



Secretariat
5th floor, 124-128 City Road
London, EC1V 2NJ
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7324 2975
Fax: +44(0) 20 7324 2977
Email: contact@idpc.net
Web: www.idpc.net

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To whom it may concern,

This letter is to formally offer the International Drug Policy Consortium's support for the ongoing legislative review and changes being undertaken by the Georgian Parliament with regards to the current national drug laws within the Code of Criminal Offences.

The International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) is a global network of more than 170 non-governmental organisations that focus on issues related to drug production, trafficking and use. IDPC promotes objective and open debate on the effectiveness, direction and content of drug policies at the national and international level, and supports evidence-based policies that are effective at reducing drug-related harm.

Our work is based on the following core policy principles:

1. Drug policies should be developed through an objective assessment of priorities and evidence.
2. Drug policies should be undertaken in full compliance with international human rights law.
3. Drug policies should focus on reducing the harmful consequences rather than the scale of drug use and markets.
4. Drug policies should promote the social inclusion of marginalised groups, and not focus on punitive measures towards them.
5. Drug policies should be developed and implemented based on open and constructive relationships with civil society.

We see the proposed legislative reforms in Georgia as being in line with these core principles. In moving towards a more humane and effective drug policy approach comprising decriminalisation of low-level offences and harm reduction, the Georgian Government is showing strong and decisive leadership in the region. The available evidence, and the recommendations from all relevant UN agencies and entities, now supports the decriminalisation of drug use in order to facilitate effective public health and human rights based approaches to illicit drugs. Yet the recently published data in *The Lancet* indicate that, globally, nearly three in every five people who inject drugs have experienced arrest and incarceration in their lives.¹

¹ [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(17\)30375-3/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(17)30375-3/fulltext)

Adopting a ‘Support Don’t Punish’ approach to these issues is the key, as has been clearly demonstrated in the experiences of Portugal – where the decision to decriminalise drug use in 2001 has resulted in significant public health gains in terms of reduced HIV prevalence and overdose deaths.² We are pleased to have been able to support our member in Georgia, Alternative Georgia, and their partners in their work to advocate for policy reform, and applaud the Georgian Parliament for the space that has been permitted for civil society to participate in this important process.

Furthermore, we strongly encourage the Georgian Government to promote and discuss their experiences and conclusions on drug policy reform at the international level – especially at the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). At the CND, we have seen a significant and demonstrable shift in the rhetoric in recent years towards more effective and humane measures such as decriminalisation, harm reduction and alternatives to punishment. We urge Georgia to contribute to this momentum and promote the leadership role that they are playing.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions relating to the above.

Yours faithfully,

Ann Fordham
Executive Director
International Drug Policy Consortium
afordham@idpc.net

² <http://idpc.net/publications/2016/06/decriminalisation-and-public-health-the-portuguese-approach-to-drug-policy>