



FEMP 2011

The Future of European Prevention among MSM

Stockholm, November 10 – 11, 2011



14th HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum - Luxembourg 6-7 December, 2011

THE CONFERENCE

- **350 participants from 37 countries**
- **6 plenaries** (OP: EMIS, Positive sex and prevention, Vulnerability and Social determinants, Response to the epidemic, CP)
- **14 parallel sessions** (Community testing and counselling; Monitoring testing behaviour; MSM in eastern Europe and beyond; Better life for positive men; Risk; Sex work; MSM migrants; Health online – MSM and the Internet; Addressing negative self-perceptions; Designing interventions – evidence as a key ingredient; Understanding epidemiological data; Planning interventions; Nothing for us without us; MSM, prevention and human rights; Life as an ongoing party? Drug use and MSM)
- **1 poster session**
- **4 workshops** (Mission possible; Business and pleasure – role of commercial actors in prevention; IOHIV – promoting quality improvement in HIV prevention in Europe; Imagery and language – is fear the future of HIV prevention?)
- Simultaneous **translation Russian/English**
- 1 photo exhibition and **welcome cocktail** in Stockholm Folkets Hus Nov 9th
- **1 dinner reception at the Stockholm City Hall, Stadshuset's Golden Hall** Nov 10th
- **1 closing party** at the gay night club Paradise in Stockholm Nov 11th
- **FEMP2011 received funding from the European Commission** under the Public Health Programme 2008-2013



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FEMP2011 OBJECTIVES

- To **connect the three main actors in MSM prevention**. Governmental agencies, NGOs and researchers
- To address the **EU Action Plan 2009-2013 priorities for MSM**
- To give participants the opportunity to **share past and present initiatives and projects**, disseminating outcomes and results of recent research studies
- To **reduce differences between "east and west"**, by sharing lessons learnt and best practices, in order to combat health inequalities and promote sexual and reproductive human rights
- To **involve commercial actors of the gay/MSM arena** in the development of future prevention strategies



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THE HIDDEN HIV EPIDEMIC IN MSM IN EASTERN EUROPE

- One recurrent theme was the **difficult social environment** in many countries of eastern and south-eastern Europe
- Despite difficulties, legislative change is possible. **A large number of countries have legalised male-male sex in the past thirty years**; progress on discrimination laws and civil unions have been considerably slower
- In some countries, **hostility towards MSM among the general population is rising**. Number of Ukrainian citizens who declared that homosexuals should not have same rights as other citizens increased from 34% in 2002 to 49% in 2011
- The Staff of health services in eastern Europe regard **homosexuality as a disease, sin or perversion**
- **Official statistics are unlikely to be accurate**. Whereas Belarus has throughout the history of the epidemic recorded only 47 cases of HIV infection among MSM, the MSM population in the country is estimated to be between 51,000 and 71,000
- WHO Europe data suggest that HIV prevalence in this population is 3.1% and that around 1600 MSM probably have HIV, even if only a minority are diagnosed



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HOMONEGATIVITY, THE LAW AND RISKY BEHAVIOURS

- Another recurrent theme was **homonegativity**, preferred to homophobia as it does not suggest that negative attitudes to homosexuality are driven by fear
- **Public expressions of homonegativity** include discriminatory laws, rejection by family and friends, violent attacks in public spaces, hostile newspaper articles...
- **"Internalised homonegativity"** indicates "the gay person's direction of negative social attitudes toward the self, leading to devaluation of the self and poor self-regard"
- Two studies (EMIS in Europe and SILAS in the US) attempted to **assess internalised homonegativity (IH)**
- **Europe**: IH scores increase from west to east across the continent. Strong relationship between legal discrimination and IH. No links found between IH and sexual behaviour; men with a high IH score less likely to have tested for HIV
- **Affirmative policy environments** can have positive health impacts on MSM populations
- **US**: Researchers did not find **direct association between unprotected sex, legal environment and IH**. There appears to be a **measurable effect of laws on behaviours**, but **indirect**; distance between laws and HIV risk behaviour is great



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THE EMIS SURVEY

- Many presentations at the conference referred to the EMIS survey
- The EMIS survey of nearly 180,000 gay men in 38 European countries shows that, while HIV prevalence in richer Western European countries is twice as high as in eastern Europe, similar proportions of gay men were diagnosed with HIV last year in the two areas, **suggesting rising HIV incidence in eastern Europe**
- Overall **HIV prevalence in the western region was 10.6%**
- Overall in the **eastern European region 5.4%** of respondents were HIV positive
- The proportion of men reporting **unprotected anal sex with partners not known to have the same HIV status** tends to be greater the further east the country is
- It is suggested that, due to poor access to HIV testing services, men in some countries are more likely to have unprotected sex within a relationship, without previously establishing that they have same HIV status



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