

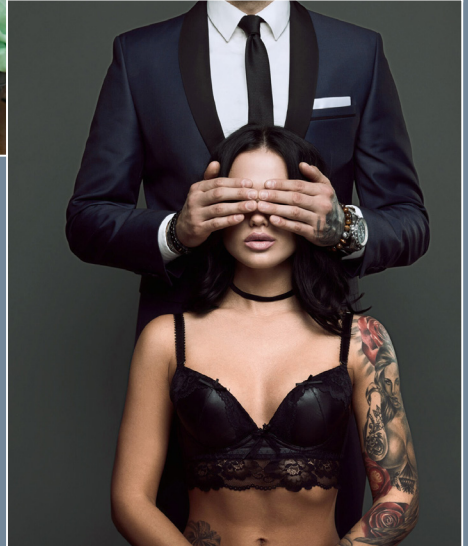


REACT

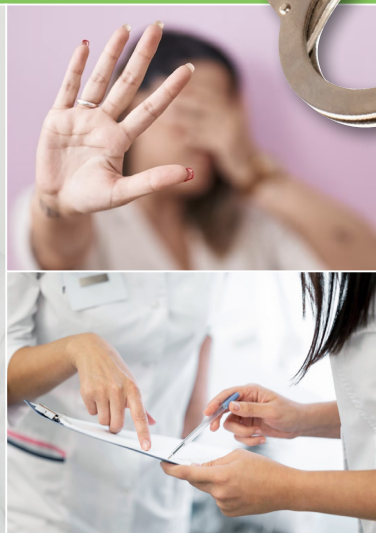


REGIONAL DIGEST

TRENDS IN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
AGAINST VULNERABLE GROUPS AND
EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE
RESPONSES TO THEM



EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



19,844

Appeals

453

REActors

205

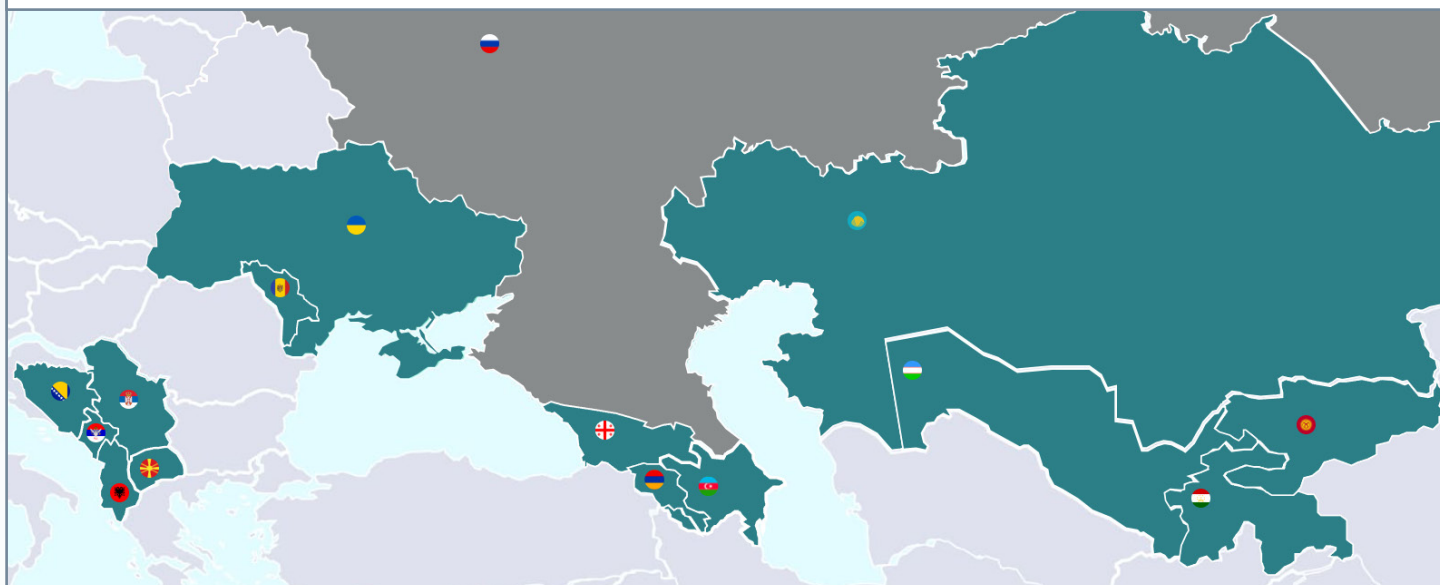
NGOs

14

Countries

Rights violations statistics

as for June 30, 2023



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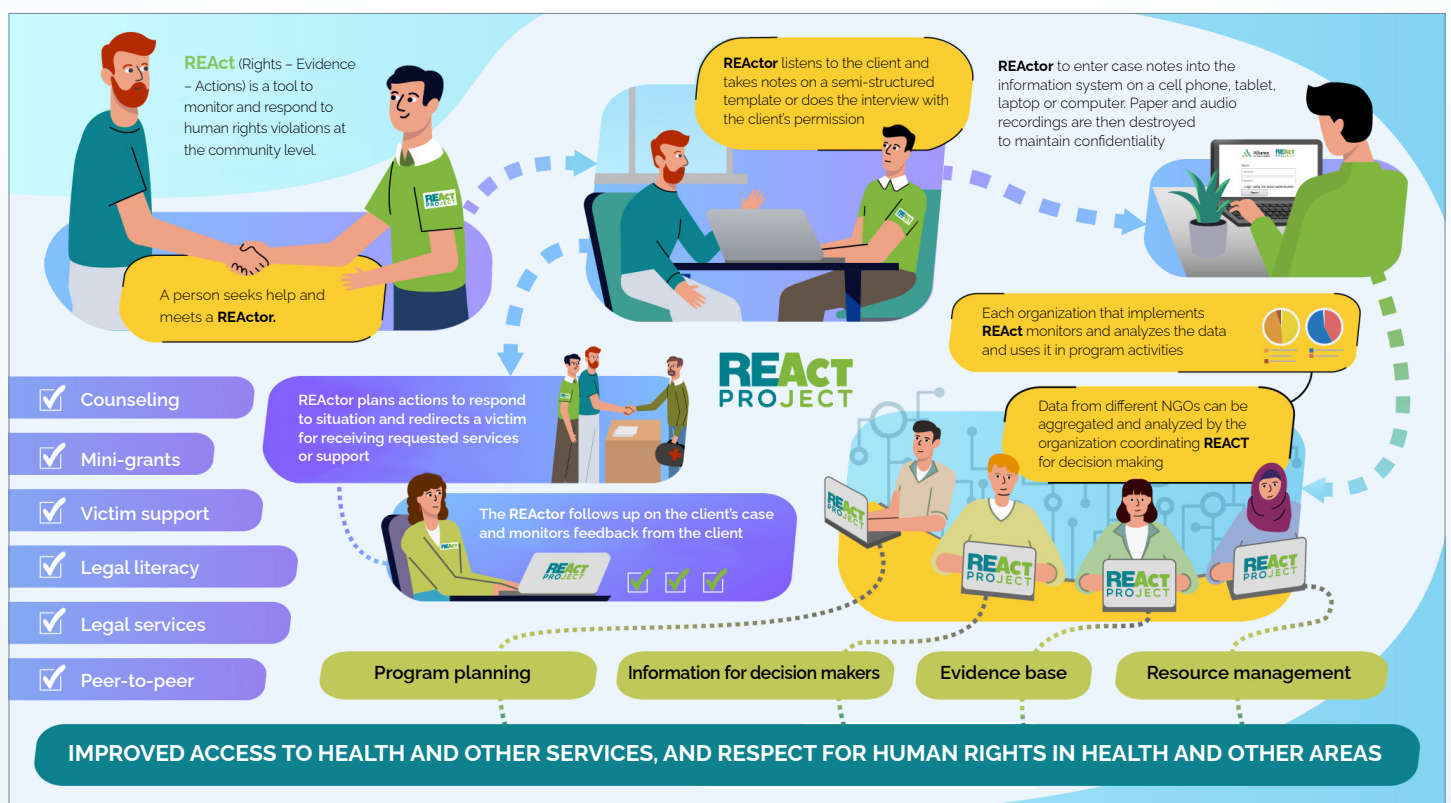
DISTRIBUTED FREE OF CHARGE

ABOUT REAct

REAct (Rights – Evidence – Actions) is a tool developed by [Frontline AIDS](#) to monitor and respond to human rights violations at the community level.

The system is being implemented by the Alliance for [Public Health ICF](#) with financial support from the [Global Fund](#).

REAct allows documenting cases of human rights violations in key communities and responding to human rights-related barriers to accessing HIV prevention, treatment and care services.





AZERBAIJAN

83

APPLICATIONS

8

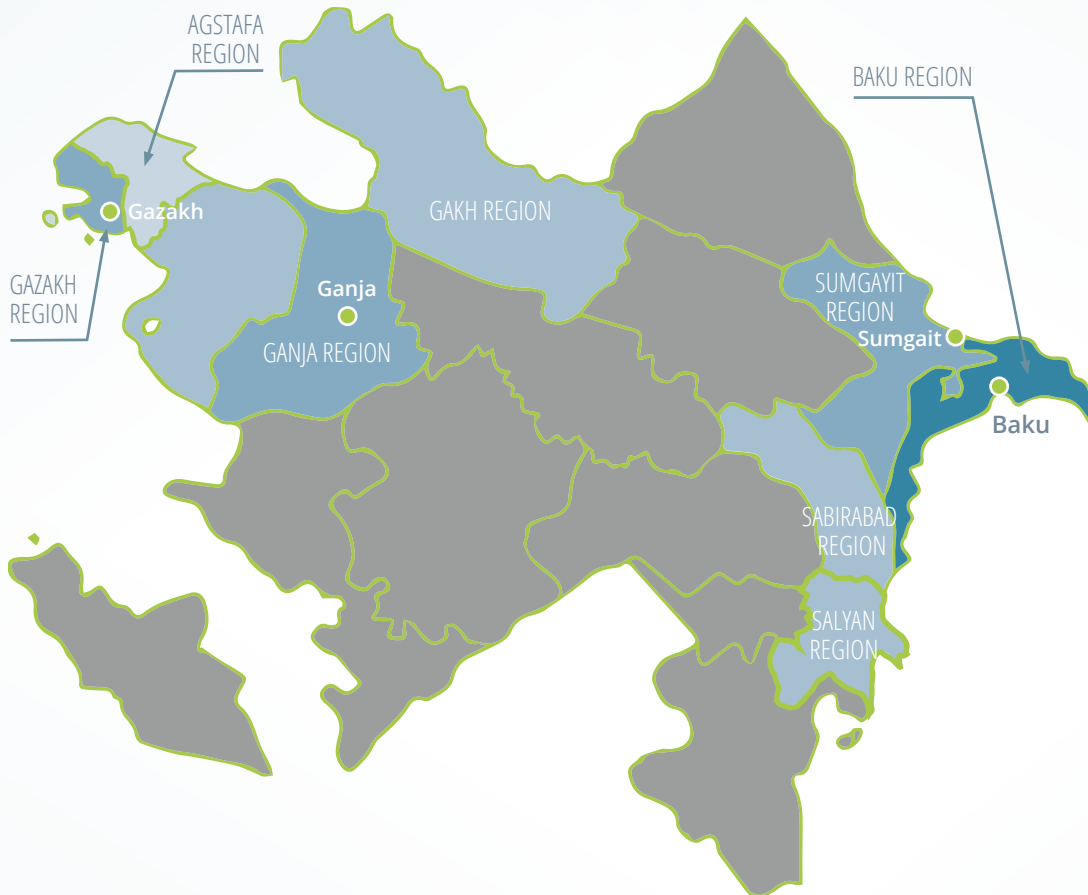
ORGANIZATIONS FROM
COMMUNITIES

8

REACTORS
(DOCUMENTATORS)

4

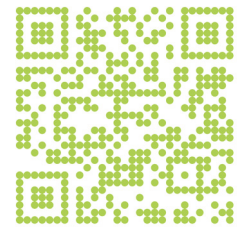
CITIES WHERE REACTORS
ARE IN PLACE



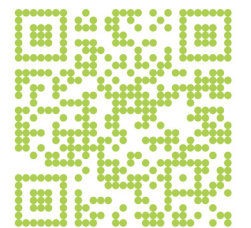
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DETAILED
STATISTICS



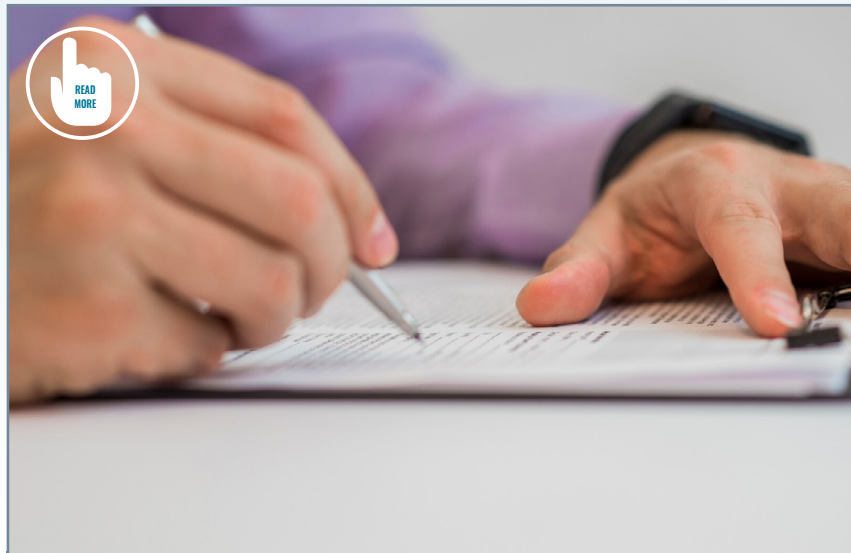
ALL REACTION
STORIES



More than 50% of complaints about rights violations concerned people living with HIV and people who use drugs. The main problems that beneficiaries addressed to REActors included intimidation, verbal abuse, forced displacement due to HIV status or drug use, and refusals by doctors to provide medical and social services to these marginalized groups. Given the close cooperation of NGOs with the Ministry of Health within the framework of the Country Coordinating Mechanism, all cases of violation of beneficiaries' rights by health workers in 2023 were resolved through administrative penalties.

In more than 100 registered appeals, survivors reported problems with personal documents or official registration, which in turn is necessary to obtain ARVs, as well as registration, disability and various benefits. Some of them had just been released from prison, some were lonely due to family displacement, and others had lost their documents. The lack of documents limited access to social security services and benefits ([CASE https://react-aph.org/en/caring-for-people-living-with-hiv-in-azerbaijan/](https://react-aph.org/en/caring-for-people-living-with-hiv-in-azerbaijan/)). In light of the large number of requests related to the issuance of personal documents and official registration, it was decided to strengthen cooperation with the relevant state structures to promptly resolve these issues.

It is worth noting that according to the gender distribution, the number of women who applied for assistance to the reactors is proportional to the number of men, which indicates the demand for these services among the female population. However, according to the rating of gender assessment led by women of the Eurasian Women's AIDS Network, the situation with violation of rights of women from key groups in Azerbaijan remains extremely difficult in comparison with other countries in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. (https://ewna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ewna-gender-assessment-report_2023_eng-1.pdf). In this regard, active work is underway to improve access of



Caring for people living with HIV in Azerbaijan: how REActors help to overcome difficulties with residence registration

women from the most vulnerable groups to shelters operating not only on the

basis of NGOs, but also state institutions (<https://react-aph.org/en/breaking-down-walls-of-silence-the-struggle-for-sex-workers-rights-in-azerbaijan/>).



Women-led gender assessment:

HOW COUNTRIES ADDRESS BARRIERS TO HIV SERVICES FOR WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV, SEX WORKERS AND WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS

Women-led gender assessment: how countries address barriers to HIV services for women living with HIV, sex workers and women who use drugs

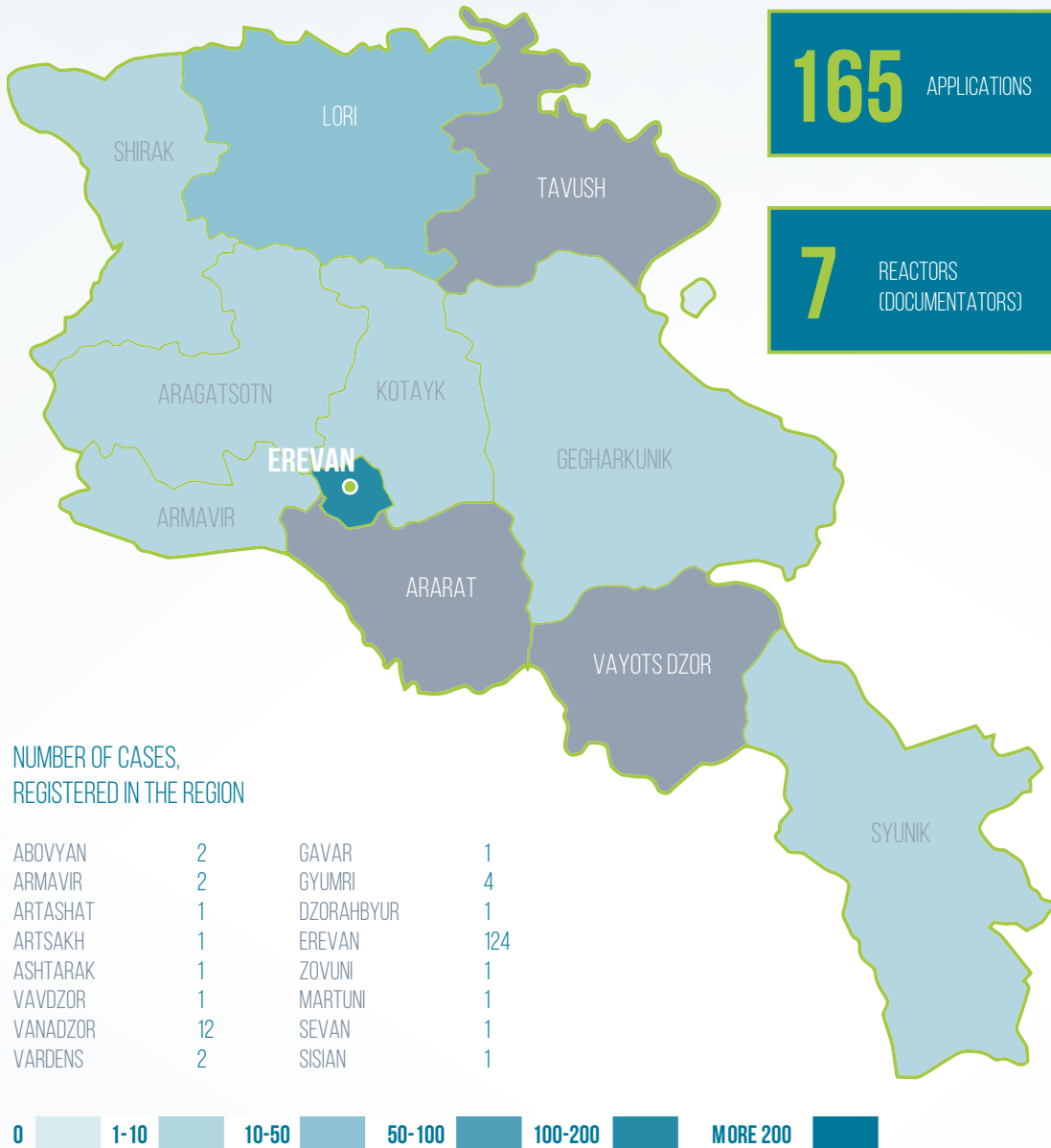




Breaking down walls of silence: the struggle for sex workers' rights in Azerbaijan



ARMENIA



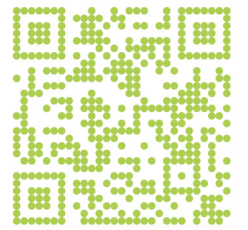
165 APPLICATIONS

3 NGOS AND CBOS

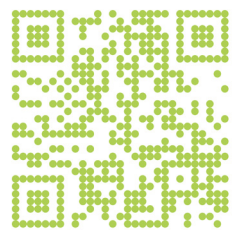
7 REACTORS (DOCUMENTATORS)



DETAILED STATISTICS



ALL REACTION STORIES



In September 2023, as a result of Azerbaijan's military action against Nagorno-Karabakh, approximately **106,000 refugees**, among them members of LGBTIQ+, and commercial sex worker (CSW) communities, were forcibly resettled to **Armenia**. As Nagorno-Karabakh was not an internationally recognized state, there were no HIV prevention programs for vulnerable groups, and therefore these people were not able to receive HIV testing and prevention services while living in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Meanwhile, over the past few months, there has been a trend of deportation of **HIV-positive people from Russia to Armenia**.

Also, on November 30, the Supreme Court of Russia recognized the LGBTIQ+ movement as an extremist organization, and representatives of the community began to migrate to Armenia in large numbers.

The HIV prevention program in Armenia is implemented solely at the expense of the Global Fund. There are no other donors in this sphere in the country, and the program is designed for a certain number of people and cannot ensure coverage of such a large number of refugees.

As a result, there will be a big gap and the country will be on the verge of an epidemic.

In 2023, Armenia witnessed **a significant number of hate rights violations against the LGBTIQ+ community (143 appeals)**. At the same time, the trend of impunity continued to grow. Offenders acted freely, feeling unpunished, realizing that either the victim would not dare to report the incident for fear of discrimination or, even in case of reporting, **the law enforcement authorities would not take any action**. This led to an increase in verbal abuse and violence at a progressive rate (78 cases of gender-motivated violence, of which in 18 cases the reactors helped to draft a police report). The main reasons for such aggression were appearance and association with sex workers/women.

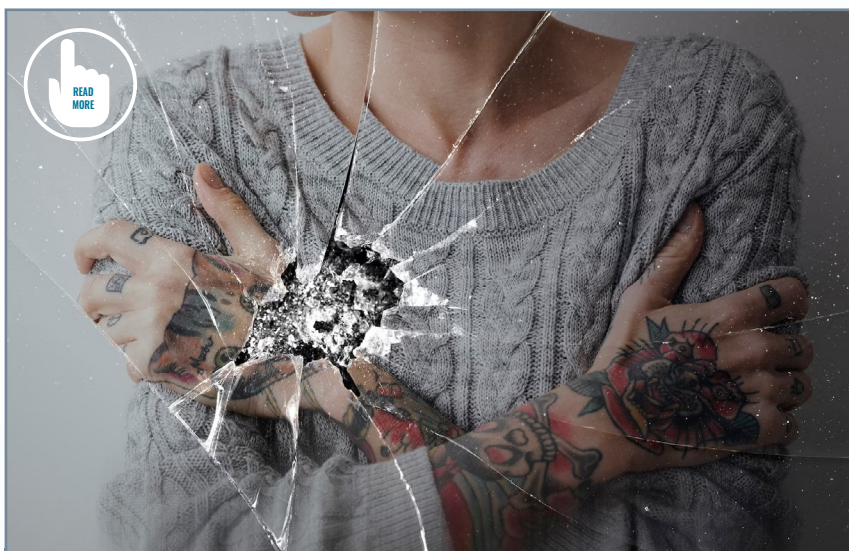
Moreover, in one of the documented cases, **a hate-motivated attack occurred against an outreach (social) worker of an NP NGO – a trans* woman** who was just performing HIV field testing (a case involving an attack on an outreach worker during work (HIV testing) by a stranger). With the involvement of REActors, **a criminal case was secured** and the client was referred for forensic medical examination and is receiving legal support.

Twenty-four referrals were recorded from beneficiaries of **sex worker/s**, and in one of them, the team managed to secure **the initiation of criminal proceedings** on a referral from **a sex worker who suffered humiliation and physical violence** from a client when she refused to fulfill his wishes. The client is determined to seek support and justice, so she turned to the paralegals for help. They are actively working with her on the matter, trying to assist the girl in filing a police report anonymously, given her desire for confidentiality.

Some changes in the call-up for military service have also affected the nature of appeals to REActors. Thus, before its commencement, young people are required to undergo a mandatory medical examination. In case of involvement in the LGBTIQ community, they are not allowed to join the army and are diagnosed with a mental disorder. This data is recorded in the state electronic medical database – ARMED. Citizens have personal pages on the corresponding ARMED app, and parents and/or guardians of minor children can access a person's history of doctor visits and diagnoses through their phone. There have been documented cases where diagnoses of psychological disorders have been described on the app as "same-sex developmental issues" or "transsexualism." Civil society is actively negotiating with the authorities to address this situation in the country.



Fighting for one's rights and the rights of others: the story of an attack on a trans woman in Armenia



Violence against a sex worker in Armenia and her legal support

In 2023, there were also 9 appeals about discrimination and human rights violations in medical institutions. A court case was also initiated against a doctor who refused to see a patient after learning about his positive HIV status. The man shared this information with REActors, this discriminatory case is currently under investigation and the client has been provided with full legal support.

Based on the data collected for 2023, an **operational report – a presentation with the main trends of offenses in Armenia was prepared.** The report was presented during the anniversary of the organization “National Trans Coalition” and at the event of the humanitarian NGO “New Generation” dedicated to World AIDS Day. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the situation of HIV and AIDS in Armenia, prevention and treatment services among key populations, existing problems, and access to HIV services among IDPs from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), migrants and refugees from Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and other countries who arrived in Armenia as a result of the military situation in Ukraine, political and non-political repressions of Russia. Steps and interventions taken to ensure access and expansion of services among the above groups, actions and programs implemented, achievements and progress recorded in this area, gaps still existing, changes needed, and future steps were discussed, which is very important in the current dire situation with the spike in the number of HIV positive cases.



Discrimination based on HIV status in a dental clinic in Armenia



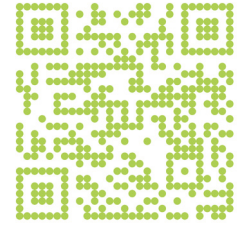
celebrating diversity and resilience: NGO National Trans Coalition (Armenia) marks World Tolerance Day and Anniversary



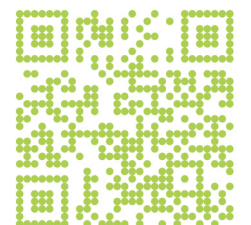
GEORGIA



DETAILED
STATISTICS



ALL REACTION
STORIES



NUMBER OF CASES, REGISTERED IN REGION

| | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| AJARIA REGION | 76 |
| GURIA REGION | 306 |
| IMERETI REGION | 1338 |
| KAKHETI REGION | 6 |
| KVEMO KARTLI REGION | 7 |
| MTSKHETA-MTIANETI REGION | 2 |
| SAMEGRELO-ZEMO SVANETI REGION | 17 |
| SHIDA KARTLI REGION | 8 |
| TBILISI REGION | 466 |



● CITIES WHERE THERE ARE REACTORS



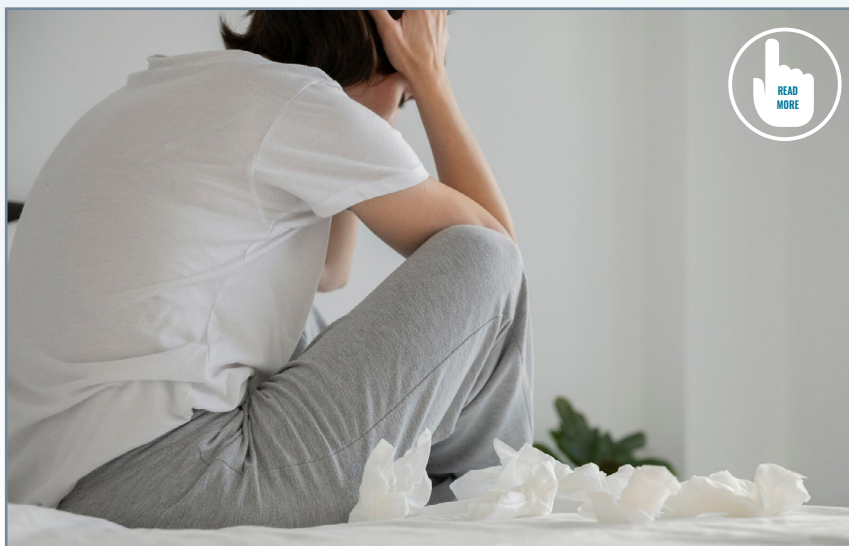
During 2023, **304 cases of hate-motivated violence** targeting members of vulnerable groups were registered in Georgia. The level of violence is particularly high in the regions, with clients displaying aggression against sex workers and trans* women, often also sex workers. Violence in these cases occurs both by clients and by relatives and family members.

As of 2023, there have been no court proceedings in such cases, which is due to low motivation of vulnerable groups in protecting their rights. However, 46 legal consultations provided by a professional lawyer under the REAct component were rendered. In addition, REActors provided ___ human rights consultations and actively accompanied beneficiaries to receive various services _____. During the

reporting period, **13 cases were recorded in Georgia** in which a police report was filed and action was taken by the staff towards the perpetrator.

An important area of focus for REAct in 2023 was addressing **the concerns of substitution program beneficiaries**. A working group was established and prepared a number of appeals to decision makers on the problems that existed. Clients expressed concerns about **restrictions on access to the drug, particularly with regard to the limitation on dispensing the drug for a few days, the geographic availability of the service, and the poor quality of the substitution drug**. They repeatedly contacted the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection, but all their appeals ended without positive results. A significant problem is also the fact that there is **a constant presence of police officers in close proximity to the program implementation centers, who search beneficiaries' homes and take them to police stations**. The refusal to provide biological material for drug testing is actively used against drug users, especially in the regions. In addition, stigmatization of clients, by program staff, is not uncommon.

During 2023, the REAct team also sought to advance and begin implementation of the Drug Policy Advocacy Plan developed the previous year by REAct based on the results of the case studies. The REAct team was active in advocating for changes to the program's regulations, including through media outreach and the creation of video reports.



Alarming trends against the background of domestic violence: the story of Lana from Georgia



Paralegal support for a methadone program participant in Georgia



Information meeting of the teleclinic project



KAZAKHSTAN

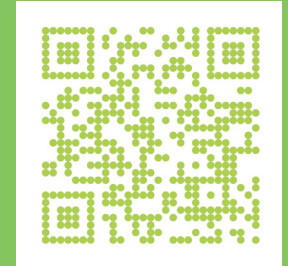
324 APPLICATIONS

7 REACTORS (DOCUMENTATORS)

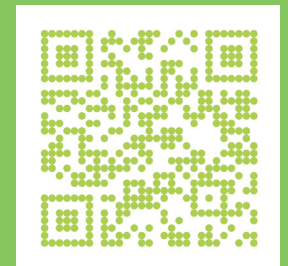
7 NGOS AND CBOS



DETAILED STATISTICS



ALL REACTION STORIES



● CITIES WHERE THERE ARE REACTORS



In 2023, Kazakhstan is experiencing alarming trends **in HIV and hepatitis-related rights violations**. In particular, violations of **confidentiality and social isolation** are recorded. Registered cases by REActors show **disclosure of HIV-positive patients' status by medical workers**, which contradicts their right to confidentiality. Crisis and health facilities, as well as nursing homes and homes for the disabled, refuse to admit patients with HIV status, violating their rights and causing social exclusion.

In 2023, health facilities in the country continue to **discriminate because of HIV status**, including disclosure of status and humiliating treatment of patients. Cases of **refusal to treat**



Ali's story: overcoming barriers to accessing health care in Kazakhstan

hepatitis in the absence of compulsory medical insurance (CMI), despite the social significance of this disease and refusal to provide antiretroviral therapy (ART) to patients with HIV who are not attached to a polyclinic, which violates the law, have been identified.

There are also cases of **dismissal from work and eviction of people living with HIV**, which leads to serious social problems and violates their right to housing and the inviolability of their homes.

Special attention should be paid to situations where **barriers to access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)** are observed – even though the service is free, as well as HIV and STI tests, available in all regions of Kazakhstan for both citizens and migrants, there are cases when AIDS centers require accurate information about sexual orientation to receive PrEP, which creates a barrier to access for certain groups of the population.

In 2023, **ENPUD's Expert Council on Drug Policy** began systematically documenting **strategic cases among people who inject drugs** in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Three such cases have been documented in Kazakhstan. Based on the evidence collected, ENPUD experts prepared an analytical paper on trends in drug policy in this country.

All these situations emphasize the urgent need to ensure access to quality health care, protect patients' rights, and fight discrimination by the law.



Protecting the rights of a person living with HIV+ in Kazakhstan:
A case of dismissal and a victory for justice



Through the lens of REAct's work: PrEP in the context of human rights, key populations, and access challenges



KYRGYZSTAN

3065 APPLICATIONS

15 ORGANIZATIONS FROM COMMUNITIES

29 REACTORS (DOCUMENTATORS)

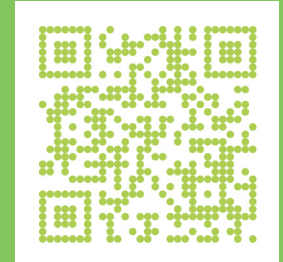
7 CITIES WHERE REACTORS ARE IN PLACE

NUMBER OF CASES, REGISTERED IN REGION:

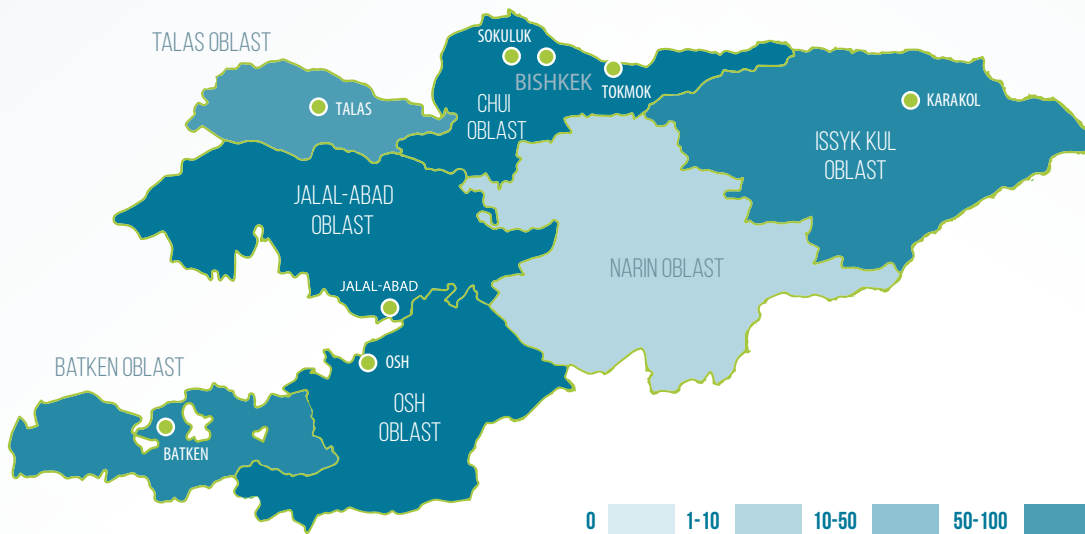
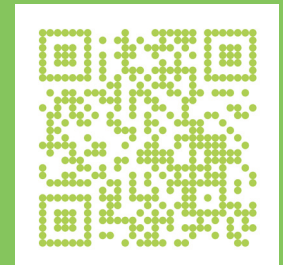
| | |
|---------------------|------|
| BATKEN OBLAST | 112 |
| JALAL – ABAD OBLAST | 309 |
| ISSIK KUL OBLAST | 156 |
| OSH OBLAST | 920 |
| TALAS OBLAST | 65 |
| CHUI OBLAST | 1407 |
| NARIN OBLAST | 3 |



DETAILED STATISTICS



ALL REACTION STORIES



● CITIES WHERE THERE ARE REACTORS

In 2023, in Kyrgyzstan, the majority of appeals documented by REActors were related to issues related **to the rights of people participating in the substitution therapy program**. These include forced fingerprinting by police, disclosure of client status, illegal detention, extortion of money by police, rude behavior of medical staff, denial of medical care, appeals against police actions, and issues of medical ethics and patients' rights.

According to the analytical paper on **drug policy trends** in the country prepared by the **ENPUD Drug Policy Expert Council** in 2023, cases of people who use drugs or have a history of drug use being subjected to arbitrary **behavior by police officers** are becoming increasingly common in Kyrgyzstan, raising serious doubts about the legality and fairness of such actions.

ENPUD
#SOS PROJECT 2.0

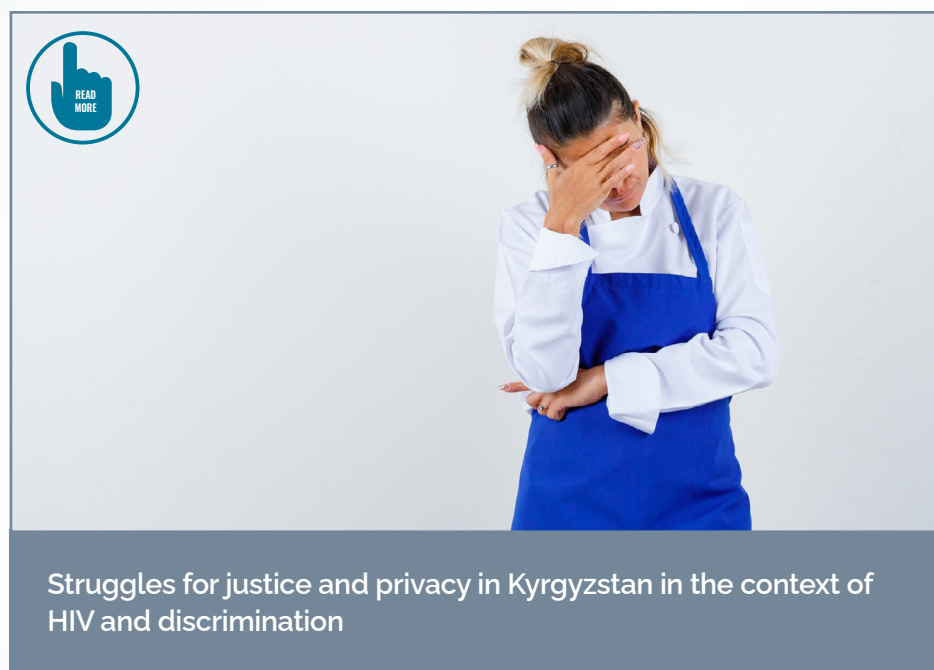
ASIAN NETWORK OF PEOPLE WHO USE NARCOTIC DRUGS

Criminal Drug Policy in Kyrgyzstan: Illusion of Change and Real Consequences. ENPUD publication.

In response to this situation, one of the strategic directions of the partners' work in 2023 was to update the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, Their Analogues, and Precursors", where work is underway to eliminate compulsory treatment; this bill is being considered by Parliament.

There has also been an increase in the number of **women reporting violence by cohabitants/husbands** and cases of beatings and humiliation of sex workers and transgender women by clients. One such story was published as part of the regional campaign 16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence.

The analysis of the cases allows us to conclude that although there are many appeals, **more than 90% of clients refuse to resolve their issues through judicial and law enforcement bodies**. This points to the need for change and greater involvement of beneficiaries in resolving their legal issues. Paralegals provide counseling to clients facing HIV and TB regarding medical ethics, free services, local government authority, and patients' rights.



There is also active work to comply **with international norms and strengthen the rights of PLHIV and TB patients**. There are notable cases where perpetrators, including private individuals and law enforcement officers, have been punished through the law enforcement system, which emphasizes the importance of strengthening accountability mechanisms and the protection of citizens' rights in the country. In one situation, **a district police officer was disciplined** for violating the confidentiality of a woman living with HIV. Her status was disclosed to her employer, which led to her dismissal.



In another case, a client was involved in an accident, but he was not the one responsible for the accident. However, despite the liability imposed, the at-fault driver refused to pay damages to the beneficiary. After the REActor was contacted, **a claim was filed for recovery of the material damage** caused to the client and later the court ruled in his satisfaction.



MOLDOVA

1263 APPLICATIONS

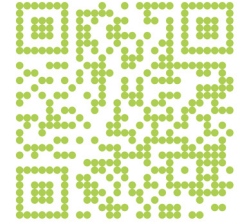
14 ORGANIZATIONS FROM COMMUNITIES

31 REACTORS (DOCUMENTATORS)

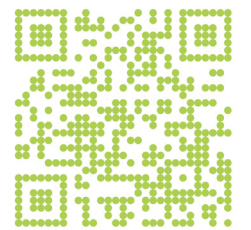
8 CITIES WHERE THERE ARE REACTORS



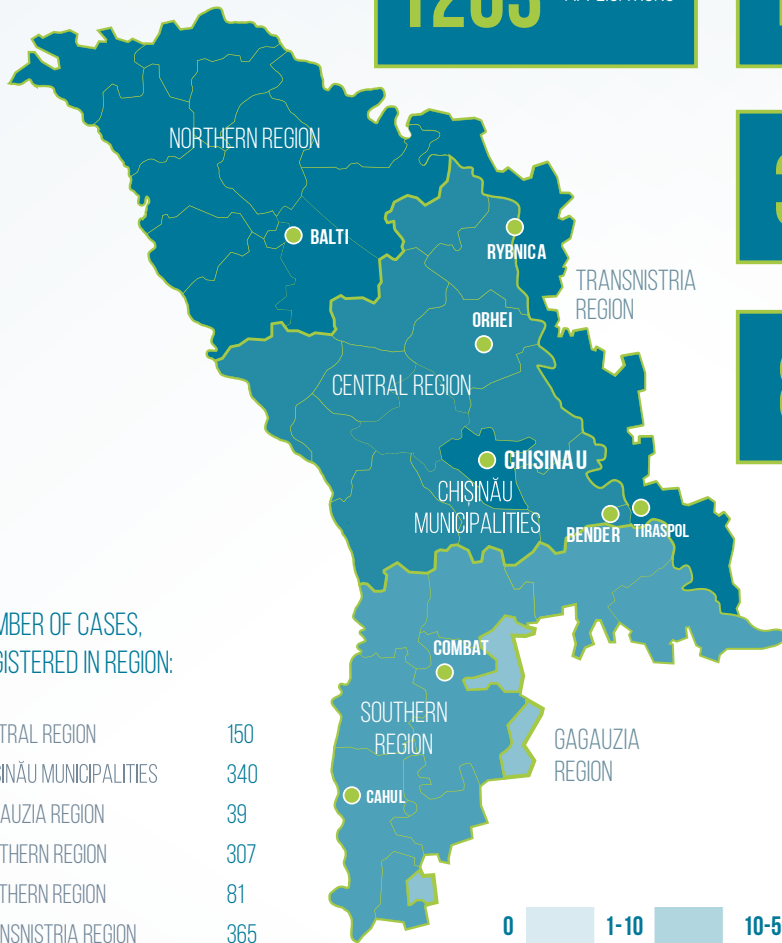
DETAILED STATISTICS



ALL REACTION STORIES



● CITIES WHERE THERE ARE REACTORS



NUMBER OF CASES, REGISTERED IN REGION:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| CENTRAL REGION | 150 |
| CHIȘINĂU MUNICIPALITIES | 340 |
| GAGAUZIA REGION | 39 |
| NORTHERN REGION | 307 |
| SOUTHERN REGION | 81 |
| TRANSNISTRIA REGION | 365 |

Throughout 2023, Moldova witnessed several significant trends regarding human rights and healthcare.

Firstly, there has been a **concerning disclosure of HIV status by medical practitioners and discriminatory practices towards high-risk clients in medical institutions.**

Particularly noteworthy is the mandatory **HIV testing during the immigration process for refugees and migrants.**



Incident in Moldova with disclosure of medical information

GENDERDOC-M Information Center registered ten cases of health rights violations related to mandatory HIV testing for individuals seeking asylum in Moldova. Despite legislative norms allowing voluntary HIV testing, these individuals are subjected to mandatory medical procedures, including HIV testing, contradicting principles of fairness. Furthermore, individuals already aware of their HIV status are compelled to undergo retesting, leading to additional stress and a breach of medical confidentiality. In a broader context, the community advocates for a shift towards voluntary HIV testing practices, where applicants are informed and have the choice to undergo testing. These changes aim to demonstrate care and support for refugees while avoiding unnecessary persecution.

In 2023, **ENPUD's Expert Council on Drug Policy** began systematically documenting **strategic cases among people who inject drugs** in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Three such cases have been documented in Moldova. Based on the evidence collected, ENPUD experts prepared an **analytical paper** on trends in drug policy in this country.

Another crucial aspect is **the criminalization of injection drug users in Transnistria**. The repressive drug policy, influenced by Russia in the territories under its control, has resulted in recorded cases of criminal prosecution for drug consumption without the intent to sell, raising serious questions about the legality of such measures.

Alas, **three referrals** were not finalized by REActors because clients refused to follow through: in one of them, instead of support and professional assistance, **the pregnant client was given incorrect information about HIV infection at the polyclinic**, which only increased her fear and anxiety. In addition, she was **forcibly sent for an abortion**, which was an ordeal for her. However, the woman decided not to apply because she faced resistance from her spouse.



Fighting stereotypes and fears: the story of Sylvia from Moldova

Efforts towards the decriminalization of psychoactive substance consumption in Moldova have involved several initiatives. These include aligning national anti-drug policies with EU policies, a roundtable on World AIDS Day, the **Fifth EECA Judges' Forum, which presented evidence of rights violations** and the role of the judiciary in the cases documented in REAct.



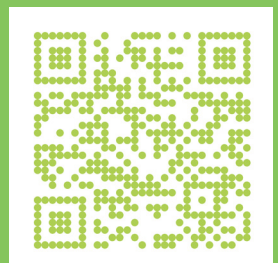
TAJIKISTAN



DETAILED
STATISTICS

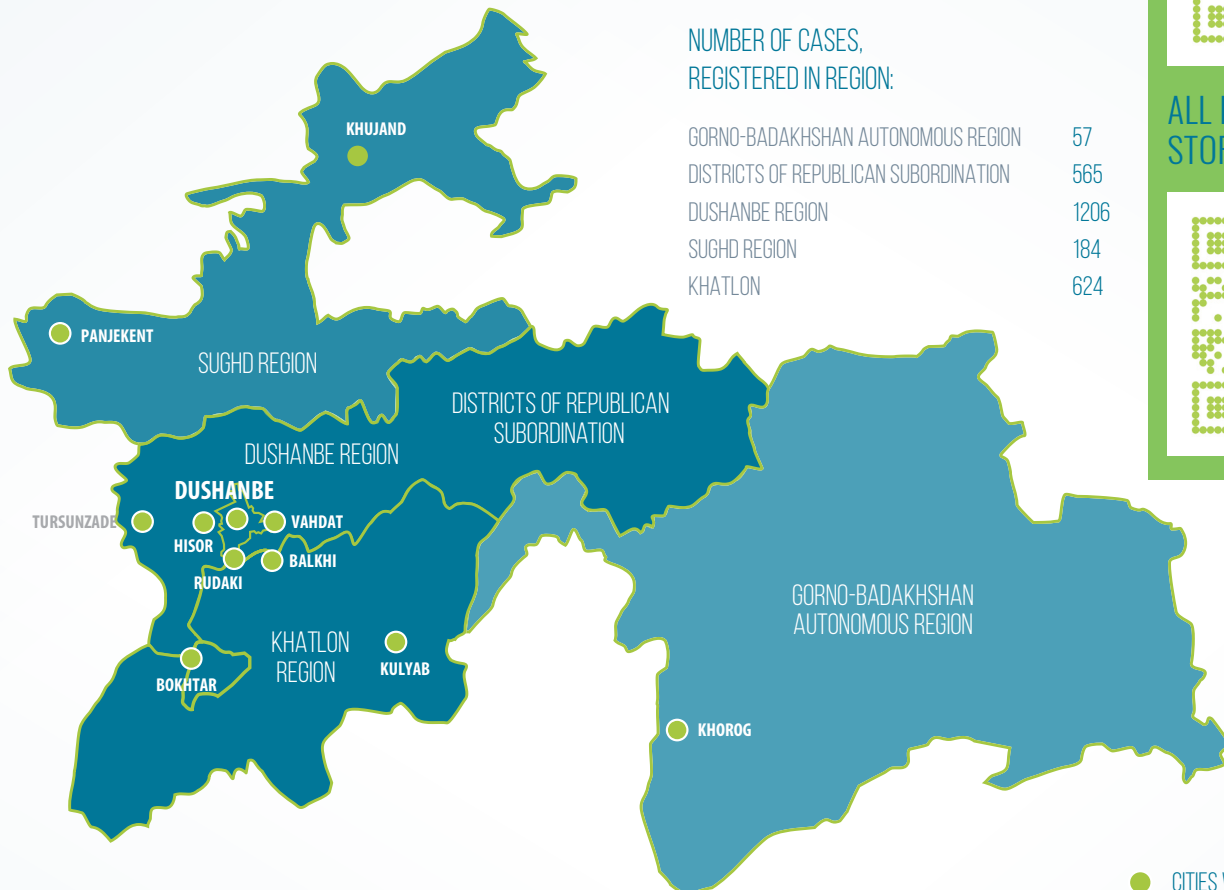


ALL REACTION
STORIES



NUMBER OF CASES,
REGISTERED IN REGION:

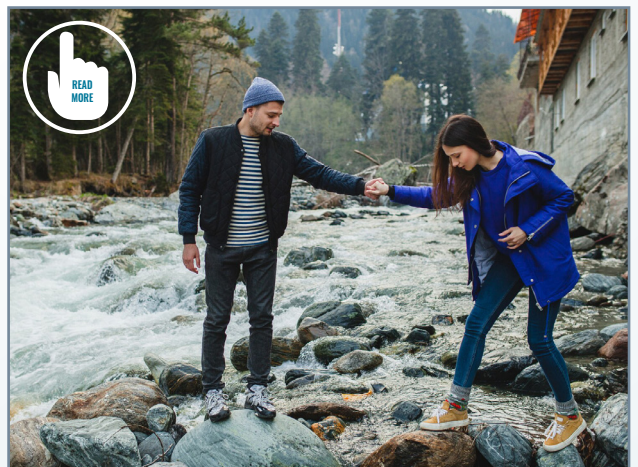
| | |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| GORNO-BADAKHSHAN AUTONOMOUS REGION | 57 |
| DISTRICTS OF REPUBLICAN SUBORDINATION | 565 |
| DUSHANBE REGION | 1206 |
| SUGH D REGION | 184 |
| KHATLON | 624 |



● CITIES WHERE THERE ARE REACTORS

In 2023 in Tajikistan, there was a significant increase in requests to REActors from people living with HIV and belonging to particularly vulnerable groups. Incidents were initiated both by representatives of law enforcement agencies and private individuals **violating people's rights using hate speech, intimidation, threats, acts of violence and blackmail.**

During the year, **15 strategic cases were registered under articles 125, paragraph 1, and 241, paragraph 3,** of the Criminal Code. Of these, 3 cases ended with a positive result, where clients received a favorable outcome of the legal process. It is important to note that 12 cases, which were conducted by a lawyer, were also considered in court, but the clients were not released and received sentences under Article 125 Part 1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Tajikistan with minimum terms.



A REActor in Tajikistan spoke out against violence and lynching

REActors also recorded cases of human rights violations among the category of citizens of non-binary gender status (key population groups) and persons affected by tuberculosis. Gender and domestic violence experts conducted an analysis and an expert was also engaged to assess the situation on changes in rules and procedures on various legal issues. Based on this analysis, it was decided to conduct **advocacy activities focusing on the problem of limited access of women from vulnerable groups to shelters after cases of domestic violence**. Currently, such women face difficulties in accessing shelters, and **problems have been identified in the area of social benefits and digital security**.

In Tajikistan, there is a particular difficulty in effectively punishing offenders because many victims, **feeling regret or fear of disclosing their status, are reluctant to file complaints or refuse to file complaints against offenders at all**. The problem of high self-stigma among citizens of non-binary gender status (KPG) poses additional challenges. These people fear possible repercussions for their status and identity, even if their rights have been violated or they have been victims of violence.

Cases of **prosecution of representatives of the LGBTIQ community under Article 241 of the Criminal Code** of the Russian Federation (distribution of pornography) have become more frequent in the country. The grounds for such charges are personal intimate photos found on the phones of the accused or intimate correspondence. One of the cases involved a transgender woman who was unjustifiably detained by law enforcement officials who seized her personal belongings (including her phone) and subsequently accused of distributing pornography. The REActors were able to provide the client with legal defense by finding a lawyer willing to take on her case and defend her rights. After two months, the case against her was closed and her personal belongings were returned to her and mailed to her.



Nevertheless, there were positive cases, especially related to men who have sex with men, sex workers, and people who inject drugs, where, in peaceful negotiations and when complaints against police officers were lodged, the officers who violated clients' rights took immediate action. These cases underscore the importance of responding to complaints and internal control in law enforcement agencies to uphold the rule of law and prevent unscrupulous behavior of officers and control the resolution of case status.

Intensive work has been organized to improve the legal literacy of project clients. However, changes in the system of filing complaints are required to improve the accessibility of lawyers specializing in the protection of the rights of KPGs and their representation in courts. One of the main challenges remains the criminalization of HIV, which causes fear and anxiety among non-binary gender status citizens and other representatives of KPGs in the process of protecting their rights.

Emphasis is also placed on raising clients' awareness of social benefits and guarantees that they are most often unaware of. This includes child allowance and nutrition, employment, restoration of documents after release from prison, cooperation with government agencies to improve the situation and participation of representatives of community-based organizations in government contracts within the country. A roadmap based on workshops with the community has been created to develop activities and programs for better provision of information on available social benefits in order to improve the protection of citizens' rights and social security in the region.

In Tajikistan's medical sector, health workers often face difficulties in holding offenders accountable, as many victims feel regret or fear about disclosing their medical status. The high level of self-stigma among medical clients creates additional problems, and they fear disclosure of personal data, even if their rights have been violated.

In some cases of violations of medical ethics, it is possible to reach positive solutions through peaceful negotiations instead of initiating criminal proceedings. For example, when medical workers were involved in violations after patient care or disclosure of status, measures are taken to restore losses and compensate for moral damage. The positive practice of cooperation with representatives of the Republican AIDS Center of RT on the protection of the rights of patients and their relatives in the medical sphere is becoming noticeable.



UZBEKISTAN

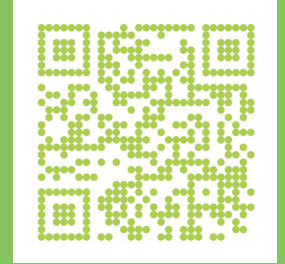


NUMBER OF CASES, REGISTERED IN REGION:

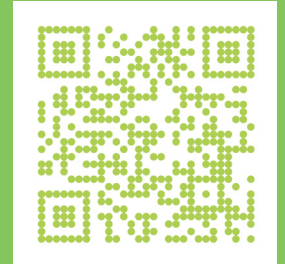
| | | | |
|--------------------|------|----------------------------|-----|
| TASHKENT | 1590 | REPUBLIC OF KARAKALPAKSTAN | 2 |
| ANDIJAN REGION | 3 | SAMARKAND REGION | 15 |
| BUKHARA REGION | 8 | SURKHANDARYA REGION | 1 |
| JIZZAKH REGION | 20 | SYRDARYA OBLAST | 3 |
| KASHKADARYA REGION | 2 | TASHKENT REGION | 103 |
| NAVOI REGION | 41 | KHOREZM REGION | 1 |
| NAMANGAN REGION | 7 | | |



DETAILED STATISTICS



ALL REACTION STORIES



In 2023 in Uzbekistan, the most violations of the rights of representatives of vulnerable groups were recorded by law enforcement bodies (225 cases), exceeding their authority in 90 cases, and the use of excessive force by these bodies was registered in 77 applications. There was also a high number of violations related to threats, intimidation, and harassment (230 cases), as well as arbitrary arrest or detention (98 cases). However, there were no prosecutions of perpetrators in such cases for 2023. This is because clients are often fearful and concerned for their safety, having had negative experiences with law enforcement in the past. They are also not confident in the effectiveness of countering the system and doubt the positive outcomes of such cases.

In Uzbekistan, in addition to documenting cases of human rights violations, our team of reactors is actively working to amend Article 113 on the criminalization of HIV. The strategic goal is to advocate for changes to this article aimed at eliminating the unacceptable practice of using this article to criminalize people with HIV/AIDS, as well as increasing public and client awareness of HIV-related rights to ensure they are better protected and have access to needed services and treatment.

During 2023, there were 20 referrals from people living with HIV who were suspected/questioned/prosecuted under Article 113. Most of the cases were resolved through the participation of reactors in pre-trial investigation, but one case was finalized with a court decision. This case is related to the client's accusation under Article 113 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan of willful HIV infection. The client claims that there was no infection and there was no sexual contact. She reported that a district police officer beat up her acquaintance with whom she had a friendly relationship, forcing her to write statements about a sexual encounter under coercive pressure. After contacting REActors, the client was referred to a lawyer, and after investigative measures, a trial took place, where all the evidence of her innocence was not taken into account. The court decided to imprison the client for two years in a general regime colony.



Unfair accusation of HIV infection in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, 204 cases of rights violations where the perpetrators were private individuals were recorded in 2023. Among the typical problems faced by REAct clients are cases of domestic and intimate partner violence (33 cases), and hate-based violence (42 cases). Almost all of these cases have been resolved through REAct mediation without recourse to the court system. As a result of these actions, cases were closed without the use of law enforcement or judicial intervention.

In Uzbekistan, 81 cases of rights violations by healthcare workers were reported in 2023. However, almost all of these cases were resolved through reenactors and the cases were closed without involving the judicial system.

The evidence collected through REAct suggests the need to strengthen measures to protect citizens from arbitrary law enforcement and to develop and implement programs to prevent domestic violence and hate speech. They also emphasize the importance of ensuring access to a fair trial and the need to help ensure the rights of citizens in various areas of life.



UKRAINE

9738 APPLICATIONS

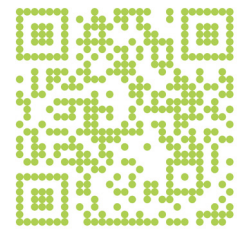
63 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

85 REACTORS (DOCUMENTATORS)

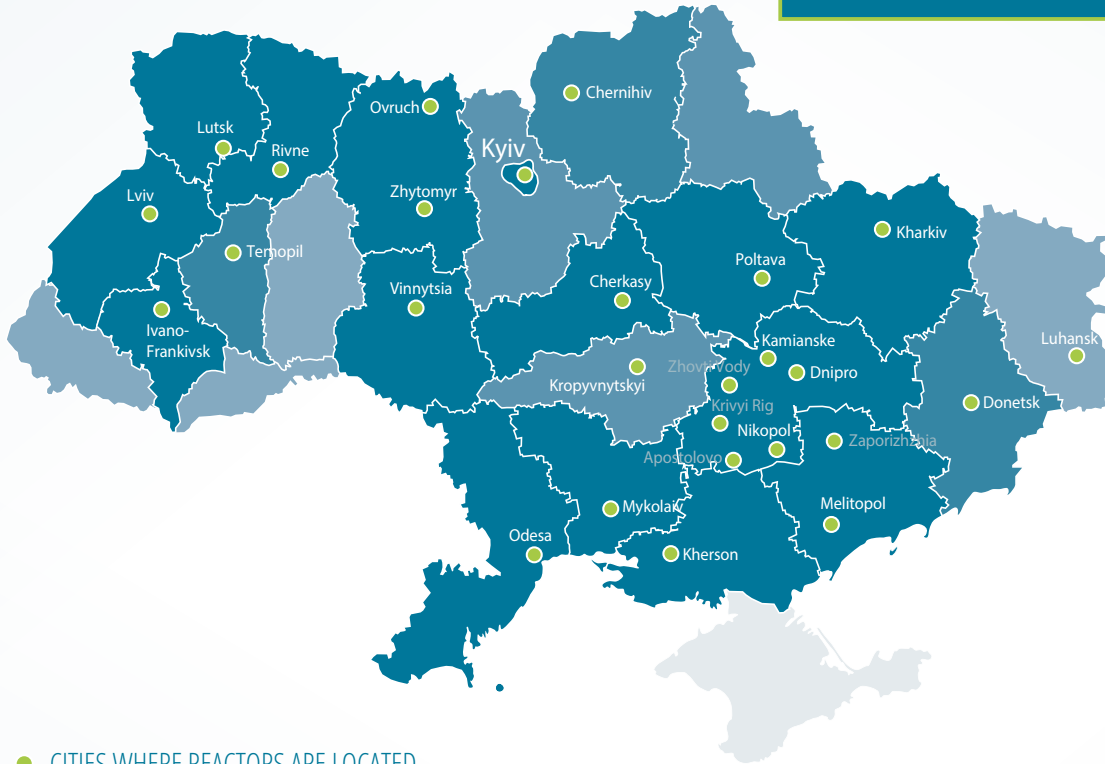
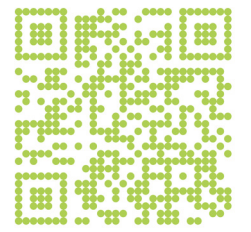
18 REGIONAL CENTER SWHERE REACTORS ARE LOCATED



DETAILED STATISTICS



ALL REACTION STORIES



● CITIES WHERE REACTORS ARE LOCATED



In 2023, the implementation of the REAct system in Ukraine continued **under conditions of war and active hostilities** in certain regions. REAct documenters recorded cases of violation of key messaging rights, interacted with clients and provided necessary assistance and support.

In the Kherson region, **16 cases of forced displacement of persons to russia with the use of brute force** were recorded. Allegations have already been filed with the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, and lawsuits to the International Criminal Court are being prepared.

There was an increased activity of clients who applied to the **issues of denial of outpatient medical care, denial of access to OST without justification, as well as cases of domestic violence**. There were difficulties with registration of **temporarily displaced persons (TDP) status** for those temporarily staying in other regions, which aggravated their situation.

Facing barriers to TDP status was accompanied by biased attitudes on the part of state representatives, especially in the context of receiving medical, social services and humanitarian assistance. Key communities, such as those temporarily in another region, were the most vulnerable to systemic barriers.

In 2023, a **working meeting was held with the representative of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine** in the Dnipropetrovska Oblast (<https://react-aph.org/en/current-issues-of-ensuring-the-observance-of-human-rights-in-the-dnipropetrovska-oblast-a-meeting-with-the-representative-of-the-commissioner-for-human-rights-of-the-verkhovna-rada-of-ukraine-in-the/>), where the share of registered cases of violation of rights of key communities prevails among the total number of recorded cases. Such an initiative is strategically important to ensure a proactive response to both individual and systemic cases of violations of the rights of key communities in the region where the perpetrator was a state representative.

As part of the REAct project in Ukraine, an algorithm for regional coordinators was developed to address situations of violations of the rights of key communities at the regional level. The main focus was on actions in cases where rights were violated by state representatives, especially health sector workers and police.

In eight out of 445 cases of rights violations by the police, where police officers were held accountable, including dismissal and reprimands.

In 56 out of 221 cases of domestic violence against women, various measures were taken against the perpetrators by the police, including interviews with the perpetrators (20 cases), opening of criminal cases (7 cases), issuance of injunctions and fines (23 cases), and legal proceedings (6 cases).

In the field of health care, in 52 cases out of 1632 registered appeals the perpetrator (medical worker) was brought to disciplinary and administrative responsibility. Chief physicians of medical institutions issued warnings and reprimands to doctors, and in some cases-imposed fines by court decision.

In 2023, the Expert Council of the Eurasian Network of People who Use Drugs (ENPUD) engaged in documenting significant cases among injecting drug users in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including four incidents in Ukraine. These events reflect the overall dynamics of drug policy in the region.



Current issues of ensuring the observance of human rights in the Dnipropetrovska Oblast: a meeting with the representative of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in the Dnipropetrovska Oblast



POLICE ATTACK OPIOID SUBSTITUTION THERAPY PROGRAM IN UKRAINE: CRIMINALIZATION OF SITES AND ATTACKS ON PARTICIPANTS

SOS PROJECT 2.0



Opioid substitution therapy program in Ukraine: the cost of the conflict between law and health

The substitution treatment program in Ukraine faces obstacles caused by repressive drug policies. Arrests of social workers and criminalization of treatment sites are indicative of the conflict between law enforcement and the medical community. The problem is exacerbated by public stigmatization of drug addicts, corruption in law enforcement structures and a lack of understanding of the effectiveness of substitution therapy. These factors lead to violation of patients' rights, undermine trust in healthcare and jeopardize public health.

ENPUD's policy brief focuses on human rights issues in the context of drug policy and substitution treatment, emphasizing the critical need to protect patients' rights and rethink approaches to drug policy.

BALKAN REGION

357 APPLICATIONS

11 REACTORS
(DOCUMENTATORS)

5 CITIES WHERE REACTORS
ARE IN PLACE

5 NGOS AND CBOS

NUMBER OF CASES,
REGISTERED IN THE REGION

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| ALBANIA | 26 |
| BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA | 73 |
| MONTENEGRO | 92 |
| REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA | 36 |
| SERBIA | 22 |

● CITIES WHERE THERE ARE REACTORS



ALBANIA

Albania, like many nations, faced significant challenges in upholding human rights in 2023, as depicted in the narratives below. Documented cases shed light on the unintended consequences of policy decisions and systemic issues adversely affecting vulnerable populations. The tireless efforts of NGOs in advocating for victims and providing crucial support were instrumental in addressing these human rights violations.

In 2023, there was an interruption in access to HIV diagnostic tests. In 2020, the Ministry of Health's decision to outsource the disease monitoring system, including HIV diagnosis and viral load testing, to a private concession company aimed to improve efficiency. However, this move had unintended consequences for people living with HIV (PLHIV). The disruption in access to critical HIV-related diagnostic tests, such as HIV RNA viral load testing, forced PLHIV to seek services in private laboratories, imposing increased financial burdens. In response, the PLWHA Association drafted an action plan to advocate for a solution, showcasing the power of NGOs in addressing systemic issues and amplifying the voices of affected individuals.

Also, in 2023 the new biopsychosocial examination launched by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection posed challenges for HIV-positive individuals seeking disability benefits. Flaws in the implementation of the disability assessment reform led to rejections, prompting the PLWHA Association to take legal action. The NGO provided crucial support to individuals navigating the appeals process,

engaging in dialogues with government officials to highlight the shortcomings of the new assessment system. The association's efforts led to the recognition of disability claims, setting legal precedents and ensuring consistent rulings in favor of individuals with HIV seeking disability benefits.

Situations related to HIV stigmatization deserve special attention: for example, a man testing positive for HIV faced severe stigma and discrimination, leading to a mental health crisis and concerns about suicide. The PLWHA Association intervened by providing extensive psychological support through counseling, contributing to the client's stabilization. The ongoing psychological therapy underscores the importance of holistic support in addressing mental health challenges triggered by societal discrimination.

One more critical issue in Albania became a medication shortage for HIV-Positive children in the Pediatric Clinic. Collaborating with other organizations, the PLWHA Association worked to cover immediate needs and forwarded concerns to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. The NGO's advocacy ensured a temporary solution and demonstrated their commitment to ensuring uninterrupted therapy for vulnerable children.

Transphobic violence was also reported by REActors in 2023: a transgender girl faced physical assault and transphobic treatment from both individuals and the police. The victim sought help from independent institutions, including the lawyer of the state and the commissioner against discrimination, with support from NGOs.

As can be seen, in 2023 the situation with violations of the rights of key groups in Albania remains challenging. However, the ongoing work of civil society and REActors in particular has demonstrated effective support in addressing such systemic problems. And with continued work, there is hope for a more inclusive and human rights-respecting society in Albania.



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the trends in human rights violations, as reflected in the cases registered through REAct for 2023, underscore the persistent challenges of discrimination and a notable lack of trust in the legal system. Notably, a majority of cases are derived from media or reports by other organizations, each accompanied by a specific information source or detailed actions taken by organizations to address the issues. This approach stems from the necessity for years of effort to cultivate trust within local communities and establish REAct as a reliable platform. Most organizations have constant and permanent funds. PH organized several meetings with other organizations to present the platform to them, but most stated that they had built trust over the years to become a focal point. Even with trust, people refrain from reporting due to a lack of confidence in the legal system. The lengthy process required for the local community to place trust in the platform is evident. Key observations highlight that individuals, particularly those with HIV, often choose to remain anonymous due to societal stigma. This echoes a broader societal challenge where testing for HIV faces hurdles in Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasizing the need for comprehensive efforts to address legal and societal barriers to reporting human rights violations. Specific cases, such as the one involving a male individual who faced workplace discrimination after disclosing his HIV-positive status, exemplify the complex intersection of health-related discrimination and employment issues. Moreover, the alarming surge in LGBTQI+ attacks in Republika Srpska during 2023 indicates an intensifying trend of hostility and restrictions, posing significant challenges for human rights defenders. Despite efforts to support victims, a striking observation is the low incidence of seeking legal redress, pointing to a prevailing lack of trust in the legal system. This emphasizes the importance of spreading awareness, providing education, and advocating for a culture that respects human rights and addresses the multifaceted challenges faced by key populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



The Cantonal Court of Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina) responded to trafficking in children effectively

In 2023, Bosnia and Herzegovina grappled with persistent challenges in human rights violations, as evidenced by cases documented through REAct. **Discrimination and a significant lack of trust in the legal system** stood out as overarching issues. Notably, the majority of reported cases originated from media sources or reports by various organizations, each accompanied by specific information sources or detailed actions taken by these organizations to address the identified problems. This approach was a result of years of concerted efforts aimed at fostering trust within local communities and establishing REAct as a dependable platform.

While most organizations had consistent and permanent funding in 2023, additionally the REAct platform was introduced to others through meetings organized by Partnerships in Health NGO. However, many organizations asserted that they had already built trust over the years and had become focal points themselves. Despite this, individuals often refrained from reporting due to a lack of confidence in the legal system, highlighting the considerable time and effort required for the local community to fully trust the REAct platform.

Key observations emphasized that individuals, **especially those with HIV**, frequently **opted to remain anonymous due to societal stigma**. This reflected a broader societal challenge where HIV testing encountered obstacles in Bosnia and Herzegovina, underscoring the necessity for comprehensive efforts to address legal and societal barriers hindering the reporting of human rights violations. Specific cases, such as one involving a male individual facing **workplace discrimination** after disclosing his HIV-positive status, exemplified the intricate intersection of health-related discrimination and employment issues.

Additionally, the alarming increase in **LGBTQI+ attacks in Republika Srpska** during 2023 signaled a growing trend of hostility and restrictions, presenting significant challenges for human rights defenders.

Despite support efforts for victims, a notable observation was the low incidence of seeking legal redress, indicating a prevailing lack of trust in the legal system. This emphasized the critical importance of raising awareness, providing education, and advocating for a culture that respects human rights, addressing the multifaceted challenges encountered by key populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



NORTH MACEDONIA

In North Macedonia, numerous cases in 2023 continue to highlight the **violation of health rights for individuals living with HIV within the health sector**. Predominantly, these incidents revolve around the **denial of care, disclosure of HIV status, and the use of stigmatizing language, sometimes bordering on hate speech**. Additionally, there is a concerning rise in **hate speech targeting the LGBT community**, driven by anti-gender movements. While these movements primarily focus on transgender rights, they also frequently oppose the rights of LGB individuals and advocate against maintaining the anonymity of HIV status for patients.



The Scarlet Letter: The Marking of a Person Living with HIV in North Macedonia

A notable development in 2023 involves a strategic case in North Macedonia. A public university faced scrutiny for **requiring foreign students to undergo HIV testing** as a condition of admission. The Association "Stronger Together" responded by filing a complaint with the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination, asserting a violation of the Anti-Discrimination Law. The Commission, after careful review, found that the testing breached both national anti-discrimination laws and international human rights legislation. Consequently, the university was mandated to revise its instructions for international students, eliminating the requirement for an HIV test for enrollment.

Conducting an assessment of the needs of people living with HIV in North Macedonia revealed a significant portion of the target group was unaware of discrimination or whether they had experienced it in the past. In response, the Association "Stronger Together" organized a workshop to educate individuals living with HIV on discrimination through case-study analysis. This initiative aims not only to empower participants to recognize discrimination but also to encourage reporting such incidents to the Association.

In collaboration with representatives from various institutions dealing with discrimination, health rights, and privacy (including the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination, State Sanitary and Health Inspectorate, Ministry of Health, Agency for the Protection of Personal Data, and State Labor Inspectorate), North Macedonia conducted a workshop. The objective was to educate these representatives on discrimination based on health status and the proportional limitation of human rights for people living with HIV.

Lastly, an **ongoing strategic case involving a healthcare professional in North Macedonia**, registered in October 2022, continues with civil hearings currently taking place.



Not here: refusing to hospitalize a person living with HIV in North Macedonia



Progress in Addressing Discrimination and Promoting HIV Awareness in North Macedonia



SERBIA

The most frequently reported issues in Serbia for the year 2023 are linked to instances of hate **speech, threats, and verbal attacks directed at clients**. **Notably**, representatives of the **police and medical staff** emerge as the primary culprits in institutional cases. A significant number of reports highlight violations of LGBTQ human rights, with medical staff notably implicated in numerous cases involving People Living with HIV (PLHIV).

Throughout the year, a legal professional was recommended for multiple cases, leading to appeals and requests for the initiation of disciplinary proceedings. One noteworthy incident involves a **school teacher expressing discriminatory views towards the LGBT community in the classroom**. Consequently, a request was filed to launch disciplinary action across all three schools where the teacher is employed. Measures were enacted in one school, though details about the specific measures remain undisclosed. The investigative process is ongoing in the other two schools.



Spread of panic and false information about the increase in the number of people infected with HIV in Zaječar

Another case pertains to the placement of an **HIV-positive individual in a residential facility**, a matter resolved in collaboration with the Center for Social Work.

To enhance coordination and case monitoring, REActors have established collaboration with organizations dedicated to the rights of key populations and the surveillance of human rights violations.

A judicial resolution was achieved in one instance, involving **the punishment of individual perpetrators through the legal system**. This case revolves around threats directed at a client through social networks. After filing a report, the perpetrator received a restraining order as a consequence of their actions.



Serbia: cooperation between the Center for Social Work and TOC as an example of good practice for providing ART



MONTENEGRO

Montenegro witnessed human rights violations in 2023, especially concerning patient rights and healthcare accessibility. Two specific cases highlighted the difficulties faced by individuals seeking proper medical care, exposing systemic issues within the healthcare system.

In October, reports emerged concerning patient rights violations linked to delays in accessing prescribed therapy, specifically TIVICAY. Patient frustration due to the unavailability of the medication triggered an investigation, revealing a breakdown in the supply chain. Despite following proper procedures, the pharmacy failed to receive the medicine within the agreed timeframe, jeopardizing the daily therapy of numerous patients.

To address the issue, the organization engaged with both the pharmacy and the supplier. Complaints were submitted to the patient rights defender, offering assistance to affected patients in navigating the process. The organization emphasized the importance of timely medication availability to the supplier, establishing daily communication with the pharmacy staff to keep patients informed. Ongoing collaboration aimed to expedite the distribution of the medication and ensure a swift resolution.

Another case involved a client in the OST program, who complained about inadequate psychological counseling services due to overwhelming demand. The NGO CAZAS verified the claims, confirming the challenges faced by patients in receiving timely and quality psychological support within the program. In coordination with the psychiatric clinic, the organization offered an alternative solution. The client could access the services of the NGO's counseling center, ensuring their needs were met in collaboration with the psychiatrist from the psychiatry clinic. This collaborative effort between institutions and NGOs showcased an alternative support system to address the deficiencies in the official healthcare infrastructure.

In 2023, several complaints were received about the denial of detoxification treatment in hospitals, a critical aspect of recovery from psychoactive substances. Patients faced reluctance from doctors, delays in treatment entry, and offers of beds in distant clinics, exacerbating the challenges for individuals battling addiction.

CAZAS directed complainants to the appropriate channels for reporting patient rights violations and assisted them in formulating their complaints. Additionally, the NGO initiated project activities to address and raise awareness about the issue, aiming to influence positive changes in the system.

These cases underscore the pressing need for reforms in Montenegro's healthcare system to uphold patient rights and ensure timely access to essential treatments. Collaboration between organizations, patients, and healthcare providers is crucial to navigating through challenges and advocating for systemic improvements. As human rights violations persist, concerted efforts are required to bring about positive change and ensure that every individual receives the healthcare they deserve.