

## **Russia continue ban on OAT as it says there is no evidence!**

For over 10 years Russian officials have continued with their dogmatic approach to harm reduction and in particular OAT, ignoring the overwhelming scientific evidence, the UN recommendations, and numerous examples of countries which successfully use OAT for HIV prevention and drug treatment, Russia maintains a criminal ban on OAT.

Russia says that OAT isn't therapy and can't be introduced in Russia. It is specified that there is no scientific evidence of its efficiency and safety. The main barrier to get OAT in Russia is unscientific position of Russian officials including Ministry of Health.

The Russian ban is based on a number of myths and misinterpreted facts, such as methadone once being called Adolphine after Adolf Hitler, or that OAT medications lead to mental dementia, liver failure, or increased risk of overdose in comparison to heroin use. The authorities also try to mobilise drug treatment doctors, patients and their parents against OAT.

The Russian Government argues that the legal ban on OAT is to promote the right to health; the legal ban is mandatory for all, so there is no discrimination of any kind. The arguments that the Russian Government present are based on the notion that the low level of retention in abstinence-based treatment, which is the only method of treatment available in Russia, has nothing to do with low effectiveness of this method of treatment. The Russian Government insists that the main reason why people who use drugs return to drug use after drug treatment is their low motivation to stay abstinent.

According to the government, the introduction of OAT will further demotivate people who use drugs from abstinence. Taking this one step further, the authorities insist that the awful health and legal risks people who use drugs face should scare and 'motivate' them into abstinence – this in spite of there being no scientific evidence to support such an argument.

Also argued is that OAT medications could be diverted to the illicit market and that OAT medications can be misused and can cause death from overdose, ignoring all the tried and tested methods to prevent this.

Anonymous (for obvious reasons)