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## Book review

# **THANASIS APOSTOLOU (EDS.) – DRUG POLICY AND DRUG LEGISLATION IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE 2013, ATHENS: NOMIKI BIBLIOTHIKI GROUP**

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Within the context in which drugs are a pest which deeply affects the contemporary societies, various public policies are developed, adopted and implemented at different levels, with the purpose to restrain the demand and offer of drugs. Worldwide, and in Europe too, the general frameworks intended to deter the illicit trafficking and drug consumption are worked out, but the regional disparities in implementing efficient interventions are high, which is why the specific legislation is undergoing adaptation, while the drug policies are reconfigured according to the new circumstances.

The book “Drug Policy and Drug Legislation in South East Europe”, published at Athenes (Nomiki Bibliothiki Group, 2013, 341 p.) is authored by Thanasis Apostolou, acting manager of Giogenis Association. Thanasis Apostolou has relevant expertise, at the European and regional level, in drug policies, with outstanding achievements in South-Eastern Europe countries, Romania included. The book makes an analysis of the current situation of anti-drug legislation in 10 South-Eastern Europe countries: relevant national strategies, national penal legislation, anti-drug institutions and legislative framework, law enforcement, penalties for breaching drug legislation, situation in the detention facilities. The countries surveyed by the book, Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Montenegro, are at the confluence of the European Union and by their vicinity policies can radiate and expand the positive practices in preventing and controlling the illicit drug trafficking and consumption.

The analysis of the institutional and legal framework regarding the drugs is an integrating approach at the national and international level (Hurdubaie, I., Nicolaescu, V., 2008) which presumes the identification of the basic coordinates of the regulatory

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and law enforcement process regarding drugs. Within this context, the relevant national works (Drăgan J., 1994; Abraham, P., 2005; Nicolăescu V., Gordan S., 2007; Iancu, A.M., 2010), are attempts to cover a field which is undergoing permanent changes, with legislative improvements and institutional progress in all the regions worldwide.

The book “Drug Policy and Drug Legislation in South East Europe” is particular due to its systematic way of synthesizing the complex aspects of anti-drug activities within a large European area. The book makes a thorough analysis of the following topics of interest for the countries covered by the survey: 1. National anti-drug strategies; 2. Acting penal legislations; 3. National anti-drug legislations and institutions. 4. Law enforcement regarding the drugs; 5. Sanctions and situation in the penitentiaries – social reintegration, decriminalization of drug possession for own use, drug addicts and penitentiaries.

This analytical structure depicts, for the specialists and for the public at large, current aspects of drug policies and control in South-Eastern Europe, achieving a specific profile for Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Montenegro.

The main conclusions of this study are: there is discrepancy between the adopted strategies and the actual practice in this field; there are juridical traditions in the form of common practices in favour of tough sanctions, no clear distinction between the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ drugs and sanctioning of drug possession for own consumption; the production and use of cannabis is dominant in all regional countries; the number of people sent to jail increased, as well as drug consumption in penitentiaries, while the medical care is inadequate in the penitentiaries; the programs of social reintegration are almost absent; there is a limited support for alternative measures to jail, and there is reticence for decriminalization; the financial resources are not balanced in terms of demand and offer of drugs, the allocations from the budget being rather low for the structures of the civil society.

The book is the result of the cooperation between Diogenis Association, non-governmental association participating in the Drug Policy Network in South East Europe and researchers from various research institutes and universities from South-Eastern Europe. By its abundant wealth of information regarding the investigated area of reference, the book is the outcome of an effort of collection, aggregation and synthesizing of the main dimensions of drug policy and drug legislation in South East Europe.

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