

# Centre For Life Advocacy Practices in Greece

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## Abstract

**Centre For Life (CFL), after 25 years of continuous presence in the support of people living with HIV, has managed to maintain its role to advocate in the field of HIV and increase its influence, through multifaceted active plans.** By forming and supporting collaborations, CFL has become part of various networks of formal and informal national sectors and has accomplished to:

🕒 **lobby** towards strengthening the voice of HIV positive people, by forming networks and platforms

🕒 conduct informative and educative programs for disseminating information and **raising awareness**,

🕒 **monitor and intervene in cases of public expressions** of hate or discriminative speeches against people that are diagnosed with HIV

🕒 **be consistent through time in organizing multiple actions** that address to the general population and aim at shifting social norms, which continue preserving stigma, discriminations and harmful attitudes / behaviors.

## Centre For Life advocacy in the field of HIV can be divided in three types of activities

**1. CFL is proactive. Its members participate in building efficient networks among civil society organizations and the Greek government, aiming at supporting and defending of rights of HIV positive people.**

a. Civil society networks, which are composed of **NGOs specialized in the support of HIV positive people.** The following are the most recent and active networks:

→ **Organization of a committee by civil society NGOs for the abolishment of the Sanitary Decree 39A.** This ordinance was created by the Ministry of Health and it permitted HIV testing without consent in various cases, mainly targeting at migrants, sex workers and people who use drugs. The Sanitary Decree 39A was repealed in 2015, after three years of continuous protests.

→ **Greek platform of NGOs for the psychoactive substances.** The main platform goal is the reinforcement of collaboration and the establishment of dialogue between NGOs and the State, in order to support specific drug policies. **Our concern is to establish the direction of policies that give priority to public health and human rights.**

b. Civil society networks, which include collaboration with governmental and State departments. For example CFL has a **formal collaboration** with the following:

→ The Ministry of Health: **National Action Plan for Public Health Promotion 2008-2012**

→ The Ministries of Justice & Citizens Protection: **“Legal and Social Support Program for HIV positive detainees and former detainees”** pertaining to their rights and **“Health Promotion Program for Correctional and Police Officers”** (Health Promotion Program targeted against HIV stigma).

→ The Ministry of Education: **HIV Prevention Program for students and faculty staff.**

**2. CFL uses the Mass media & Social networks to pressure for social justice.**

a. **Monitoring and evaluating** the applied policies and especially those unjust towards people diagnosed with HIV:

→ **Protests and interventions regarding the antiretroviral drugs stock outs** in Special Infection Units at State hospitals.

→ **Protests and interventions regarding the lack of viral**

load, drug resistance and CD4 tests, to HIV positive people who are in treatment, due to inefficiencies in laboratory resources (reagents) for almost a year

→ **Interventions** in regards to the accessibility of HIV positive people in medical care or state benefits.

b. **Public speech for the defense** of HIV positive people:

→ **Interventions to fight hate speech, stigma and discrimination** against HIV positive people (such as in cases of politicians, journalists or anyone who has the ability to influence public opinion).

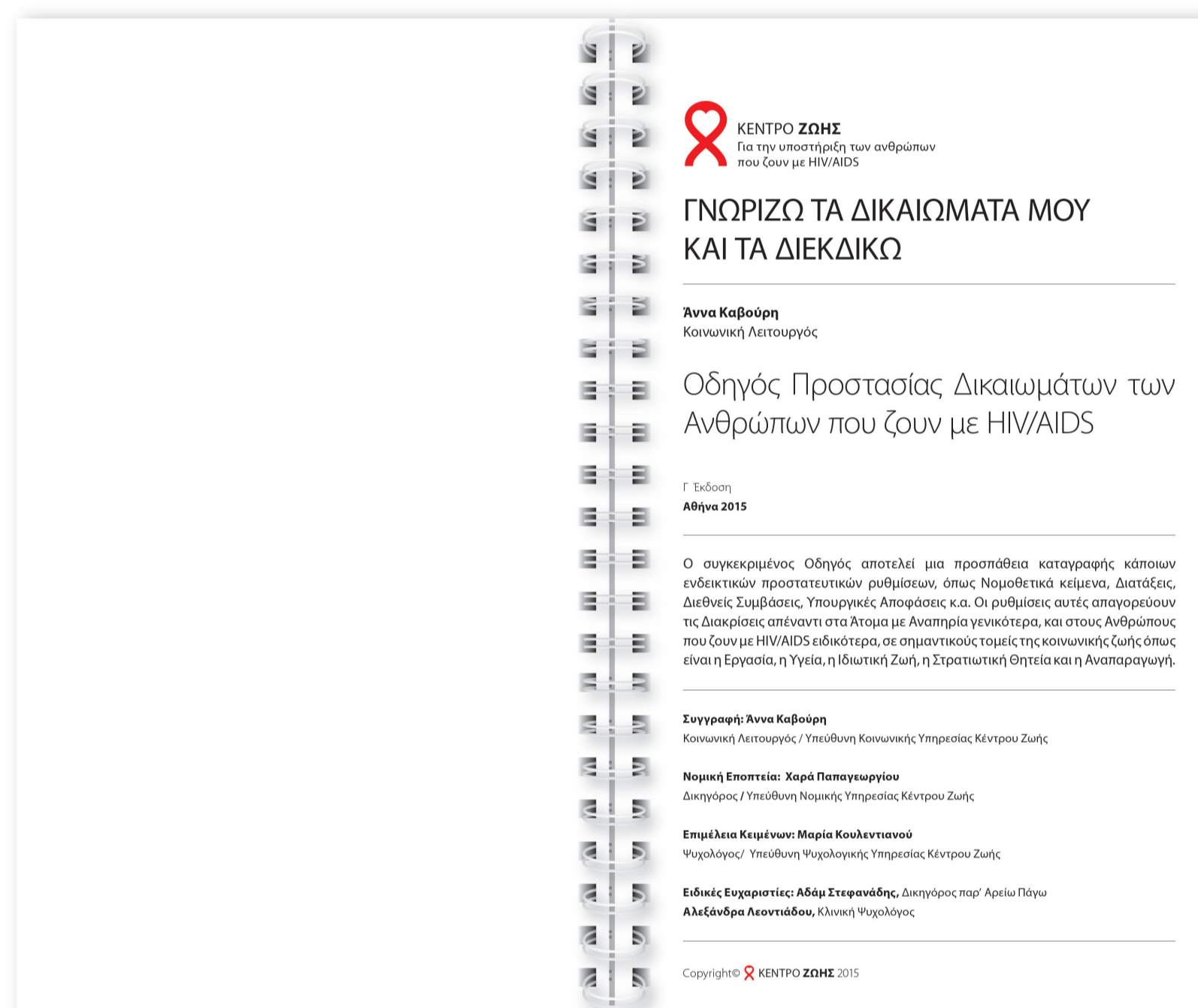
→ **Participation in conferences**, meetings etc. representing and defending the rights of HIV positive people.

**3. Disseminating information and raising awareness of the general population** about HIV and HIV- related stigma.

a. National **Campaigns against HIV- related stigma** (2011 – 2016)

b. Organizing actions & events

→ **Publishing the “Social Rights Guide for HIV positive people”.**



Social Rights Guide Booklet for HIV positive people

→ **Organizing educative and informative seminars** (Last year's theme was “Woman & HIV”).



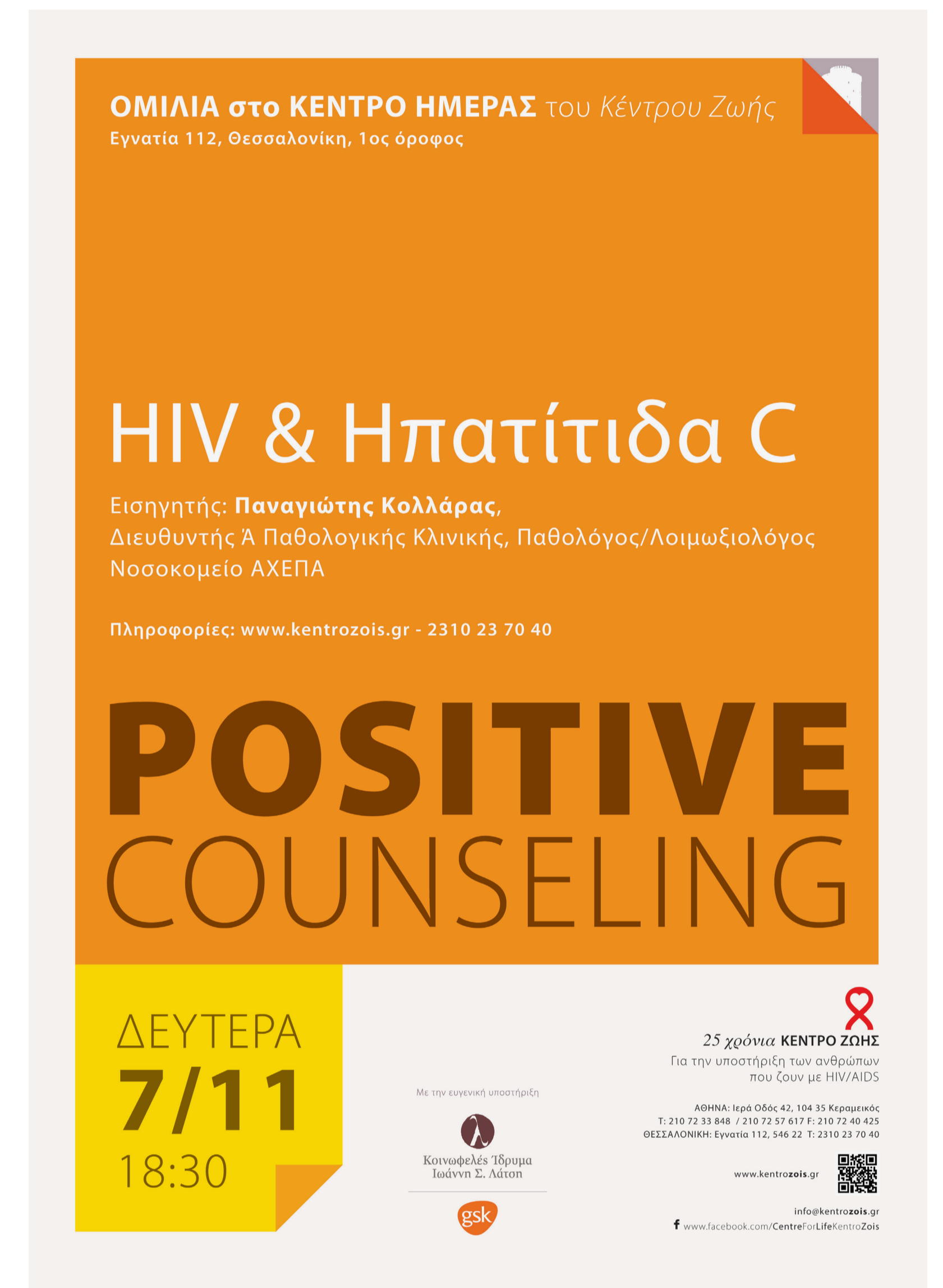
Woman & HIV Poster

→ **Organizing workshops and other events at the CFL**

**Drop-In Centre** (e.g.. two animation workshops created by both HIV positive and HIV negative people, and presented at the International Animation Festival “Animasyros”).

→ **Organizing informative and educative projects** (“Breaking the surface – The history of Greg Louganis”. Mr. Louganis, Olympic Diver, conducted a speech against HIV stigma organized by CFL in the Athens Concert Hall).

→ **“Positive Counseling Program” for people living with HIV.** Informative workshops addressing everyday life issues, such as: “How HIV treatment works”, “Drug resistance”, “HIV & HCV co-infection” etc. (resources adapted from the original NAM aidsmap edition, with NAM’s approval)



Positive Counseling Program Poster for people living with HIV

## Implications/ Achievements

**Current implications:**

- 🕒 Financial crisis
- 🕒 Needless bureaucracy
- 🕒 Lack of HIV awareness among public servants (teachers, hospital staff, administrative employees etc.)

**Centre for Life Achievements:**

- 🕒 Every person living with HIV is entitled to **free access to treatment, and medical care** without any kind of discrimination (including people without legal papers or insurance)
- 🕒 People living with HIV are gradually becoming **more assertive and empowered** in fighting for the rights.

**AAE should maintain an active and proactive role in supporting its members to their effort to eradicate HIV/AIDS by 2030.**

AAE could act as an **observatory for Europe and Central Asia** gathering and disseminating information regarding efficient practices of advocacy and strains as well, described by its member organizations.

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