



Assessing drug use in a Greek prison in the context of a program targeting infectious diseases

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2017 Expert meeting on the indicator

'Prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population (GPS)'

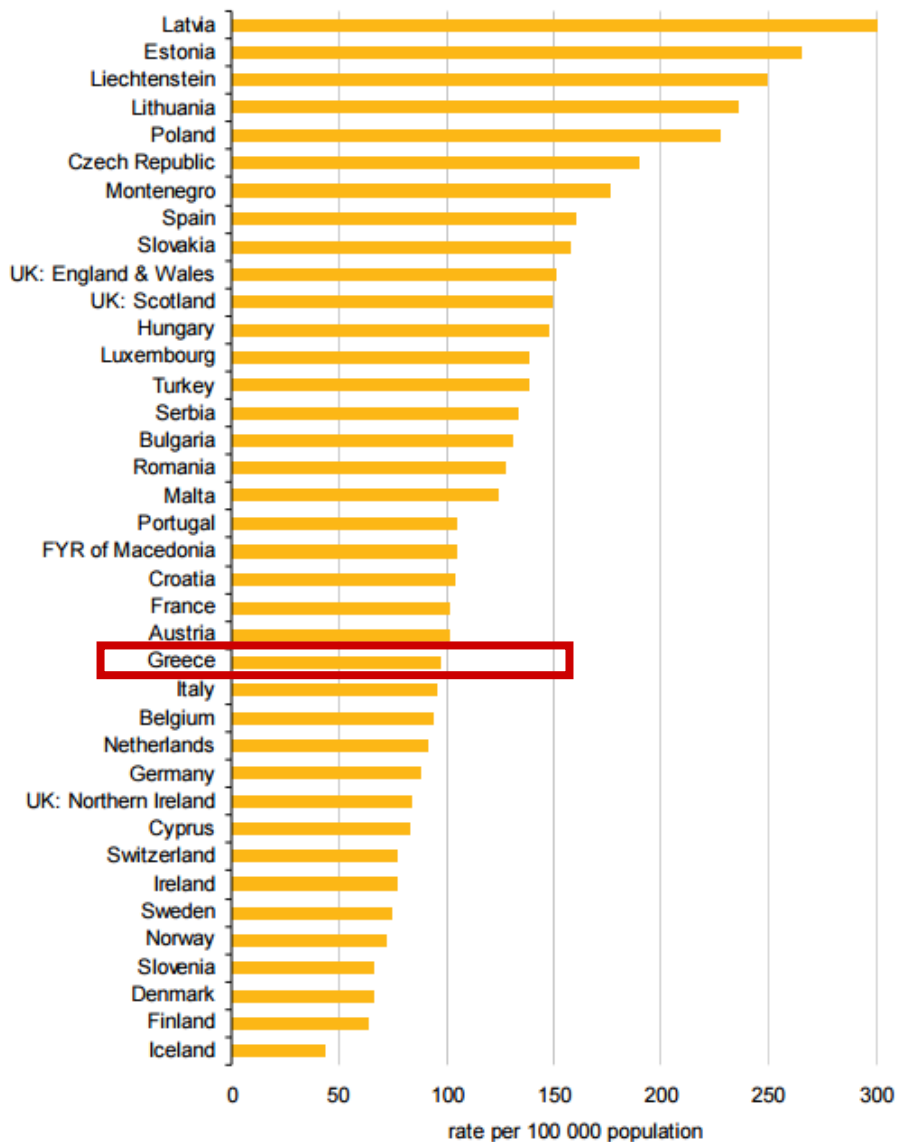


Prisons in Greece

- In total **33 prisons** in Greece
 - 9,573 prisoners
 - Occupancy level: 97.5%
- The largest prison: **Korydallos** (in Athens)
 - 1,721 prisoners
 - ~ 70% remand prisoners
 - Occupancy level: 123.3%



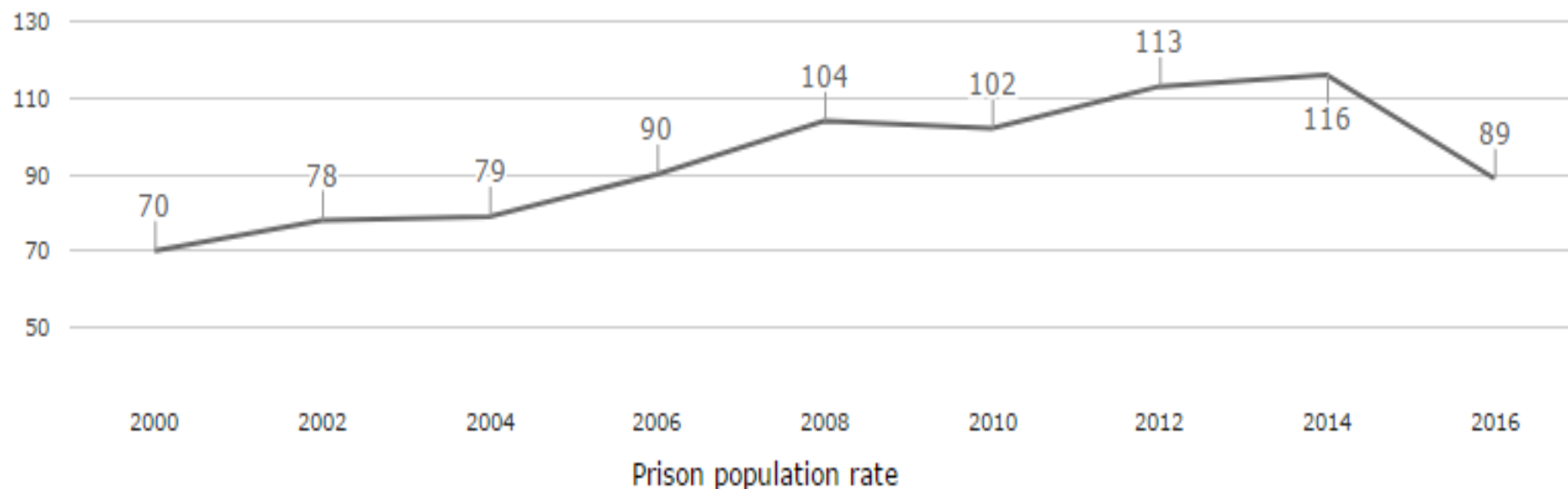
Prison population rate /100,000 population (average per year, 2007-2009)



Source: Eurostat



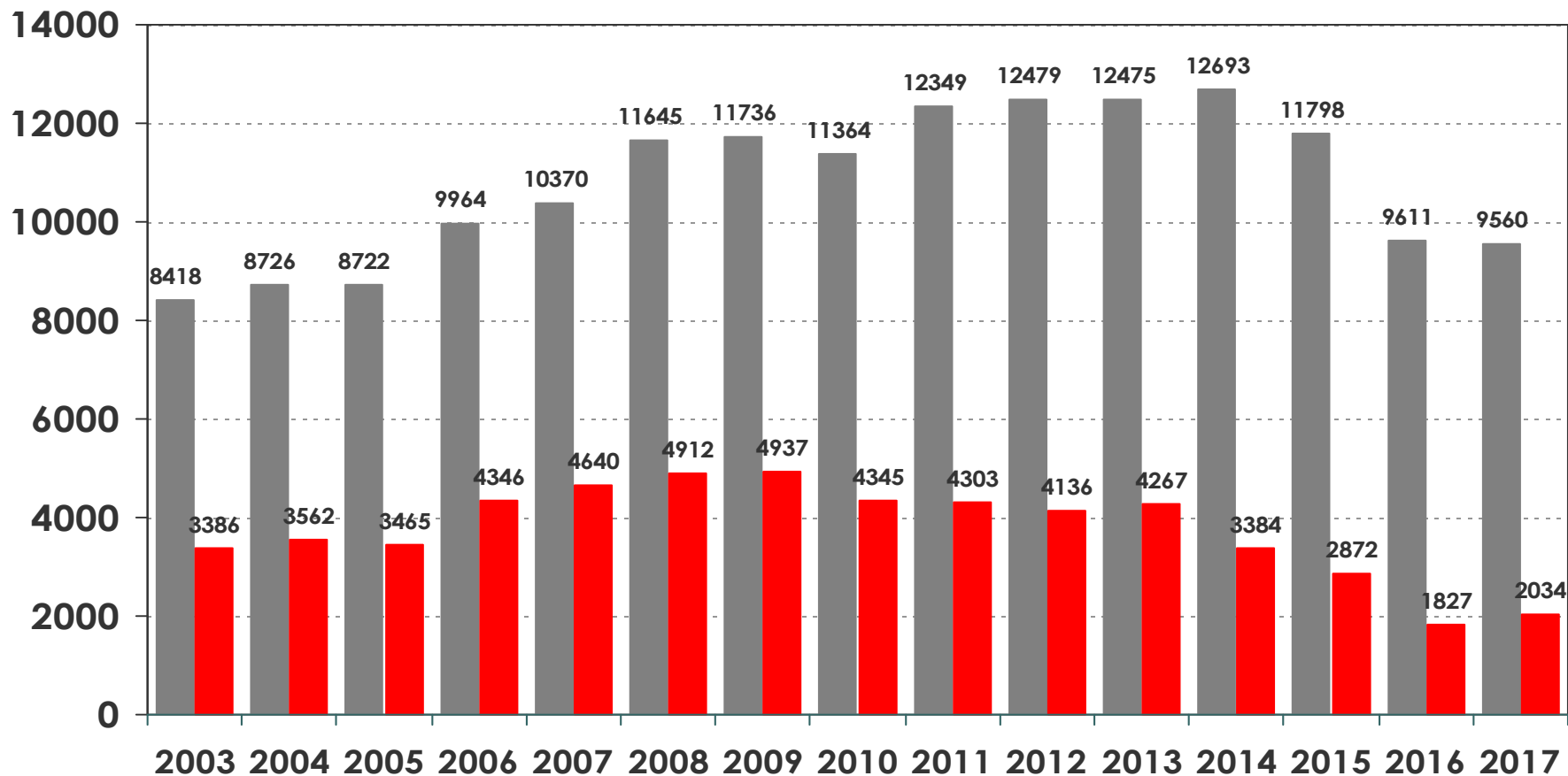
Greece: Prison population rate over time





Number of prisoners in Greek prisons over time

■ Total ■ Drug related offences

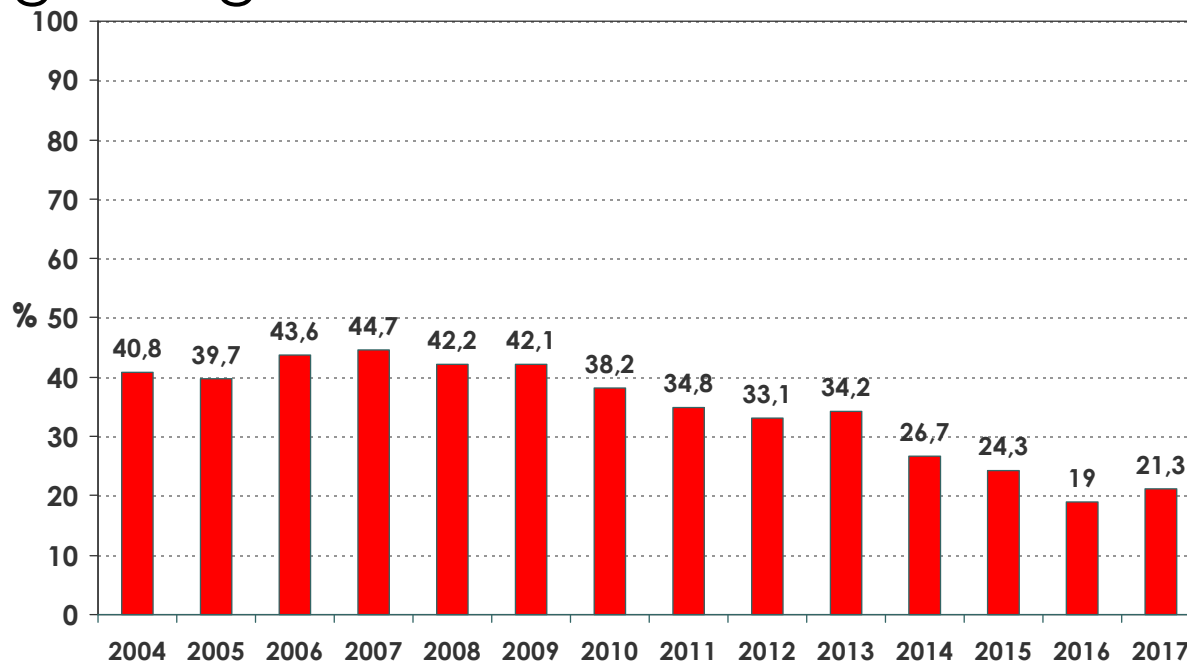


Source: Ministry of Justice



% imprisoned for a drug law offence

- According to the most recent drug law (4139/2013): people who use drugs should not be treated as criminals, but rather as 'patients'
- This resulted in a decline in the % of prisoners held on drug charges



Source: Ministry of Justice



Drug use and infectious diseases in Greek prisons

- No standardised system in place to collect data on prisoner health
 - sparse data on prisoners who use/inject drugs, or who are living with HIV, viral hepatitis or TB



Prison data from previous studies: Drug use

Year/prison	Sample	Drug use ever	Drug use in prison	Injecting drug use in prison
2014 Korydallos prison ¹	101 female prisoners	31.7 %	7.9 %	
2004 Komotini prison ²	80 male prisoners	27.5% opiates		
1995-1996 Multiple prisons ³	861 prisoners	33.7% (injected)		20.2%
1994-1995 2 major prisons ⁴	544 prisoners (drug users)	100%	53.7%	24.3%

¹Geitona et al, 2016, ²Fotiadou et al, 2004, ³Koulierakis et al, 2000, ⁴Malliori et al, 1998



Prison data from previous studies: Sharing syringes

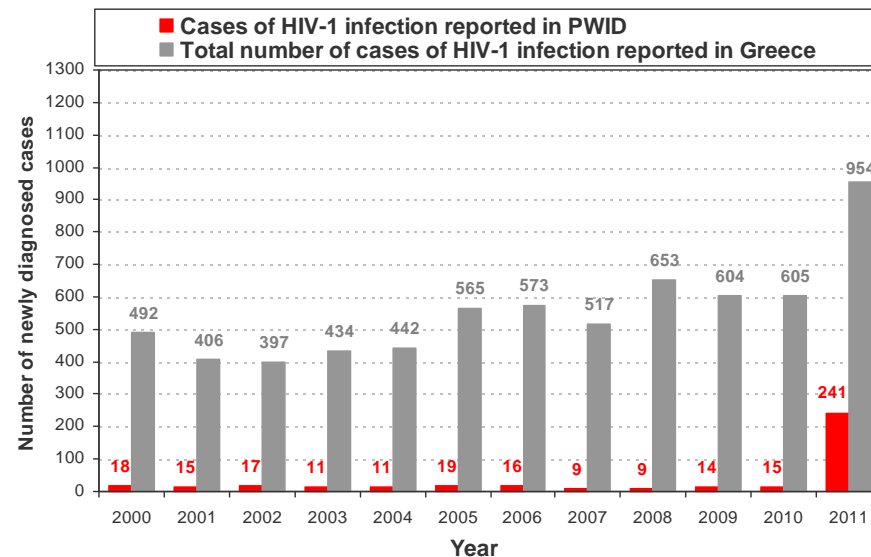
Year/prison	Sample	Shared syringes in prison (out of total)	Shared syringes in prison (among those injecting in prison)
1995-1996 Multiple prisons ¹	861 prisoners	16.8%	83.0%
1994-1995 2 major prisons ²	544 prisoners (drug users)	21.9%	90.2%

¹Koulierakis et al, 2000, ²Malliori et al , 1998



HIV in Greek prisons

- All HIV-positive male prisoners are transferred to Korydallos prison hospital
 - In 2017: 107 HIV(+) prisoners
- In 2011: HIV outbreak among PWID in Athens
 - HIV prevalence among PWID increased from 0.8% in 2010 to 16.5% in 2013
 - History of imprisonment
 - risk factor for HIV seroconversion



Source: Hellenic CDC

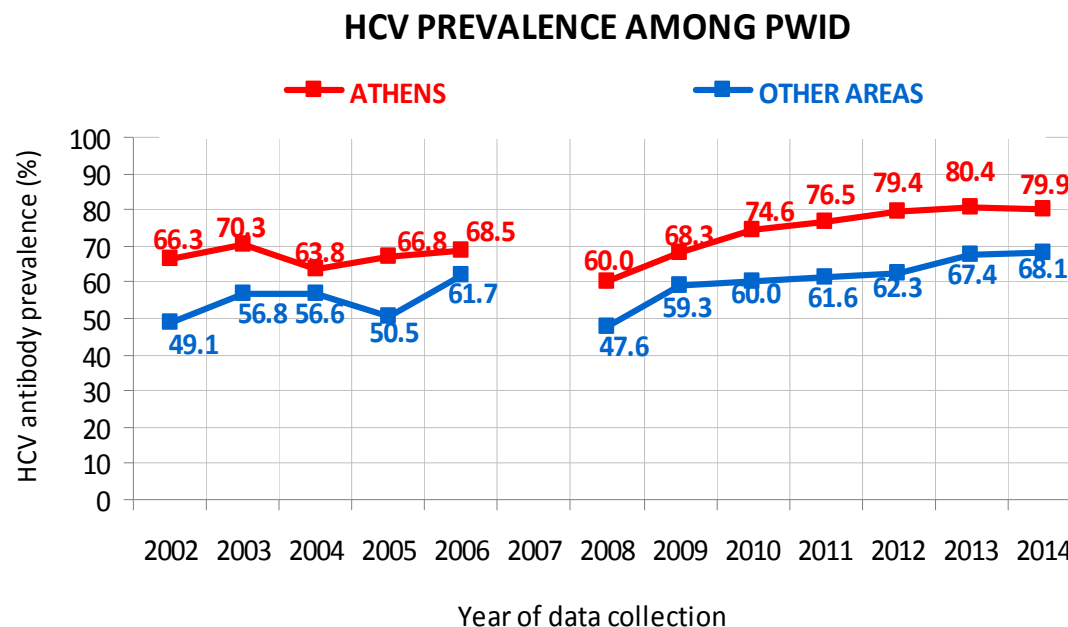


Tuberculosis and viral hepatitis in Greek prisons

- An increase in TB cases in Korydallos prison hospital (16 cases in 2015)
 - Intensive preventive measures led to almost no new TB cases

○ No recent data on viral hepatitis in prison but HCV highly prevalent among PWID accessing OST, drug-free and low-threshold settings

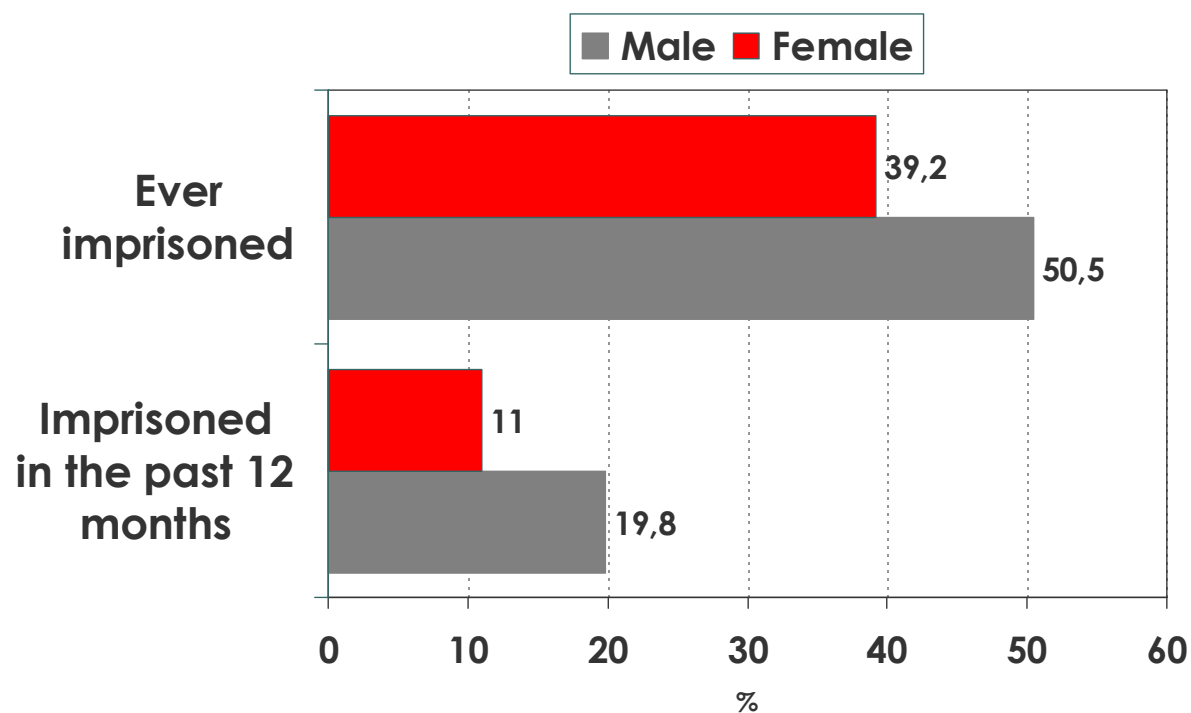
Source: Greek Reitox Focal Point





PWID and imprisonment

Out of 3320 PWID recruited through a high coverage community-based (ARISTOTLE program):



History of imprisonment was found associated with increased risk of HIV and HCV



Drug treatment in Greek prisons

- 7 treatment programs in Greek prisons
 - 5 drug-free programs
 - In 2014, 2 opioid substitution treatment programs were initiated (Korydallos and Patra prisons)



Our program

“HCV-HIV-HBV-Tuberculosis in a Greek prison”

Main aims:

1. To offer screening for hepatitis C/B, HIV and tuberculosis (TB) in a major Greek prison
2. To assess liver fibrosis in prisoners identified to be anti-HCV/HBsAg (+) (with transient elastography) & to offer complete HCV/HBV laboratory testing to those diagnosed with significant fibrosis
3. To link patients to care

Secondary aims:

1. To assess drug use outside and inside prison using the European Questionnaire on Drug Use in Prison (EQDP)
2. To set up ties between various stakeholders (University, Patient Associations, Ministry of Justice, Prison authorities)



Investigators - collaborators

- University of Athens
 - Including clinicians – experts in viral hepatitis, HIV and TB who will assist in linking patients to care
- Hellenic Scientific Society for the study of AIDS and STDs
- Liver Patient Association “Prometheus”
- NGO Positive Voice

**Close collaboration with the doctor
and the director of Korydallos prison hospital**



Target population

- Korydallos prison
 - In total 1592 in men's judicial prison+169 in hospital prison
- Approximately 500 prisoners will participate to the program
 - To maximise the yield of the screening, priority will be given to prisoners awaiting trial/convicted for drug-related offences
 - As we are looking for additional funding, we will aim to include more prisoners
- A team consisting of a doctor, an interviewer/psychologist and a person trained to perform transient elastography will visit Korydallos prison hospital on a daily basis
- Anticipated duration: 7 months



Description of the process

A number of prisoners will be moved to the prison hospital every day and will be informed about the program

Consent process

If consent obtained:

- Interview
- Blood sample collection for HCV/HBV testing (anti-HCV, HBsAg, HCV RNA, HCV genotype, HBV DNA, ALT/AST)
- TB screening (chest X-ray, Mantoux)
- Transient elastography
- Rapid HIV test
- Counselling – prevention information

When testing results are available

→ 2nd appointment with the prisoners

- Counselling
- Linkage to care in association with the prison doctor and collaborating clinicians



Ethical issues & protection of personal data

- IRB approval from the University of Athens and the Hellenic Scientific Society for the study of AIDS and STDs
- Currently awaiting for approval from the Hellenic Data Protection Authority
- Interviews will take place in a separate room – no other people will be present apart from the program interviewer



Informed consent

- The participants are informed that:
 - They may decline to take part, withdraw their consent at any time or choose not to answer any question in the survey
 - Their participation will not affect or influence the length of their sentence, their parole, or any other aspect of their incarceration
 - The prison doctor will be informed about the test results – all other information will be confidential



Questionnaire

- The questionnaire is based on the European Questionnaire on Drug Use in Prison (EQDP)
 - Adapted to the specific needs of the program
 - Face to face interview with the program interviewer



Questionnaire sections

1. **General information**
2. **Substance use**
 - Outside prison
 - Ever (in any prison)
 - During current imprisonment
3. **Substance injecting and other health risk behaviours** (+ a few additional questions)
 - Outside prison
 - Ever (in any prison)
 - During current imprisonment
4. **Health status** (more detailed than EQDP)
5. **Use of health and addiction services** (shorter than EQDP)

Sensitive questions on drug use during current imprisonment were approved by the Ministry of Justice



Barriers and enablers

- + Prison authorities and the Ministry of Justice were very positive towards the program
 - + The program offers not only screening for infectious diseases but also complete laboratory testing and linkage to care → this was important for the Ministry of Justice and prison authorities
 - + Existing tool for the questionnaire → easier for a tool proposed by a European organisation to be accepted by the authorities
 - The lack of framework to implement this type of programs in prisons caused delays – hopefully we have opened the way for future programs
 - Lack of staff and space in the prison
- Challenges we might have to face during the program**
- Language problems during the interview with migrants
 - People may leave the prison unexpectedly – barriers to linkage to care
 - Acceptability of the program from the prisoners?



... and opportunities

- To monitor drug use and infectious diseases in the prison population and identify needs for intervention
- To establish collaboration between different stakeholders
- To expand this to more prisons and other prison populations
- To repeat this periodically
- To contribute to the achievement of WHO elimination goal for hepatitis B and C in Greece



Collaborators and funding

- Funding: Gilead Sciences Europe

- Collaborators
 - G. Kalamitsis – Hellenic Liver Patient Association “Prometheus”
 - A. Hatzakis, G. Papatheodoridis, G. Daikos, M. Psychogiou – University of Athens
 - S. Georgoulas, M. Stefi – Koridallos Prison Hospital