

Executive Summary from the 23rd meeting of the HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum

The HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum (CSF) has been established by the European Commission as a working group to facilitate the participation of NGOs, including those representing people living with HIV and AIDS, in policy development and implementation and in information exchange activities. Below is a short overview of the meeting (Luxembourg, April 18 & 19, 2016). The full meeting report and all presentations are available for download at <http://www.aidsactioneurope.org>.

Engage Civil Society at national level and connect with Governmental Organisations

The CSF discussed challenges to engage Civil Society with GO at national level on European issues, ideas on how to overcome barriers and the suggestion to implement an international conference (see Annex 4). The idea of a conference is to bring together stakeholders from European and regional level in order to demonstrate the benefit and to improve access to information at regional level. This would also include getting a better picture of the European infrastructure and how to make better use of it.

Stigma and discrimination

Identifying obstacles and barriers in accessing prevention, testing and treatment services for all key populations. Also barriers in linkage to care were discussed. The aim is to start good practice examples such as the video Be who you want to be!, a video that promotes greater acceptance in the gay community; the video Test Heroes to promote testing among gay people; sensitisation trainings for law enforcement in EECA countries conducted by AFEW and the cooperation within the LEAHN network (Law Enforcement and HIV Network); as well as sensitisation trainings for physicians. Moreover, ILGA Europe presented a survey conducted throughout its membership in the field of HIV/AIDS in April 2016. The vast majority of total respondents (96 %) offer prevention services, 75 % offer testing and counselling services. A number of organisations are part of HIV networks and follow their positioning. Accessibility, affordability and availability of treatment play an important role.

Migrants and migrants with irregular status

The findings of the European HIV Legal Forum on migrants with irregular status were presented including research on access, the mapping tool, recommendations and future perspectives of the network. With regards to the mapping tool, some information seemed to be disputable as there is colliding information. The legal report is commented on as a very effective and useful advocacy tool that now has to be brought to the political level. Extension to EECA countries is suggested as the situation of migrants with irregular situation is of great importance in this region as well and where Human Right groups could provide information.

Needs, challenges and strategies to support CSO in neighbouring countries

Following up on the discussion during the last CSF Meeting, epidemiologic data from the region, reports about the GFATM strategies and recommendations for the transition process, the 5th EECAAC in Moscow in March 2016 and empowering civil society and PLWHIV were at focus. Also the ART situation in Ukraine and in particular the situation in the oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk and the online platform Wambo.org to follow best practice industry standards in procurement were discussed.

Chemsex Forum in London

The phenomenon Chemsex (to enhance sexual performance by drugs like GHB, ketamine, Meth, Mephedrone among others) has been described not only in London but in several bigger cities in Europe with a larger gay community. The higher risk of obtaining HIV, viral Hepatitis and other STIs was the reason to implement this conference.

Strategic discussion Policy Framework: Integrated approach of HIV, TB and viral hepatitis

External representatives of pan-European networks and organisations were invited in order to inform the CSF Members on advocacy and good practice of integrated approaches in the field of TB and viral Hepatitis. The discussion contributed to using synergies and avoiding duplications in the response to the three big epidemics.

Strategic discussion: Addressing the funding gap

Strategies and timeline of Global Fund's investments in HIV responses in the EECA countries and the transition to domestic funding remain challenging for a lot of countries in the region. The main challenge faced in transition is that often treatment is covered by the governments but NGO run prevention services addressed to key populations are not, which leads in some countries to an increase of incidence in key populations as is seen currently in Serbia among MSM. In EECA countries with concentrated epidemics around key populations, NGO work is highly dependent on international funding. Here, the GF grants are not finishing as fast as expected and most will be able to benefit from a 3-year transition grant.

