

## **Summary of the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum (Brussels, 4 May 2010)**

*Below is a short overview of some of the topics that were discussed at the meeting. The full meeting report and all presentations are soon available for download on the AIDS Action Europe website.*

### **EU Communication on HIV/AIDS – follow up steps and action plan:**

Wolfgang Philipp from DG Sanco presented an updated version of the action plan, which is a working paper related to the EU Communication on HIV/AIDS. Since the Action Plan is a working document, there will be flexibility for regular updates in order to keep it relevant. CSF members are invited to provide ideas as to priorities for the 2011 Sanco work plan. Moreover, the Commission calls upon NGOs to lobby with their own MEPs for funding of the EU health program. There is a seven-year 'financial perspective' for funding from 2014 to 2020 (about €25 billion) and especially in times of economic crisis it is important for NGOs to flag up their needs.

### **Criminalisation of HIV transmission**

Dr. Matthew Weait presented an update on the project 'Criminalisation of HIV transmission in Europe', which is part of the HIV in Europe initiative. It consists of a survey on criminal law, HIV and human rights. The aim is to map the scope and degree of HIV criminalization in the WHO European region. Five countries participated in the pilot project: Hungary, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, UK. The finalised report is merely completed and will become available at the HIV in Europe website <http://www.hiveurope.eu/>

### **EU fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)**

The FRA provides assistance and expertise on fundamental rights issues to the European Union institutions and the Member States when they implement EU law and to promote dialogue with civil society, in order to raise public awareness of fundamental rights and actively disseminate information about its work. FRA has been asked to present issues of key importance for the human rights approach to HIV/AIDS in Europe at the International AIDS Conference in Vienna. There was also discussion about a possible resolution in the European Parliament on HIV and human rights in Europe as part of this process. FRA is therefore planning a stakeholder consultation and wants input from the CSF on its questionnaire which it wishes to disseminate to CSF members.

### **HIV/AIDS and the world of work**

ILO (International Labour Office) is making a more high level commitment with a labour code on 'HIV/AIDS world of work' which is strong on the rights of migrant workers, against mandatory testing and requirements on providing information on HIV status. The CSF will encourage ILO to involve civil society and people living with HIV much more strongly.

### **Drug policies**

Last year there was a 10-year evaluation meeting of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) which concluded that drug policy had not done at all what it intended to do. It caused a number of harms, specifically fueling the HIV epidemic. The CND had another meeting one month ago. Some highlights: there was increased representation of civil society in the CND, and many statements of European countries reflected a need for harm reduction. Next year's CND meeting for the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the drug convention will be a good opportunity for advocacy. Decriminalisation is becoming more mainstream. The CSF will develop a position statement on drug policy.

### **Protecting HIV services during times of budgetary cutbacks**

Ton Coenen (Netherlands) explained that the global economic situation will be an important issue in the coming years. The CSF should be a watchdog for the European countries in two respects when it comes to funding:

1. What is happening in our countries? what is with the impact of the economic situation on HIV services?
2. Replenishment Global Fund in September in New York. When you look at needs for scaling up we need 20 billion. There is a great need for advocacy within the countries to push for money within the global fund.

### **And more:**

Other topics that were discussed during this meeting of the CSF include:

- response to travel restrictions in Europe
- Commission activities at the International AIDS Conference in Vienna
- Updates by international institutions (WHO Europe; ECDC and UNAIDS)
- EU Presidencies
- Presentation of the "I know what I'm doing" campaign and the European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS)

Finally, it was announced that this was the last meeting with Nikos Dedes acting as a co-chair of the forum. Nikos introduced his successor: Luis Mendao (EATG) who will from now on co-chair the forum together with AIDS Action Europe colleague Yusef Azad.