



“Prof. Dr. Al. Obregia” Psychiatric Hospital
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Brussels, 18 August 2010

Call to continue to ensure the work of the NGO ALIAT to provide harm reduction services within the premises of the ‘Prof Dr Al Obregia’ Psychiatric Hospital

Dear Madam / Sir,

The European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG) is very much concerned about a recent decision taken by the management of the “Prof. Dr. Al. Obregia” Clinical Psychiatric Hospital to close down the community services for alcohol and drug users offered over the last 10 years by the Alliance Against Alcoholism and Drug Addiction (ALIAT) within the territory of the hospital.

The ALIAT is a major NGO providing harm reduction services for people who use drugs in Romania and the good practice example in the European continent which is referred to in media, meetings and reports. The ALIAT has been a partner in different projects run by official institutions such as the *National Antidrug Agency*, *The National Center for Mental Health* and the deputies’ chamber of the Romanian Parliament. Its donors include large public institutions such as the Dutch Embassy and Ministry for Foreign Affairs, UNODC and the Global Fund to Fight AIDs, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

Given that international funds for harm reduction services are not secured in Romania, closing down ALIAT’s service in your hospital premises *de facto* contributes to shutting down the work of the NGO that has worked for national public health over a decade,

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and managed to reach out to the most vulnerable groups that often were not reached by public health system before.

The strategy for the reform of mental health services signed and approved by the Romanian Government clearly states the need to develop more harm reduction services for drug users, not less. In this respect the strategy is in line with the recommendations of the Council of the European Union and the EU drug strategy and HIV/AIDS Communication, which build on evidence based standards to reduce HIV and HCV transmission.

Harm reduction services provided by the ALIAT like its needle exchange programmes decrease the risk of HIV and HCV transmission among injecting drug users, and the decision to expulse the ALIAT from its premises amounts to negligently putting health and lives of injecting drug users and their partners at risk.

We trust that your hospital will reconsider its decision and hope the programmes run by the ALIAT will continue at the current location.

Sincerely,



Anna Zakowicz
Chair, European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)