



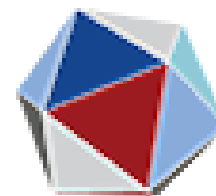
## **Steps forward in an attempt of OKANA to widen harm reduction to risk reduction:**

Entries and facilities within a new concept based on the real needs

**OKANA | Athanasios Theocharis,**  
President of BD OKANA  
Greek Organization against Drugs



European Monitoring Centre  
for Drugs and Drug Addiction



**LISBON  
ADDICTIONS  
2022**

# Organisation Against Drugs (OKANA)

the **biggest public service provider** on the field of addictions and behavioral addictions in Greece

**4 main pillars:** Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction-Direct Access and Social Reintegration

- 75 Prevention Centers
- 64 facilities providing OST treatment with the 2 of them to provide OST treatment within Prisons
- 7 Drug-free treatment programs
- 24 Harm Reduction – direct access programs
- 7 Social Reintegration programs all over Greece

More than **9000 beneficiaries** in treatment programs / **20.000** in Harm Reduction / **800** in Reintegration

More than **1000 employees**

# OKANA's STAFF

Today, OKANA occupies **more than 1000 employees...**

- ✓ **Multidisciplinary teams**
- ✓ **The diversity of its human resources gives OKANA the ability to fully cover the needs of its beneficiaries** and provide holistic treatment and health services tailored to the needs of each individual
- ✓ **The staff consists mainly of psychiatrists, pathologists, anesthesiologists, nurses, social workers, administrative staff and specialized therapists,** covering the full spectrum of the needs of drug addicts

# Harm reduction in Athens

Before three years there was a gap of:

- Covering the needs of more than **2500 active drug users**
- *Reducing the concentration of the **high-risk population***
- *Reducing **transmitted diseases** and preventing diseases' outbreaks among drug users.*
- *Treating of **overdoses***
- *Reducing crime that may be associated with drug use at meeting places*
- *Covering basic needs which were even more intensified by covid19 pandemic*

# Harm Reduction in Athens

*In order to meet the needs of more than **2500 drug users** and **the community**, OKANA the last three years:*

- *Intensified streetwork actions*
- *Streetwork actions within immigrants' campus*
- *Opened the DCR “STEKI 46”*
- *Opened the new Shelter*
- *Opened the new Hostel IONIS with Municipality of Athens*
- *Opened Day centers*
- *Participated in programs for HIV/HCV*
- *Made a positive statement for the expansion of the framework of Naloxone use*

***Essential was the contribution of the Government.***

***There was also support by the Police and Municipality of Athens***

✓ ***The government instantly recognized the need to establish and operate these facilities***

✓ ***The legal framework of Naloxone and DCR’s were supported by the government and local authorities***

✓ ***Close collaboration of all was the key to succeed.***

# The harm reduction philosophy patient- centered in a one stop shop

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All services offered are **based on actual needs**.

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The facilities and services are **easily accessible to all**.

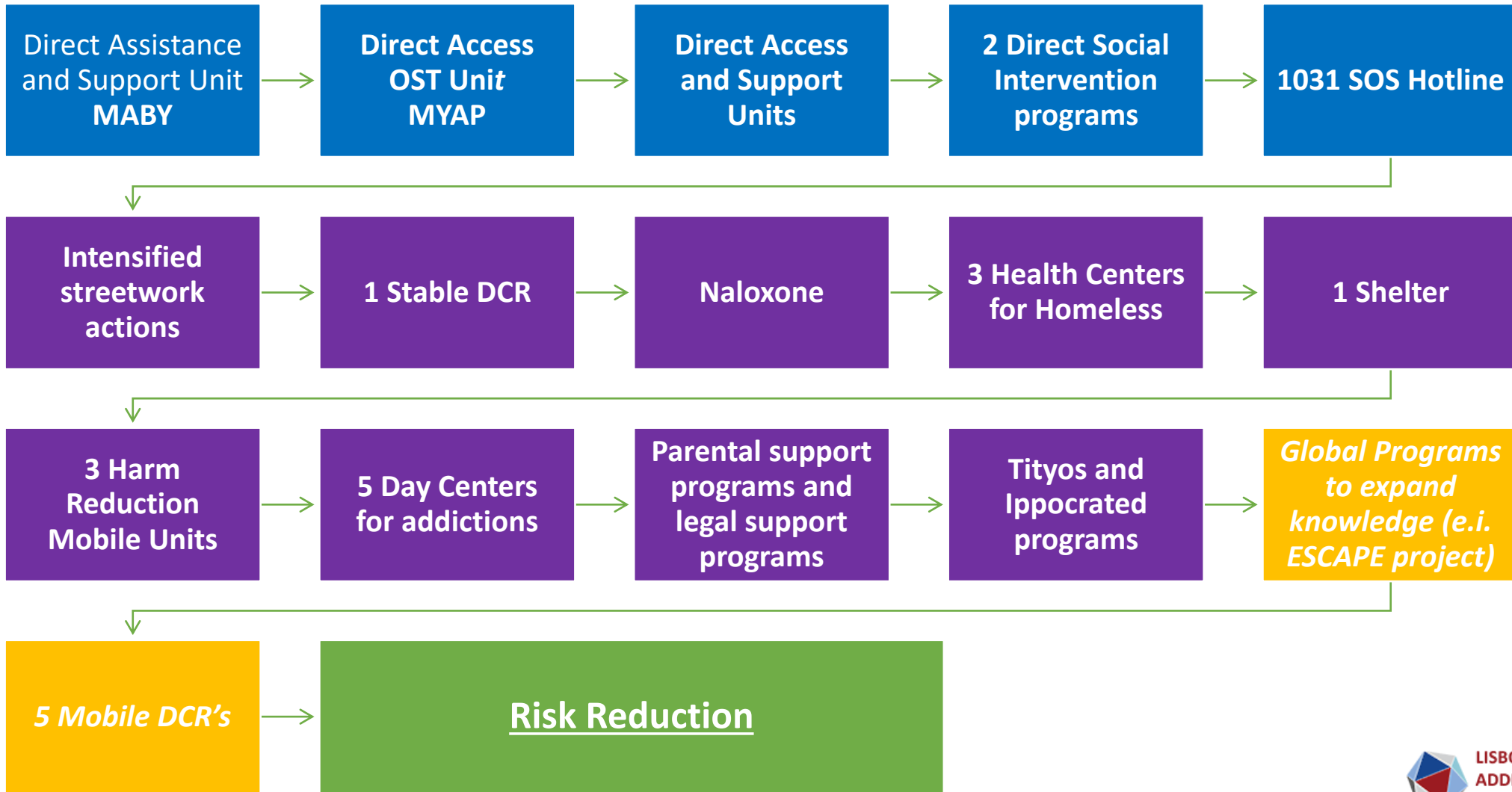
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Staff build a **close relationship with patients** and guide them through the system so that they receive primary health care and are connected to treatment programs.

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The services provided by OKANA follow the **one-stop shop principle**.

# OKANA's network: a **holistic approach** transforming **Harm Reduction** to **Risk Reduction**



New entries:

- Stable DCR
- Intensified streetwork actions
- Inhaling KITS
- Nasal Naloxone
- Shelters
- Day Centers
- HIV HCV programs (Tityos and Hippocrates)
- ESCAPE project
- Supplementary programs based on the risk reduction philosophy

Harm Reduction

New services:

- + Safe supervised use
- + Overdose treatment
- + Access for all
- + Protection of Public Health
- + Primary Health Care services
- + HIV/HCV outbreaks monitoring / HCV eradication
- + Social care
- + Hygiene
- + Covering of basic needs (food, clothing etc)
- + Housing homeless drug addicts
- + Psychosocial support
- + Legal support
- + Parental support
- + Referrals to treatment programs
- + Connection with primary health care services
- + Realtime feedback on new entries in the field of addiction

Risk Reduction



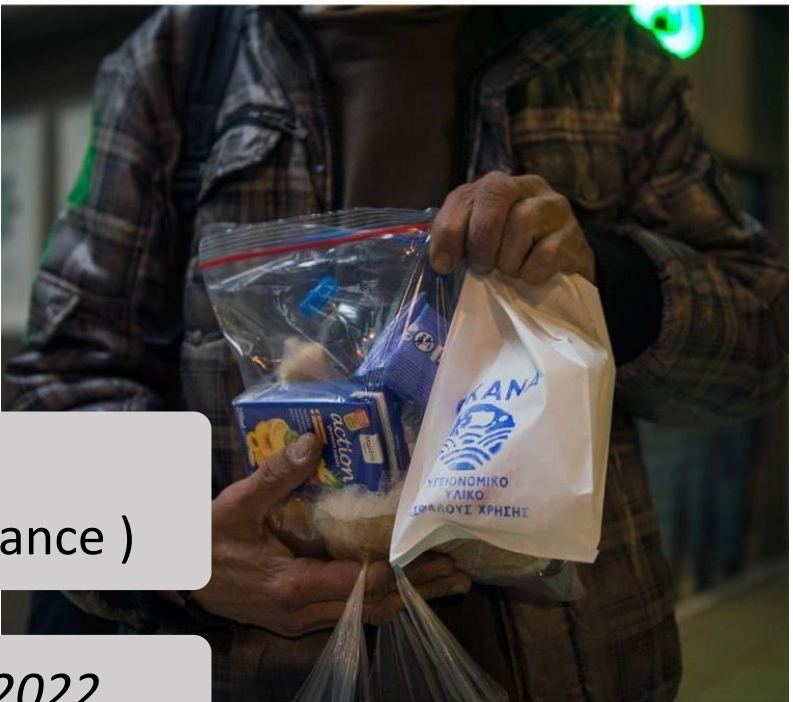
# Intensified Streetwork Actions



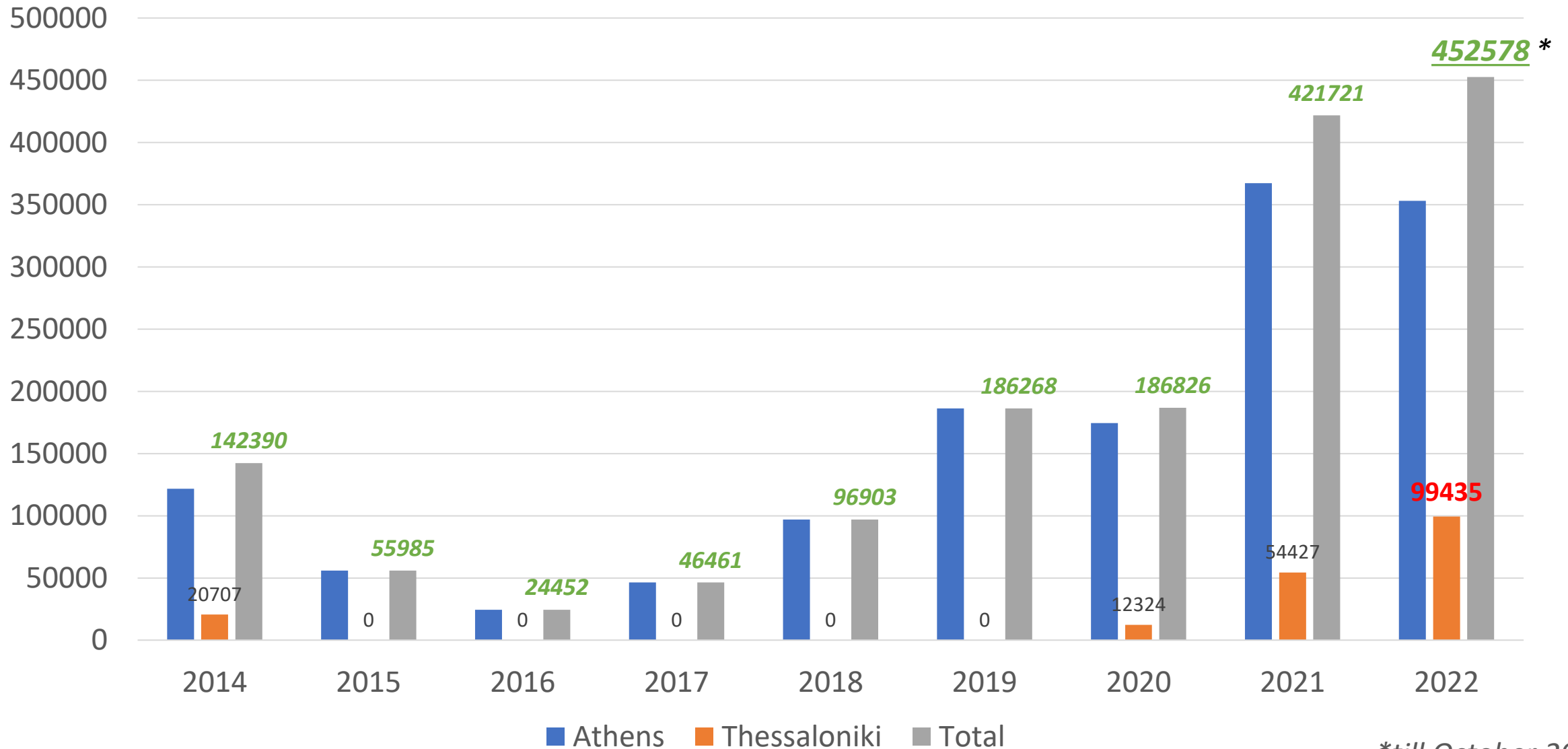
7162 inhaling use KITS for shisha (methamphetamine-based substance)



570.000 syringes distributed for 2022 (est.)



# Distribution of Syringes per Year



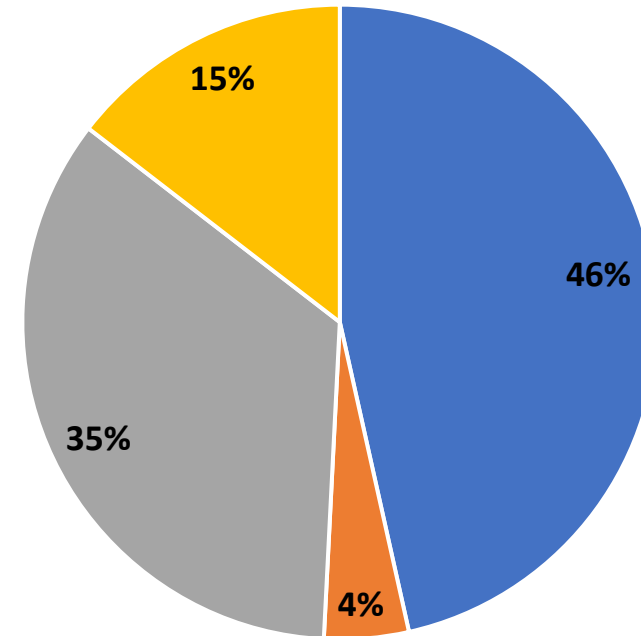
*\*till October 2022*

# Direct Assistance and Support Unit (MABY)

- ✓ Harm reduction services
- ✓ Syringe exchange services
- ✓ Prevention of communicable diseases
- ✓ Primary health care: pathological care, dental care, microbiological tests, HCV testing
- ✓ Social care services

Persons visited MABY: 3045

MABY



■ Pathological care    ■ Dental care  
■ Microbiological care    ■ Primary Health care

(data 1/1/2022- today)



*Welcome to DCR STEKI 46*



# STEKI 46: Supervised drug use



STEKI 46...with safety

# The first DCR in Athens...

## **12 spaces** for safe injecting and/or inhaling use

- a **waiting room** for the beneficiaries of DCR services,
  - a **fully equipped infirmary** for primary health care and overdose treatment,
  - and a **room for counseling and psychological support.**
- 
- Holistic approach with
    - **primary healthcare services,**
    - **psychological/counseling support,**
    - **meeting basic needs** (personal hygiene, nutrition, clothing) for homeless addicts, and
    - **connecting beneficiaries** with other **Harm Reduction services, healthcare facilities, and treatment programs** at their request.



*OKANA officially operates the first Drug Consumption Room (DCR) "STEKI 46" in Athens on 18/4/2022*

# Timeline in opening the Athens' DCR

4/2020:

- ✓ Formulation of **legal framework for DCRs** in Greece

1



**For the 1st time, a specific and concrete operational framework was created**

11/2021:

- ✓ **Authorization for the operation of a DCR is issued**
- ✓ Permission in operating mobile DCR granted by the Ministry of Health
- ✓ In the same month, the use of nasal Naloxone by OKANA's professionals & streetworkers also approved

3



2

6/2021:

- ✓ OKANA submits a **proposal to the Ministry of Health for approval** in order to operate a stable and mobile DCRs in Athens

4

4/2022:

- **The 1st DCR in Athens, Greece and SE Europe opened its doors to the public**



# STEKI 46: Data (till October 2022)



**10974** *total visits*

**434** *individual registered persons*

**3989** *cases of safe use within DCR*

**5687** *other services were provided to beneficiaries within DCR (primary health care, hygiene, medical monitoring, psychosocial support)*

Prevention of overdose in **41** cases, with close supervision (close monitoring)

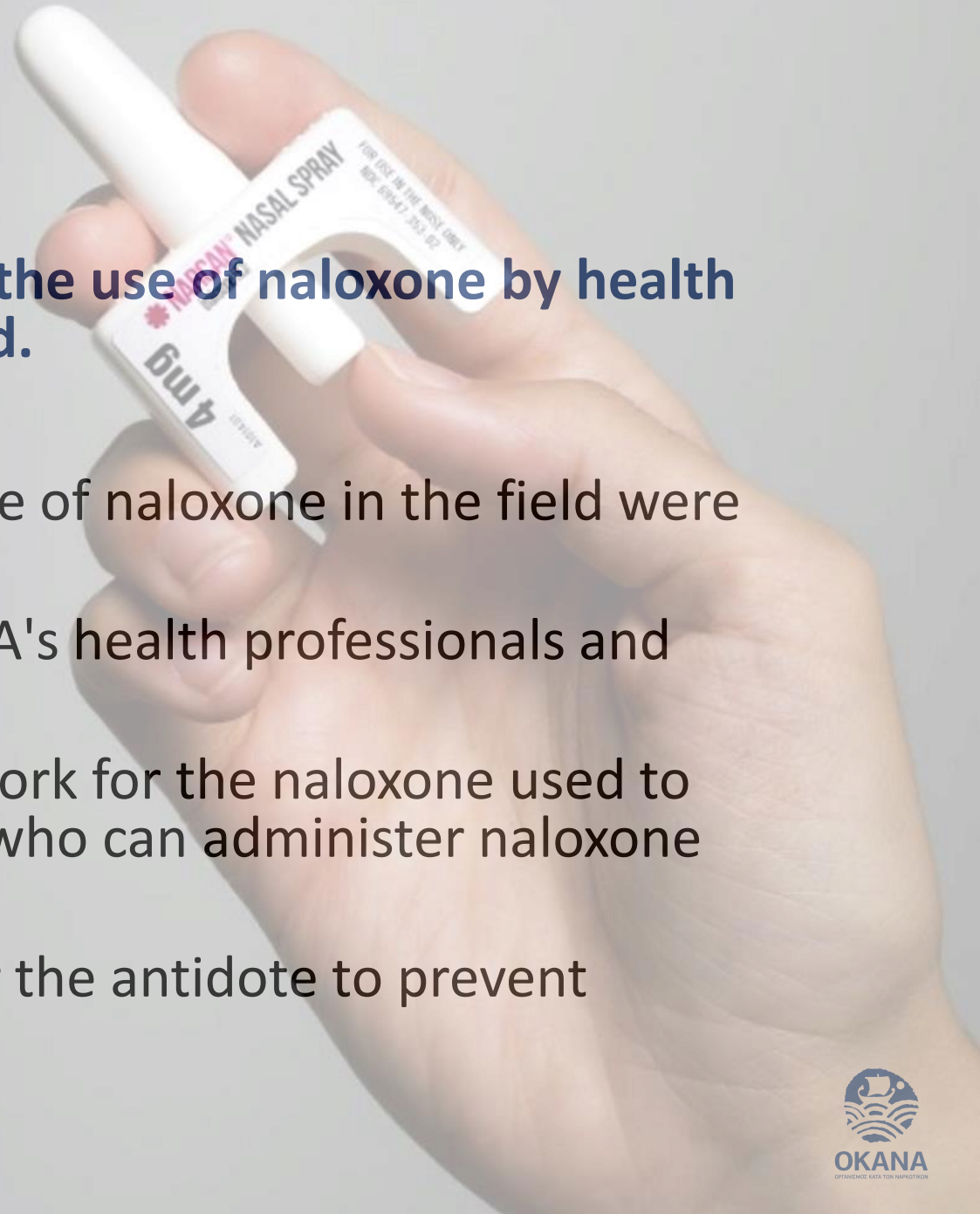
**14** cases of overdose were treated with naloxone use

# Naloxone

**OKANA's positive statement on expanding the use of naloxone by health professionals and street workers in the field.**

December 2021:

- ✓ The conditions for the expansion of the use of naloxone in the field were established by a ministerial decision.
- ✓ Today, the use of nasal naloxone by OKANA's health professionals and street workers in the field saves lives
- ✓ There is a clear and concrete legal framework for the naloxone used to prevent overdose deaths, and the people who can administer naloxone in case of overdose are trained by OKANA.
- ✓ Now OKANA streetworkers can administer the antidote to prevent overdose deaths.



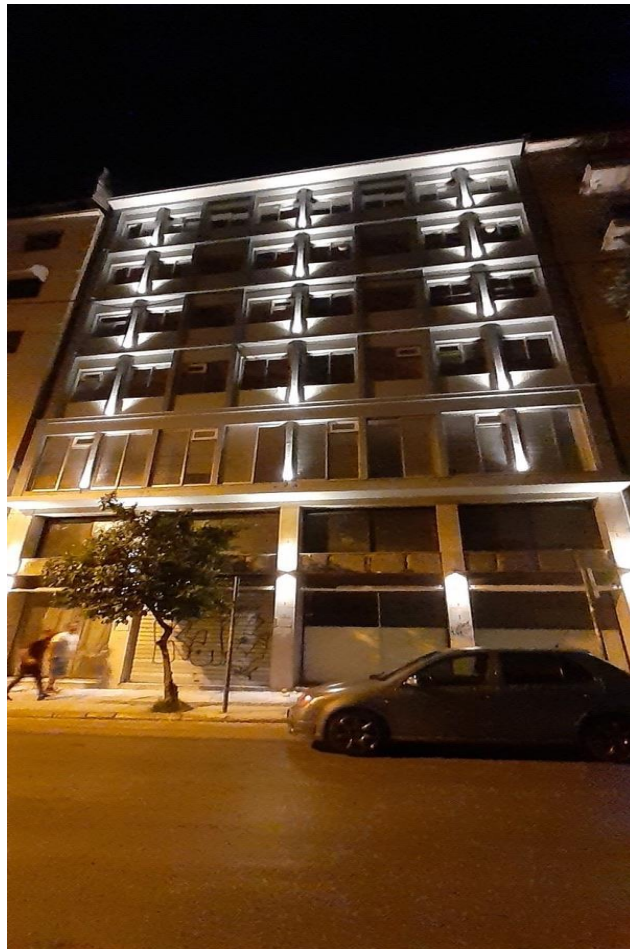
✓ Until October 2022, a total of **34 overdose cases** have been treated using **Naloxone**:

✓ 14 within the DCR

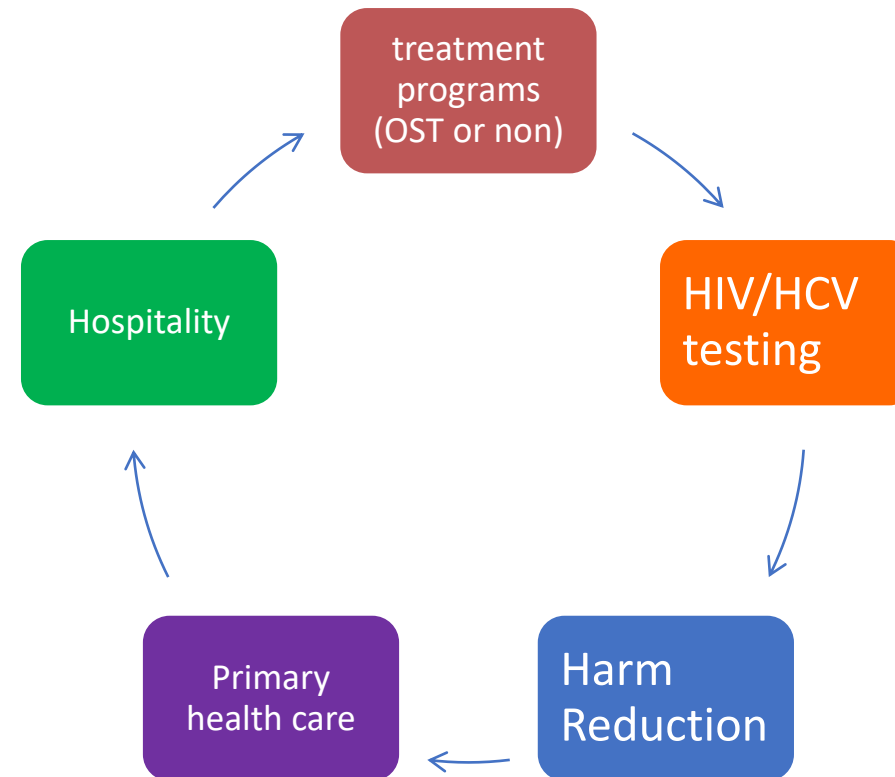
✓ 10 within the Shelter

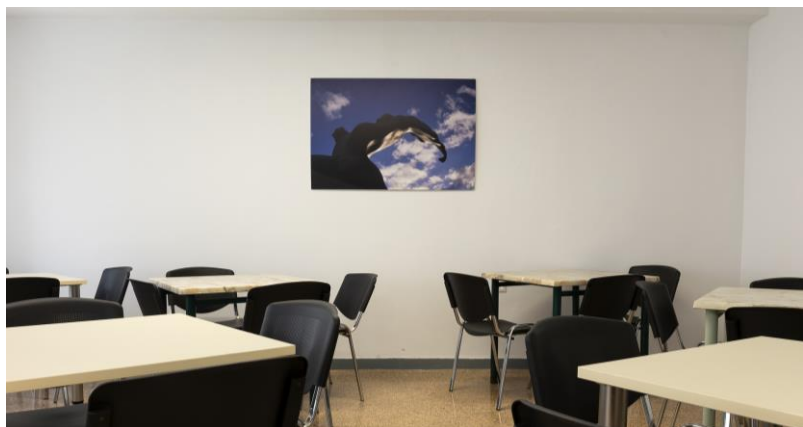
✓ 10 on the streets by the OKANA's streetworkers

# New facility: HOMELESS SHELTER



In the center of Athens  
Capacity: **90 persons**



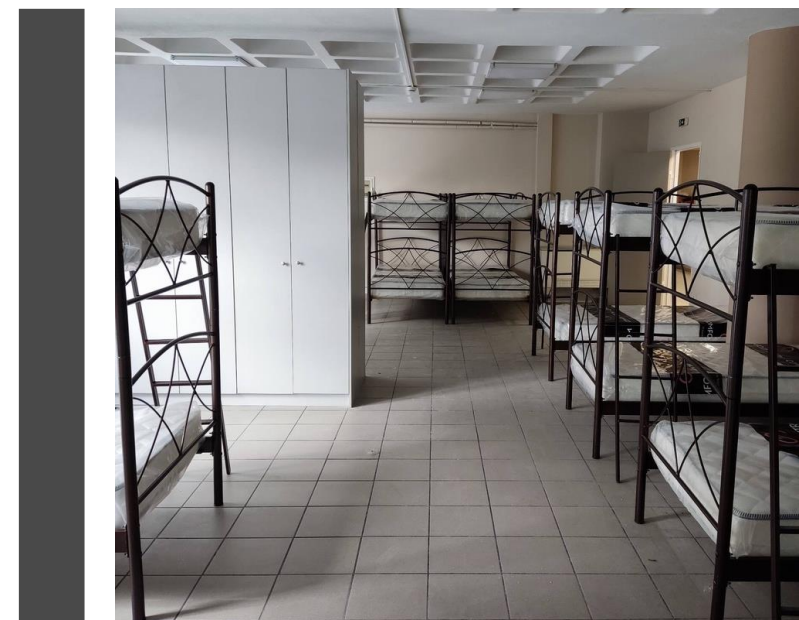


*Welcome to the Shelter/Day center of OKANA*



Already **1413 people are benefited by the Shelter/Day center services in the 5 months of its operation:**

- 1) 242 connections with treatment programs were implemented
- 2) 138 people spent the night in the Shelter
- 3) Food was provided to 1365 people
- 4) Personal hygiene care services were provided to 564 people
- 5) 568 people received counseling and psychological support
- 6) 777 people received primary health care



## Day center ILION (Western Athens)

- ✓ **294 beneficiaries** within the Day Center
- ✓ **133 beneficiaries** from streetwork actions nearby



## Day center Thessaloniki

✓ **410 beneficiaries** within the Day Center





## TITYOS Program

Program to eradicate Hepatitis among beneficiaries of the organization's OST programs

### The 1st Greek Hepatitis Elimination Program

All beneficiaries of the organization's OST programs who have HCV will be monitored

## Access to treatment within 1 year.

The program will prevent 180 cirrhosis, 82 cases of hepatocellular carcinoma and 26 deaths by 2028.

Savings of 8 million in the health system by 2028.

## HIPPOCRATES Program

- A program to create a complete automated system for timely and reliable detection of epidemic outbreaks.
  - The program includes the development of an algorithm for assessing individual risk of infection with a focus on HIV and Hepatitis B, C.
  - It will be applied to OKANA beneficiaries who inject opioids.
- ✓ To date, 1902 people have been examined in 20 OKANA Structures

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS



**OKANA**  
ΟΡΓΑΝΙΣΜΟΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΝΑΡΚΩΤΙΚΩΝ



**Ιπποκράτης**  
Σύστημα  
Ανίχνευσης  
Επιδημιών

Department of Hygiene  
Epidemiology and  
Medical Statistics,  
Medical School of  
Athens



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης

## Syringe residues analysis (ESCAPE) Project

*Participation of OKANA for the first time in the project ESCAPE for the analysis of 300 syringes from different locations of the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki (150 each), in order to study the substances contained in the syringes, to identify new trends in drug substances and to determine the extent of use of the already known substances in these cities*

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The 1st time that Greece participates in this global project



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OKANA participates with two cities, Athens and Thessaloniki, collecting 300 syringes (150 in each city)



European Monitoring Centre  
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

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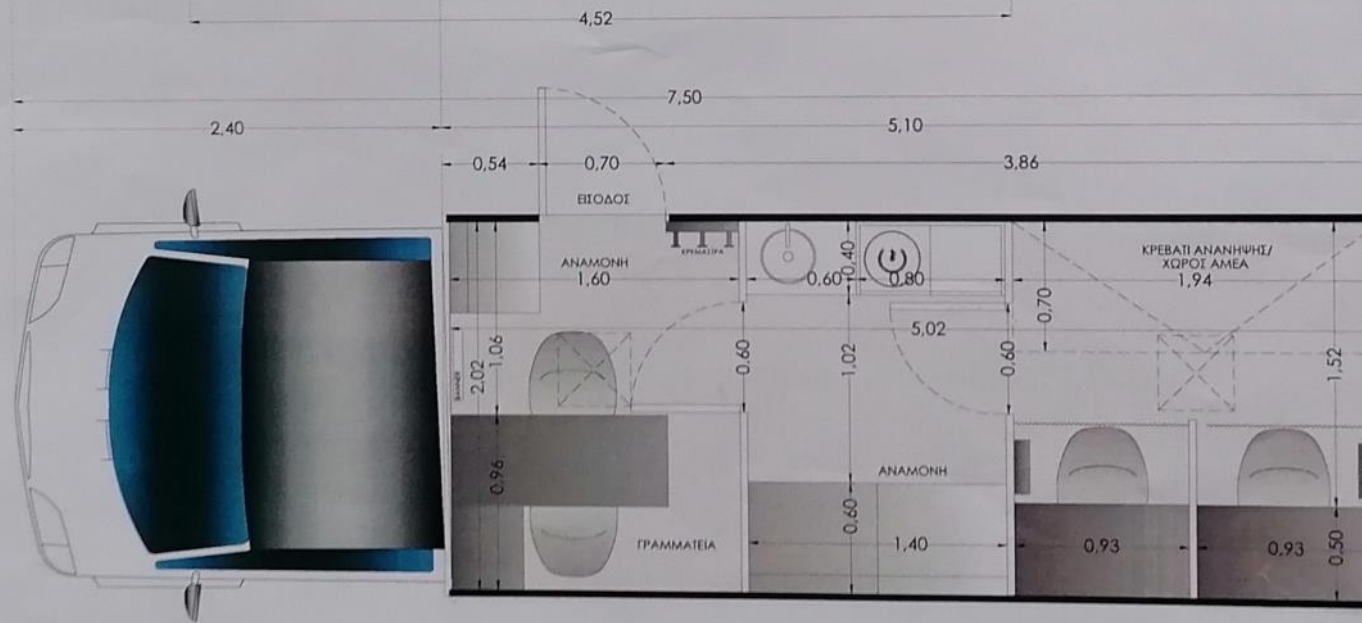
the syringes collected by OKANA streetworkers were analyzed by the Laboratory of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology of Aristotle Medical School in Thessaloniki



ARISTOTLE  
UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF  
MEDICINE

INOVATIVE PROGRAMS

# We are not done...next steps to Harm Reduction



- There is a need for more DCRs in the major cities of Greece
- There are already 3 mobile units in the cities of Patra, Rethymno and Tripoli providing harm reduction services
- OKANA, in collaboration with the Municipality of Athens, plans to establish 5 mobile DCRs that will operate 24/7.
- In addition, OKANA plans to establish one mobile DCR in Thessaloniki.

*The new mobile DCRs will be operational by the end of 2022.*



*Prevention is better than Treatment...*

*Treatment is better than Harm Reduction...*

*Harm Reduction is better than doing nothing....*

*Thank you!*

**Athanasios Theocharis**  
President of BD OKANA  
Greek Organization against Drugs

