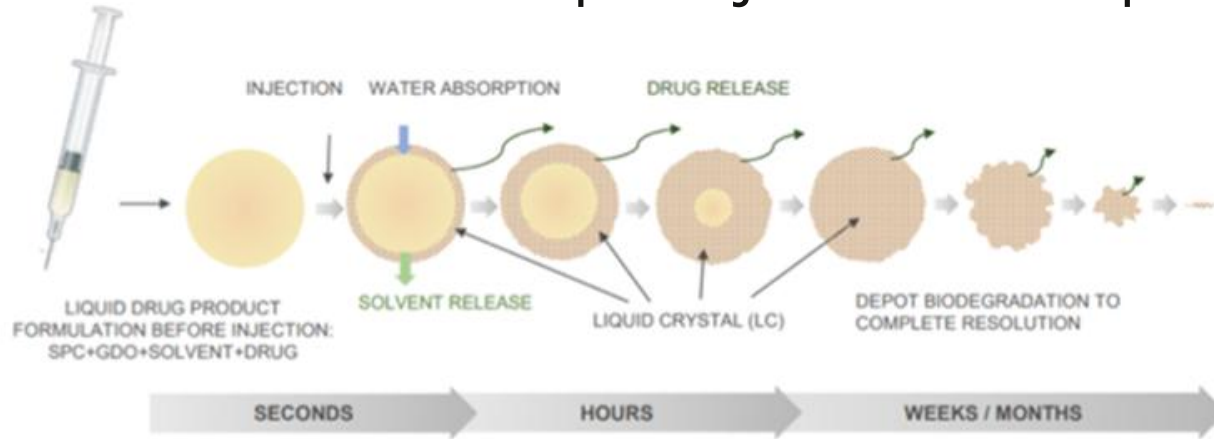
**Georgia** - closed private OAT programs

**Kazakhstan** - risk of stop of OAT in 2025 and 2026

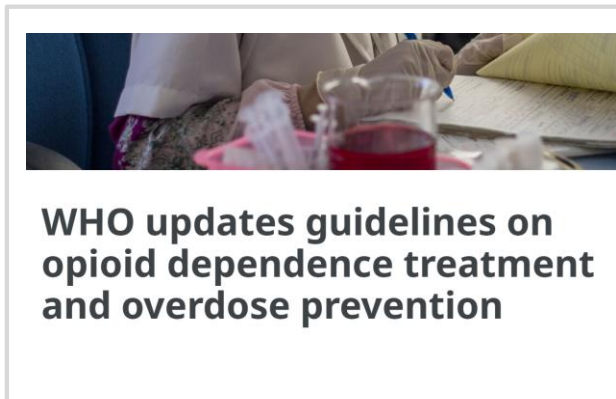


# LADB as important element of HIV response

- Once a month depot injections of Buprenorphine

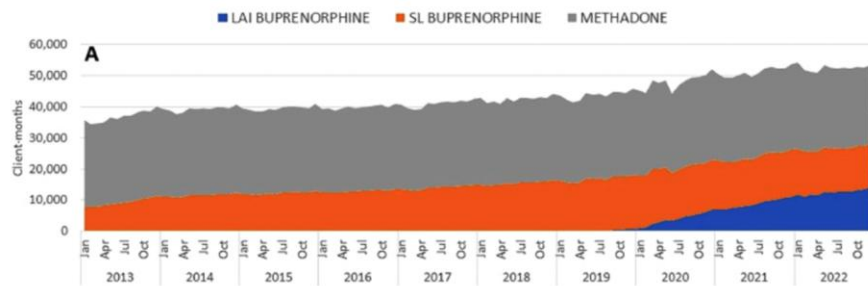


In the updated guidelines, WHO reaffirms its recommendation for the opioid agonist maintenance treatment (OAMT) - defined as the administration of rigorously evaluated opioid agonists by accredited professionals within recognized medical practice to people with opioid dependence to achieve defined treatment goals. Alongside the continued strong recommendations for OAMT with methadone and oral buprenorphine, WHO now extends its guidance to include new formulations of **long-acting injectable buprenorphine** (conditional recommendation).



### LADB in Australia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan demonstrated relevance of this approach

- A growing option in Australia, positive experience by community in war-time Ukraine (300 patients), start in Kyrgyzstan (100 patients) in 2025



## Prioritization approach & considerations

### Interventions

Opioid agonist maintenance treatment and other medically assisted drug dependence treatment for people who use drugs (PUD)

(Program Essential 3)

### Prioritization considerations

#### Areas prioritized for GF investment

- Procure and distribute opioid agonist maintenance treatment to maintain and scale up access.
- Ensure continuous supply and delivery.

#### Opportunities to increase optimization & efficiency

- Integrate services where possible.
- Introduce or expand take-home dosing for stable patients to reduce costs of service delivery, expand other low-threshold models such as community pharmacies.
- Assess market availability and potential to implement long-acting depot buprenorphine, w/ acceptability for users and, depending on the price of long-acting depot buprenorphine at market l
- Assess quality assured, regionally manufactured harm reduction commodities where possible (so such as methadone or buprenorphine at lower prices than those from global manufacturers).

# Long-Acting Depot Buprenorphine (LADB) in Eastern Europe & Central Asia – Early Implementation Experience

## Why LADB matters

- Innovative opioid agonist therapy (OAT) option with weekly/monthly injections
- Reduces daily clinic attendance and stigma
- Improves treatment adherence, retention, and quality of life
- Supports HIV and HCV prevention among PWID

### Ukraine: Regional Pioneer

- March 2023 – December 2025
- N= 297 (received at least 1 injection)
- N=149 (completed 12-month treatment)
- Most of dropouts after 1<sup>st</sup> injection
- Retention rate = 50%



### Kyrgyzstan: Emerging Scale-Up Model

- Started in October 2025
- Target N=100
- 31 patients received at least 1 injection
- Retention rate 95%
- Reasons for dropping out: arrest (n=1), side effects (n=2)
- National guidelines and Essential Medicines List already updated to include LADB



## Main observations (qualitative data)

- Strong patient interest in less restrictive treatment models
- Potential to improve employment, reintegration, and continuity of care
- Important opportunity for HIV/HCV prevention integration



## Regional Significance for EECA

- EECA remains the only region globally where HIV incidence continues to rise
- OAT coverage remains critically low in many countries
- LADB offers: differentiated and patient-centered care, reduced service burden, potential expansion of OAT access in restrictive environments,

# Pilot study: methylphenidate treatment for people with ADHD and stimulant-related disorders

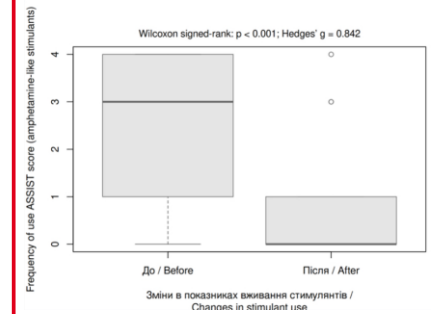
## Pilot study overview

- Observational pilot study among adults with ADHD and problematic use of amphetamine-type stimulants
- 92 participants enrolled; 31 completed the 6-month treatment protocol (at the time of data analysis)
- Conducted in 6 cities of Ukraine (Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Ivano-Frankivsk, Cherkasy, Rivne, Kharkiv) at state narcological centres and private clinics using standard clinical guidelines for ADHD treatment

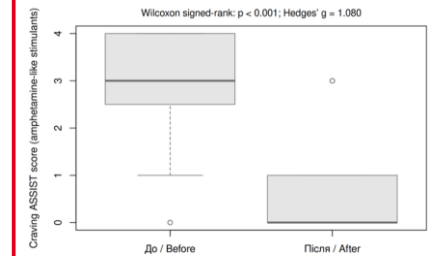
## Key findings

- After 6 months of methylphenidate treatment:
  - statistically significant reduction in problematic stimulant use
  - statistically significant reduction in craving for amphetamine-type stimulants
  - statistically significant reduction in frequency of stimulant use
- Weekly or more frequent stimulant craving decreased from:
  - **74.3% → 19.2%**
- Weekly or more frequent stimulant use decreased from:
  - **59.4% → 9.6%**
- No statistically significant increase in use of other substances was observed  
→ no evidence of “substitution effect”

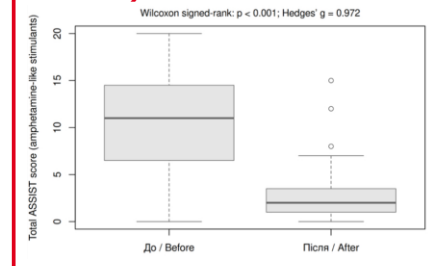
### Stimulant Frequency of use decreased (large effect)



### Stimulant craving decreased (large effect)



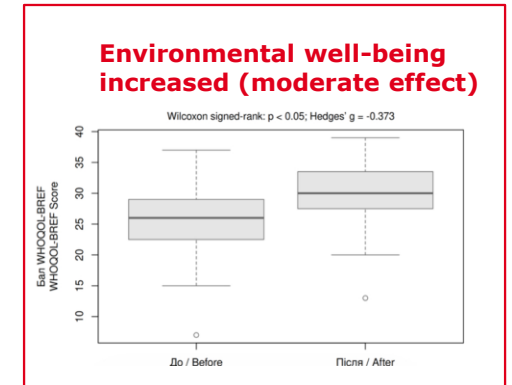
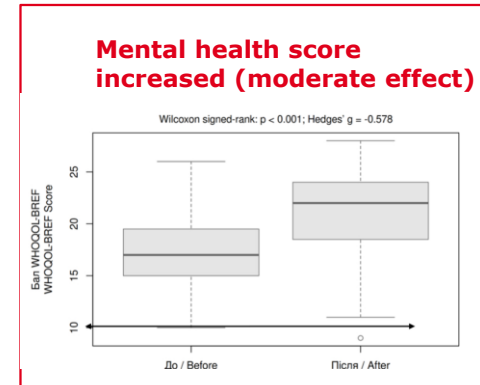
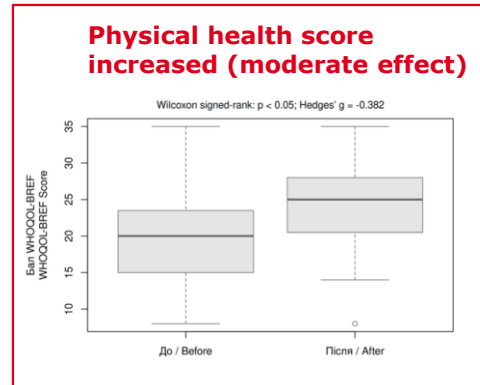
### Problematic stimulant use decreased (large effect)



# Pilot study: methylphenidate treatment for people with ADHD and stimulant-related disorders

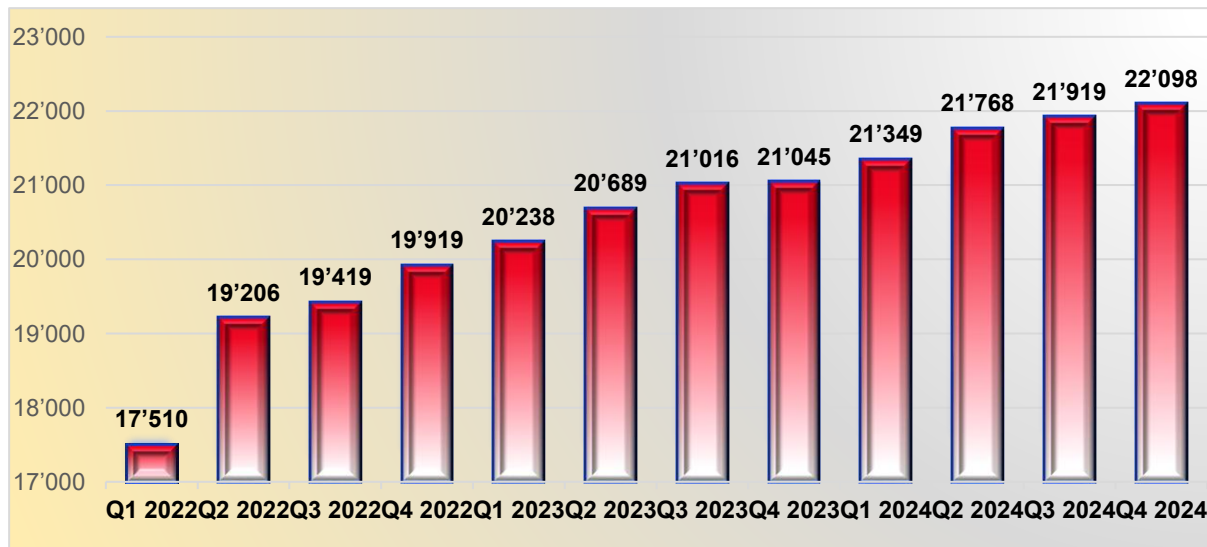
## Additional findings

- Improvements observed in:
  - physical health
  - psychological health
  - environmental quality of life
- Findings support integrating ADHD diagnosis and treatment into services for people who use stimulants and further exploring opportunities for stimulant use treatment

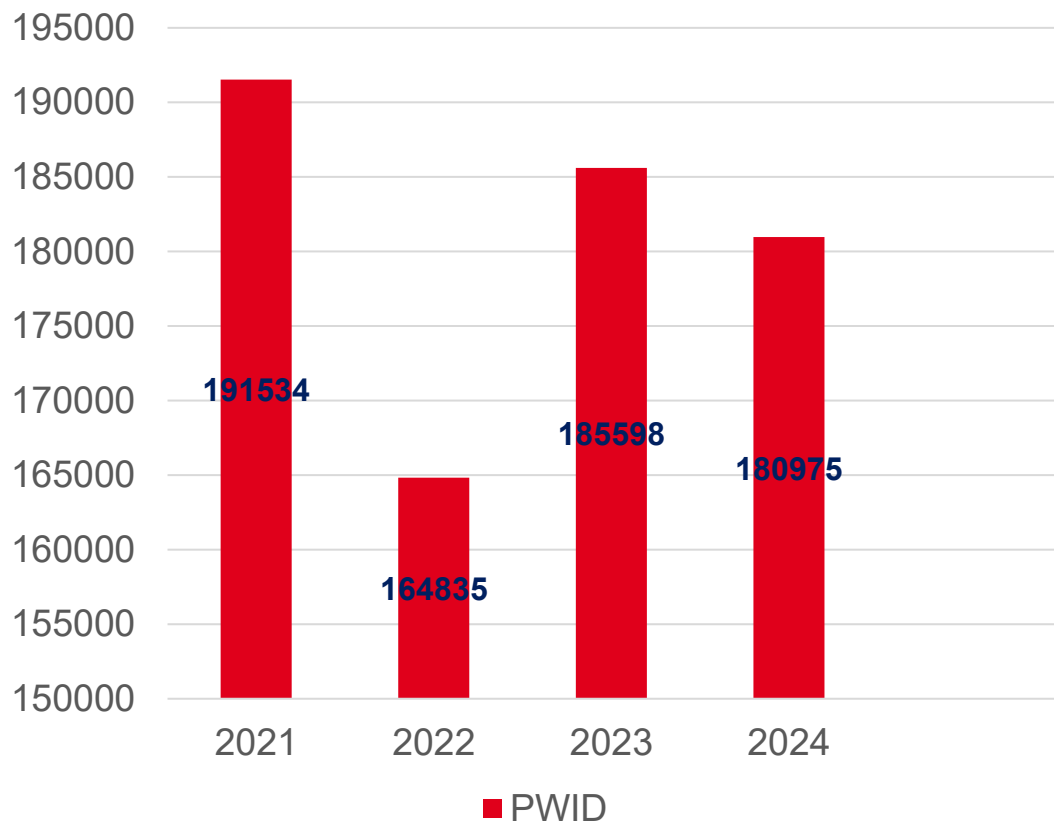


## Best practice: Ukraine

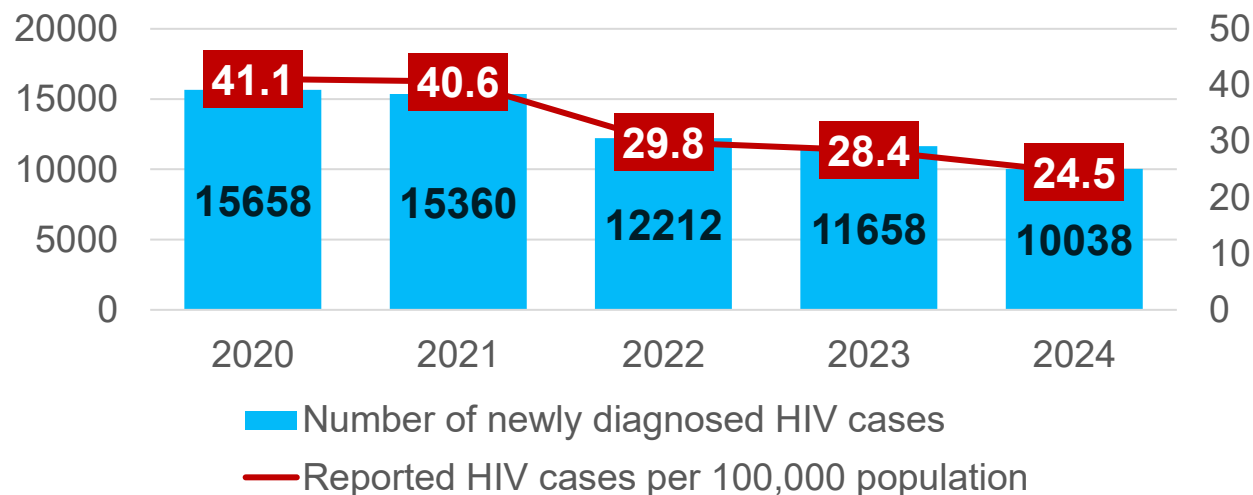
### Sustaining OAT program during war



### PWID prevention coverage during war

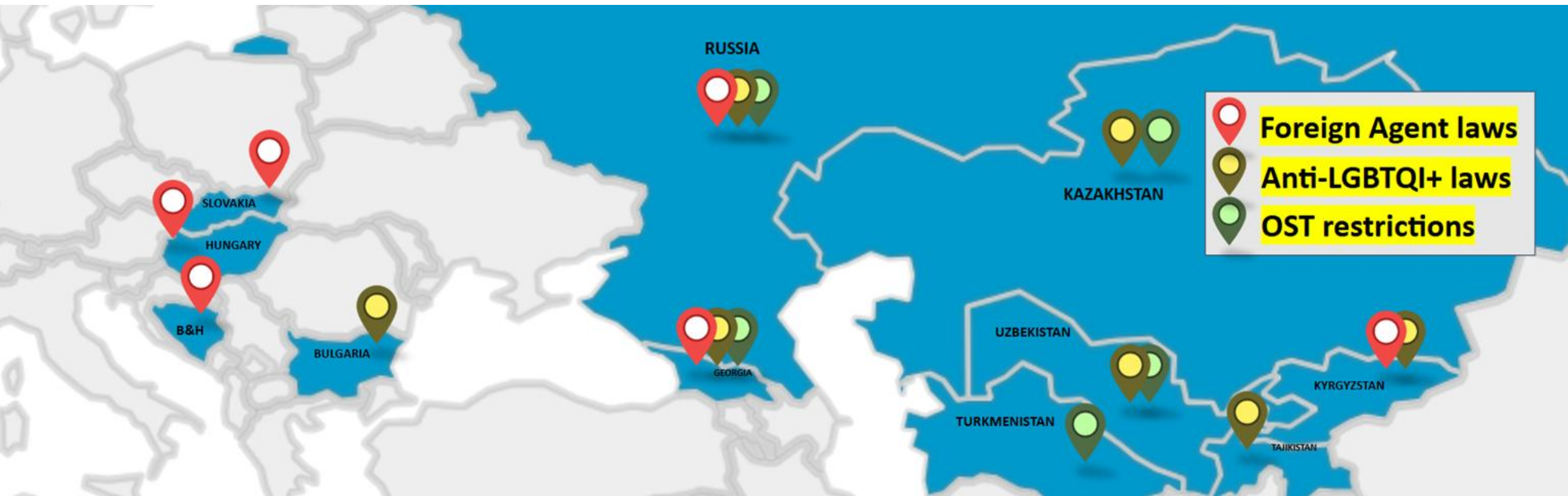


### HIV situation in Ukraine under control

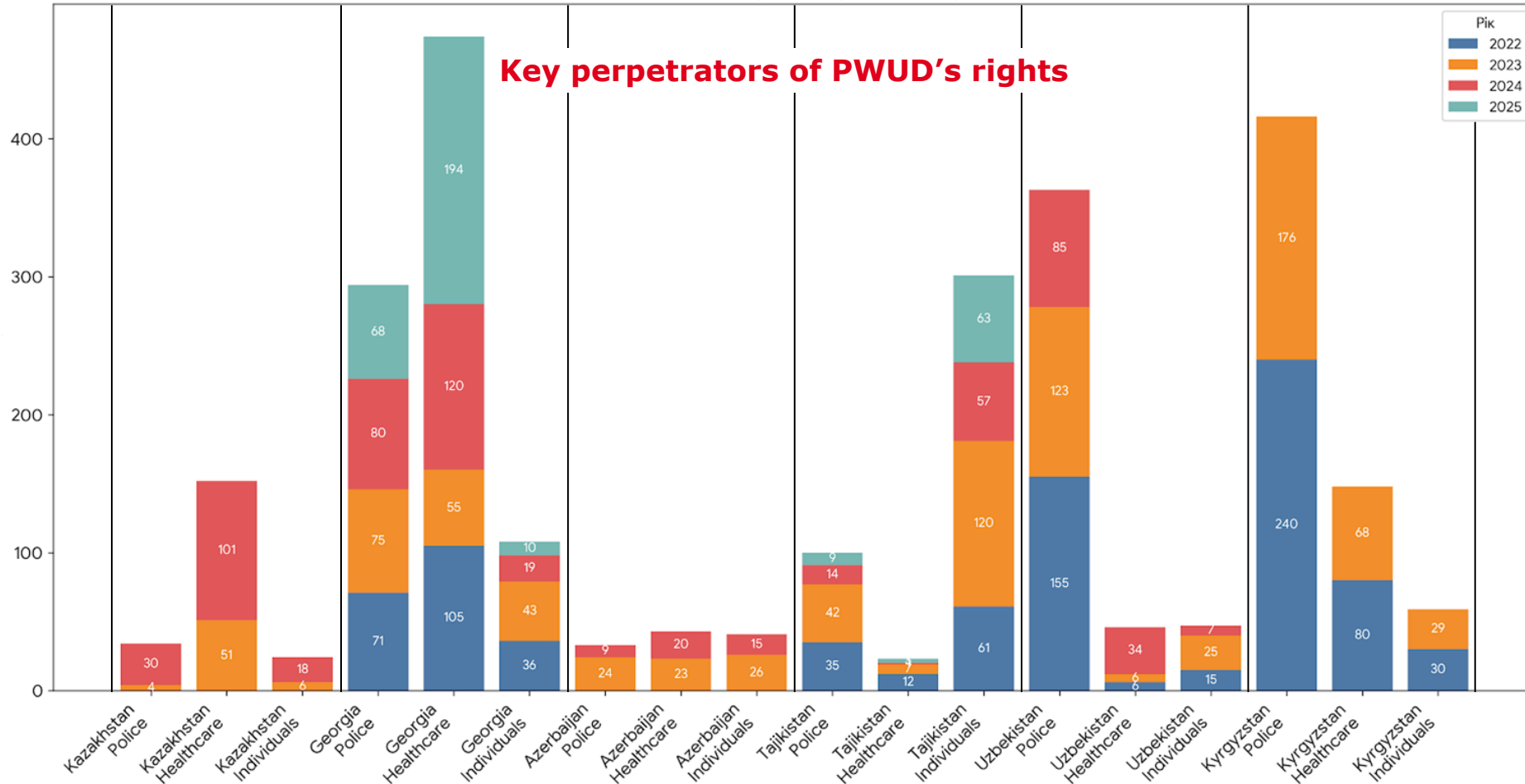


# Repression legislation

CSOs and Communities should have the full freedom and possibility to reach out with low threshold non-discriminatory services to those hardest to reach. But in many authoritarian government this is being controlled and the communities remain cut off from friendly services. Unfortunately, the foreign agent laws imposed by Russia have restricted services for key populations not only domestically, but also in other countries under its influence.



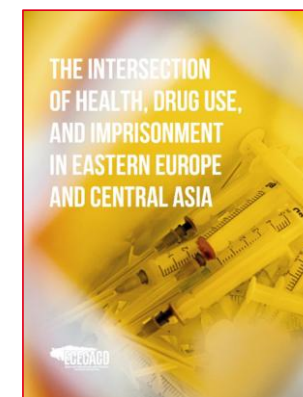
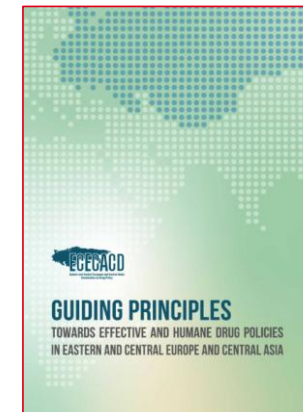
# REAct: PWUD's human rights violations



# EECA Drug Policy Commission

The ECECADC was created in 2021 by leaders from the region, former high-level politicians, diplomats, scientists, philanthropists to advocate for evidence-based, human rights oriented drug policy in the EECA region. The ECECADC produces technical and political reports and evidence-based policy recommendations that ground drug policies in human rights, health and development. It facilitated establishment of Drug Policy group in European Parliament.

Thanks to high-level visits and political influence at the state level, significant progress has been achieved in several countries: the repeal of the drug registration law in Kyrgyzstan, the adoption of the National Drug Strategy in Ukraine, and the prevention of interruptions in the procurement of opioid substitution therapy (OST) in Kazakhstan. At present, active efforts are underway to prevent the adoption of a law (No. 104, April 2026) in Moldova that would put the community of people who use drugs at risk.



Visit to Moldova, 2023, 2026



Visit to Ukraine, 2026



Visit to Kyrgyzstan, 2021, 2023



EU Advocacy, 2025-2026



# Conclusions

**1.**

**Growing HIV and HCV epidemics** in EECA among PWID

**2.**

Reasons: **low coverage** with key services as a result of **criminalisation** of PWID

**3.**

Important **developments**: introduction of LADB, medication assisted treatments for stimulant users

**4.**

Important **global advocacy efforts**: **Commission, EU integration**



**Thank you**  
for your attention!

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