

**The Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe
Brussels, March 22& 23, 2004**

Report & Action Plan

**AIDS Action Europe
The Pan European NGO Partnership on HIV and AIDS**

Amsterdam, June 2004

The Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe

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'The path for a world free of AIDS calls for exceptional leadership, courageous policies, audacity in action, additional resources and above all, the conviction that we can defeat AIDS.'

(Kathleen Cravero, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS, citing the call of Dr. Piot at the Dublin Conference 'Breaking the Barriers – Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia')

Introduction

The Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe took place in Brussels on March 22 & 23, 2004. It was organised by AIDS Action Europe, the Pan European NGO Partnership on HIV and AIDS and the regional branch of ICASO (International Council of AIDS Service Organisations). The conference also served as the formal launch of AIDS Action Europe.

The Open Forum focused on three core lines of action, which are also the priority areas for AIDS Action Europe:

- Rise of HIV and STIs in Western Europe;
- HIV and AIDS in Central and Eastern Europe in the context of EU enlargement;
- Resource mobilisation for the global epidemic.

The goal of the Open Forum was to reach broad consensus among European NGOs on the priority actions to halt the further spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, to join forces and to come to specific agreements on follow-up actions for each of these three core lines of action. Prior to the conference, issue papers were written by experts on the three topics. These papers served as the starting point for the discussion among the Open Forum audience. The papers can be downloaded from www.aidsfonds.nl/europe.

The Open Forum brought together about 100 participants from Western, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The main audience consisted of NGOs and AIDS Service Organisations. However, there was considerable diversity among representatives, including community based organisations, AIDS activists, other AIDS-related European networks, funding organisations, and international organisations like WHO, UNAIDS and the European Commission.

'...we know the challenges of bringing together disparate groups eager to achieve something together – in terms of influencing policy and mobilising resources – while they are still building effective responses in their own communities. That challenge is not any easier in a region where country's' definitions and history of NGO action are almost as varied as the problems they are trying to solve.'
(Scott Purdon, GlaxoSmithKline, in his plenary speech)

Programme

Monday March 22, 2004

- 08.45 *Registration / coffee*
- 09.30 *Inauguration by honorary speakers*
Chair: Henriette Laursen, Director AIDS-Fondet
- Martin Donoghoe, Public Health Officer STI/HIV/AIDS Programme, WHO Regional Office for Europe
 - Dadi Einarsson, National Expert Health Determinants Unit DG SANCO, European Commission
 - Scott Purdon, Manager Positive Action Global Community Partnerships, GlaxoSmithKline
- 10.00 *Setting the agenda for AIDS Action in Europe*
Chair: Henriette Laursen, Director AIDS-Fondet
- Kathleen Cravero, Deputy Executive Director UNAIDS
 - Peter van Rooijen, Interim Steering Committee AIDS Action Europe
- 11.00 *Coffee break*
- 11.30 *Introduction to 3 core lines of action and working groups*
Chair: Marija Subataite, Co-ordinator EuroCASO's Eastern European Partnership Office
- Rise in HIV and STIs in Western Europe
Ton Coenen, Director Soa Aids Nederland
 - HIV and AIDS in Central/Eastern Europe in the context of EU enlargement
Arnaud Wasson-Simon, Co-ordinator of European Partnerships AIDES
 - Resource mobilisation for the global epidemic
Kirsty McNeill, Campaign Manager Stop AIDS Campaign
 - General announcements
Martine de Schutter, Interim Co-ordinator AIDS Action Europe
- 12.30 *Lunch*
- 14.00 *Simultaneous working groups*
- Rise in HIV and STIs in Western Europe
Ton Coenen, Soa Aids Nederland
 - HIV and AIDS in Central/Eastern Europe in the context of EU enlargement
Maria Georgescu, ARAS & Arnaud Wasson-Simon, AIDES
 - Resource mobilisation for the global epidemic
Anna Moshkova, Open Society Institute
- 16.15 *Coffee break*
- 16.45 *Plenary reporting back from the working groups*
Chair: Chris Lambrechts, Director Sensoa
- 18.00 *Global Video Link*
Bringing together Forum representatives with World Bank offices in Washington DC, Brussels, Chisinau and Moscow through a video conference
- 20.00 *Dinner party*
Restaurant: The Strofilia, Rue du Marché aux Porcs 11, Brussels

Tuesday March 23, 2004

- 09.00 *Setting the agenda for AIDS Action in Europe*
Chair: Pedro Silvério Marques, Director Abraco
- Richard Burzynski, Executive Director ICASO
 - Julian Hows, Representative ENP+ (European Network of People with HIV/AIDS)
 - Achmat Dangor, Interim Manager World AIDS Campaign
 - Jerry Kelliher, Desk Officer Balkans and CIS Desk, Development Cooperation Ireland
- 10.00 *Coffee break*
- 10.30 *Continuation of simultaneous working groups*
- 12.30 *Lunch*
- 14.00 *Panel discussion based on reporting back from working groups*
Chair: Maria Georgescu, Director ARAS
- 15.30 *Coffee break*
- 16.00 *Wrap-up: statement of commitment to join forces in Europe*
Chair: Peter van Rooijen, Director Aids Fonds

Speakers' highlights

To set the agenda for AIDS action in Europe, representatives from different organisations shared their views on the issues, priorities and actions needed. Below, some highlights from the plenary speeches are presented. See www.aidsfonds.nl/europe for the complete plenary presentations.

Martin Donoghoe

Public Health Officer STI/HIV/AIDS Programme

WHO Regional Office for Europe

Mr. Donoghoe presented the key WHO HIV/AIDS policy documents and the core components of the health sector response to HIV/AIDS, including prevention and health promotion, health standards and health systems, informed policy and strategy development and treatment. He paid particular attention to the '3 by 5' strategy in relation to scaling up access to ART in Europe. The European goal is universal access by 2005. The current treatment gap is estimated to be 100,000 persons in 22 countries of Europe. In order to tackle the epidemic, WHO is undertaking efforts in the field of advocacy, training and networking, technical assistance, normative tools, programme planning and implementation and surveillance and monitoring.

Dadi Einarsson

National expert Health Determinants Unit DG SANCO

European Commission

Mr. Einarsson explained that HIV/AIDS is part of the sexual health component under the 2003-2008 EU Public Health Programme. The focus within this Programme is on specific challenges faced by high-risk populations. The overall EC support to fight HIV/AIDS will amount to 1.2 billion in the period 2003-2006. Mr. Einarsson expects that under the 2004 work programme, several projects will be funded on the definition of best practices in HIV/AIDS prevention and sex education.

Scott Purdon

Manager Positive Action Global Community Partnerships

GlaxoSmithKline

Mr. Purdon called for attention to the new challenges that are arising in the HIV and AIDS epidemic and that AIDS Action Europe has chosen to address at the Open Forum. GSK is especially excited about the way that AIDS Action Europe addresses the challenges, using combined strength to give voice to community identified needs, while at the same time sharing expertise and experience to strengthen individual organisations across the region. Mr. Purdon also mentioned the experience that Positive Action has in working together with the international networks of AIDS Service Organisations and PLWHA.

Kathleen Cravero

Deputy Executive Director

UNAIDS

Mrs. Cravero called to the attention that HIV infections are increasing in Western Europe and that Eastern Europe and Central Asia are experiencing the fastest growing HIV epidemic in the world. The AIDS epidemic in Europe is thriving on complacency, denial and injecting drug use; on social exclusion, homophobia, and unsafe sex.

UNAIDS recommends to:

- Spur greater, broader political momentum across Europe and the world;
- Gather the evidence that HIV prevention works;
- Keep hope alive, e.g. by expanding access to care and treatment;
- Increase funding.

The Dublin Declaration on Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia reaffirms the UNGASS goals:

- It promotes leadership;
- It focuses on prevention for young people and vulnerable groups;
- It addresses the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS;

- It addresses the importance of partnerships at national and regional levels – for better coordination and cooperation, sharing of best practices and lessons learned among countries in the region.

Peter van Rooijen

Interim Steering Committee AIDS Action Europe

In representation of the organisers of the Open Forum, Mr. van Rooijen presented an overview of the history of AIDS Action Europe, what the Partnership is about, and how governance and membership procedures will develop.

He made very clear why AIDS Action Europe is called AIDS Action Europe:

- AIDS: because the global fight against HIV & AIDS is what unites the members
- Action: because the partnership wants to move beyond networking into concrete actions
- Europe: because the need for collaboration on a shared agenda in Europe is acknowledged, not only because of Europe as such but also to improve Europe's contribution to the global agenda.

Richard Burzynski

Executive Director

ICASO (International Council of AIDS Service Organisations)

Mr. Burzynski shared with the audience 3 main challenges for Europe:

- Uniting organisations in Eastern and Western Europe through a strong advocacy agenda;
- Capacity building to improve networking skills of organisations in Central and Eastern Europe;
- Creating a structure that allows for Western and Eastern European organisations to participate in a global community united in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Julian Hows

ENP+ (European Network of People with HIV/AIDS)

According to Mr. Hows, AIDS Action Europe could play an excellent role in linking existing partnerships and initiatives with PLWHA. AIDS Action Europe could support the mainstreaming of the needs of PLWHA, underwrite the mission of GNP+ within the European region as the mission of AIDS Action Europe, and support a new Pan European network of PLWHA. The Partnership could serve as a clearing-house for information and calls for action, in short a resource for PLWHA.

Achmat Dangor

Interim Manager

World AIDS Campaign

Mr. Dangor gave an overview of the history of the World AIDS Campaign, the global context and the status of the involvement of civil society. The World AIDS Campaign strategies include stimulation of growth of national/regional networks, support campaigns in countries most affected, facilitate joint action, promote greater harmony around messages, initiate/support targeted policy efforts, promote dialogue and consensus, and sharpen the political approach to campaigning. The vision of the World AIDS Campaign is to create a global movement of civil society campaigns, ensure that resources are available on a scale equal to the disease, and match resources with sustained action. The ultimate goal is that the response to AIDS is integrated into the ongoing planning of nations everywhere.

Jerry Kelliher

Desk Officer Balkans and CIS Desk

Development Cooperation Ireland

Mr. Kelliher informed the audience about the 'Dublin Declaration on Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia' and the role that Ireland has played in putting HIV/AIDS high on the political agenda. He informed the audience about upcoming conferences in follow-up of the Dublin Declaration. The Irish Presidency will make sure that continuity in relation to the implementation of the Dublin Declaration will be assured through meetings with the upcoming EU presidencies of the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom.

Core lines of action

Plenary introductions to the three core lines of action were given, in order to share the key issues resulting from the issue papers and to provide input for the working groups discussions.

The Rise of the HIV & STI Epidemic in Western Europe

Ton Coenen

Director

Soa Aids Nederland

Mr. Coenen showed the audience several slides reflecting the rise of HIV and STIs in Western Europe, followed by a discussion on the main challenges in prevention and an overview of evidence of what makes prevention efforts work. There's more to HIV/AIDS than prevention alone, and the promotion of human rights, strong leadership to maintain the topic on the political agenda, good policies and funding are also urgently needed. Specific recommendations for action include knowledge transfer, strengthening of prevention through best practices and innovation, the integration of HIV & STI approaches, the exchange of human rights approaches, EU-policy, advocacy and funding.

HIV & AIDS in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Maria Georgescu & Arnaud Wasson-Simon

Director

Coordinator of European Partnerships

ARAS

AIDES

An overview was given of the fastest growing HIV epidemic worldwide, the major shortcomings in access to treatment, prevention and human rights, who does what, the required funding and what all should do. Main recommendations include the support for the development of local HIV/AIDS NGO mobilisation and EU advocacy in Brussels on behalf of European HIV/AIDS NGOs. Mrs. Georgescu and Mr. Wasson-Simon called for action to make sure that in each region of Europe and Central Asia there is at least one local community-based NGO where PLWHA and members of vulnerable communities can find high-quality prevention and health support and that will hold governments accountable for their actions in reducing the impact of HIV and AIDS.

Resource mobilisation for the global epidemic

Kirsty McNeill

Campaign Manager

Stop AIDS Campaign

Northern governments have been criminally feeble in their response to the Southern pandemic and, famously, have been accused of carrying out a 'genocide by neglect' and 'mass murder by complacency'. HIV and AIDS are unpicking decades of development work by slowing economic growth and crippling schools, hospitals, agriculture, manufacturing and trade. Europe bears a heavy responsibility for this failing. World Bank GDP data suggests Europe has 27% of the world's wealth, but it would have to increase AIDS spending by 1 billion to contribute a fair (i.e. one quarter) share of the global spend.

At the Open Forum, working groups met during two days for each of the three core lines of action. Each working group followed their own methodology. Therefore, the action plans resulting from the groups differ in style and level of detail. Nevertheless, all groups set as their goal to define concrete follow-up actions for AIDS Action Europe and associated members, partners and sponsors, to fight the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Europe and world-wide.

Action plan on Rise in HIV and STIs in Western Europe

Chair, note-taking and reporting: Ton Coenen, Soa Aids Nederland

In order to fight the rise of the epidemic of HIV and other STIs in Western Europe, a lot needs to be done. The issue paper by F. Adam and J. de Wit has stated a lot of the necessary work in the field of prevention. The members of the workshop recognised the importance of prevention within the broader spectrum of actions that need to be undertaken.

Priorities for AIDS Action Europe with regard to prevention should be:

1. The position of and activities for people living with HIV (*)
2. Prevention and Research (*)
3. Migration, mobility and expulsion (*)
4. The need for policy & advocacy on a European level (+)
5. Access to treatment
6. The need for surveillance systems, including behavioural surveillance
7. The legal issues concerning people living with HIV being prosecuted & convicted (+)

The workshop made an outline for action on the three themes marked (*). On two other themes (+) action is already prepared:

- On the legal issues, the Hiv Vereniging Nederland will organise a workshop this autumn. To organise this workshop within the framework of AIDS Action Europe, an overview of the actual legal systems in the different countries is needed;
- The need for policy and advocacy on a European level is stated as a general need for AIDS Action Europe and is the responsibility of the Steering Committee to organise. Since this is one of the main tasks of AIDS Action Europe, many people are willing to support and contribute.

On the three themes marked *, the working group has developed the outline of a plan:

- What needs to be done;
- Who needs to do it;
- When should it be done.

Prevention and research

Essential prevention needed on a European level with regard to:

- Access to good sex education;
- Access to information;
- Access to condoms;
- Access to HIV-testing and counselling;
- Access to treatment.

European standards are needed for:

- Prevention programs including harm reduction principles;
- Research and surveillance;
- Involving communities in prevention.

Since most of these activities needed are part of the Dublin Declaration, the working group is convinced that AIDS Action Europe and all its participants wish to commit to the implementation of the Dublin Declaration. This can be promoted if AIDS Action Europe and all its participants formulate their action plans according to it.

Next to the implementation of the Dublin Declaration, there is a need for the new European CDC to be involved in prevention. There is a need for a European authority that can review national and regional prevention programs, based on the principles mentioned above and that can be very pro-active when it comes to best practices and making these available.

Committed organisations for follow-up: Fundação Portuguesa "A Comunidade Contra a Sida", ENP+, Schorer Stichting, Soa Aids Nederland.

Migration, mobility and expulsion

The working group considered it to be fundamental human rights that people in Europe, regardless of their citizenship have:

- Access to means of prevention;
- Access to health care;
- Access to good public health.

What needs to be done

- Create tools for advocacy on Equity of access to prevention, care & treatment for migrant populations, for people living with HIV/AIDS.' The focus is on the European Union-region: EU-citizens, recognising all the others.

Develop a strategy to effectively monitor and influence proposed immigration laws in different countries in relation to HIV/AIDS.

When: within a year

Committed organisations for follow-up: Hiv Vereniging, Tampep, The Swedish Association for HIV-positive People.

- Get a lobbyist
When: as soon as possible.
Who: The Steering Committee

Positive prevention and sexual health

Positive prevention and sexual health should target at policy and activities that focus on the needs of positive people keeping themselves healthy in an enabling society. This needs to be done, with recognition of the diversity of different groups of positive people. And – naturally – this needs to be developed including and involving different groups of people living with HIV.

What needs to be done

In order to develop positive prevention and sexual health it is needed that:

- The underlying principles should be formulated & implemented
- A needs assessment on a national & European level is necessary
Committed organisation for follow-up: Sensoa wants to prepare a EU-proposal
When: 2004

- Lobby for products/commodities (condoms) available in every country
- Evidence & experience driven actions should be implemented
- Stimulate support of self-support groups & NGOs
- Create a website/a free platform for best practices
Who: Secretariat AIDS Action Europe
When: 2004

- Start a Lobby getting this theme on the agenda of WHO and UNAIDS
Who: Steering Committee

- Disseminate information & access to help lines
- Create a link to the CDC
Who: Steering Committee

Implement the Dublin Declaration

During the workshop the Dublin Declaration was regarded as a good vehicle to use in fighting the rising epidemic of HIV and STIs in Western Europe. Three activities are needed for the implementation of the Dublin Declaration:

- Translation of the Dublin Declaration in several languages
Who: Secretariat AIDS Action Europe
When: within 2 months

- The Dublin Declaration should be translated into action
Who: Steering Committee
When: 2004

- AIDS Action Europe should be promoted by the Steering committee as the forum in 2006 to evaluate the Dublin Declaration.
Who: Steering Committee

Action plan on HIV and AIDS in Central/Eastern Europe in the context of EU enlargement

Chairs: Maria Georgescu, ARAS and Arnaud Wasson-Simon, AIDES

Note-taking and reporting: Marija Subataite, Eastern European Partnership Office and Sandie Sempé, AIDES

Introduction

As close to 60 persons participated in this working group, two smaller groups first met on Monday afternoon to enable greater individual participation, followed by a joint meeting on Tuesday.

Objective of the working group: identify priority issues and propose initiatives to be undertaken by AIDS Action Europe.

Key outcomes

- Information: A core role for Aids Action Europe could be to facilitate access to information on existing initiatives, promoting especially best practices, through developing an "information exchange matrix": a database on key ongoing projects (such as the work carried out by EATG, CEEHRN, the Global Fund, WHO and other governmental and non-governmental initiatives).
- Inclusion: Full inclusion of partner NGOs from all sub-regions of the wider European Region (as defined by WHO) need to be enabled by AIDS Action Europe at all levels. AIDS Action Europe's activities and documents need to be accessible – as much as possible - in more languages than just English (notably Russian). Note: The AIDS Action Europe Steering committee now includes a Romanian citizen as full-fledged member and recruitment of a representative from NIS countries is ongoing.
- Local needs: Any activity carried out at Pan-European level (funding of local NGOs, capacity building, advocacy...) must be founded upon a comprehensive assessment of the needs and priorities of the local actors of the countries that are concerned.
- Strong commitment from UNAIDS, WHO, and the Worldbank: Henning Mikkelsen from UNAIDS and Martin Donoghoe from WHO-Europe assertively affirmed, on behalf of their respective organisations, that local HIV/AIDS actors should not hesitate to contact them directly and personally in case it is felt that the local representations of UNAIDS and WHO are not carrying out their mission optimally. The Worldbank very concretely also demonstrated its acknowledgment of the value of NGOs by setting up a video-link consultation on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe in between Washington DC, Brussels, Moscow, Turkey and Moldova (on Tuesday, March 23) which included both high-level World Bank staff and NGOs.
- Dublin Declaration: Following-up on the Dublin Declaration on HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia. The very strong commitments made by European Governments need to be transformed into action (notably, but not only, through new EU directives). This declaration stands as a strong foundation for the European advocacy work to be undertaken by AIDS Action Europe.

Advocacy issues

- NGO recognition: National governments support AIDS-service NGOs in the region and perceive them as equal/ qualified partners.
Tool: facilitate meetings between NGOs and governmental authorities (both at national and European levels).
- Community/ PLWHA need to be given more opportunities to be pro-active with regards to key international documents (e.g. Dublin Declaration).
Tool: facilitate greater and sustained involvement of PLWHA and NGO delegates in the work of UNAIDS, WHO, EU institutions and others.
- Access to antiretroviral treatments for all (including for drug users).
Tools: document and promote established successful practices, which include notably the prescription of substitution treatments such as methadone or buprenorphine.
- Provide better health care services (free and easy access to testing).

- English is not enough. The meetings, events, publications should be in a language that people understand. That includes Russian, and even national languages.
- Eastern/ Central European countries that will become members of the EU will not longer be eligible for some funding (OSI, Global Fund ATM). The EU should create possibilities/ mechanisms for them to receive funding – including requiring national EU government to increase the funds they make available locally– so that the termination of EU Phare funds notably be less abrupt.
- Lobby with the EU to keep Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the NIS on the agenda and develop and create new funding programs (e.g. TACIS could take a far greater role on funding HIV prevention and treatment).
Tool: promote good examples of funding mechanisms – for instance TIDES Foundation which set up a deciding body composed of community people from the region to decide upon donations made to local NGOs.
- Create an European agency to fight AIDS in Europe, or at least, ensure that the new 'European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control' is provided with the means and expertise it needs to carry out this mission.
- Put HIV on the agenda of national governments. National governments do not take sufficient responsibility to fight HIV in their countries.
- Recognise the harm reduction approach (needle/ syringe exchange, substitution treatment...).
- Prevention. Effective campaigns and approaches need to be streamlined across the continent.
- Combat abuse of human rights/ marginalisation of ethnic minorities, discrimination or even criminalisation of social minorities (IDUs, SW, homosexuals).
Tool: Existing institutions which have a mandate to promote or to enforce fundamental human rights need to be solicited.
- More funding/ support for networks/ partnerships.

Advocacy targets

- National governments;
- EU – European Commission, European Council, European Parliament, European Court of Justice;
- Council of Europe;
- UN system – UNAIDS, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP;
- Church;
- Civil society organisations;
- AIDS Service organisations in Western Europe;
- West-European NGOs to lobby with their governments.

Capacity building

Lack of Eastern Europe and Central Asia representation in international meetings.

Capacity building that responds to the needs of NGOs:

- Advocacy;
- Networking (no overlapping between networks);
- Fundraising including marketing, donor relations, proposal writing skills;
- Organisational skills/ management;
- Empowerment of PLWHA;
- Language training.

Tools

- Twinning/ partnerships between various sub-regions of the region (EE – EE, CE – EE, WE – EE, etc.)
- Peer education
- Trainings/ seminars
- Using fully existing resource of information (for instance: EPHA or ECAS, two NGO-friendly great sources of information on EU Policies and access to EU funds)

Action plan on Resource Mobilisation for the Global Epidemic

Chair: Anna Moshkova, Open Society Institute

Note-taking and reporting: Russel Pickard, Open Society Institute

Introduction

The working group started with a presentation of 3 existing initiatives - the Global Progressive Forum, the Fund the Fund, and World AIDS Campaign - with the aim of mapping the existing advocacy/resource mobilisation environment. This provided the framework for the subsequent discussion rather than a detailed consideration of the issue paper.

Discussion

- Highlighted the difficulty of separating the question of resource mobilisation from the issues in the other workshops.
- Spent some time discussing the possible levels of engagement that exist for AIDS Action Europe to access and there seemed to be broad agreement that AIDS Action Europe can be pitched at a point between international initiatives and country/civil society level. AIDS Action Europe as an information/advocacy/resource mobilisation 'node' with two-way traffic.
- Was receptive to the suggestion that the European aspects of the Fund the Fund could be brought under the umbrella of AIDS Action Europe with the explicit understanding that AIDS Action Europe can and should go beyond the needs of the Global Fund and address the bigger (global) funding picture.
- Whether AIDS Action Europe should address the question of technical assistance from the perspective of advocating that the EU put into place a global programme for capacity building.
- The importance of raising the profile of civil society organisations as recipients of resources, e.g. Ukrainian NGOs.

Summary of resource mobilisation commitments for AIDS Action Europe

- Meeting commitments, e.g. Millenium Development Goals 0.7%, Global Fund, 3x5, etc;
- Epidemiology, e.g. increasing AIDS problem in Europe (member states and Eastern Europe/FSU) therefore there is a need to address it but without losing sight of the needs in the developing world;
- Global/big picture needs, e.g. vaccine agenda, microbicides, etc. Expanding commitments.

Overall conclusions

It was a difficult discussion, which at times did not seem to be leading to a concrete conclusion. This was in particular to do with the fact that it was a very small group.

The group agreed upon a 3 fold-proposal:

- The first and most immediate and substantive part was the decision that AIDS Action Europe should focus its resource mobilisation efforts on the series of EU presidencies stretching from the current Irish to the UK (through the Netherlands and Luxembourg) and the UK G8 presidency. A number of organisations committed to participate in this working group. It will be led by AIDS Action Europe but will be made up of both members and partners: Aids Fonds, GCM, IAVI, GPF, NAT, Stop AIDS Alliance, Stop AIDS Campaign. Stop AIDS Alliance and Aids Fonds will draft a paper to send out to the group.
- The second part of the proposal relates to ensuring that a voice for Eastern Europe/Central Asia is created in AIDS Action Europe.
- Development of AIDS Action Europe in terms of resource mobilisation will be taken forward by the Steering Committee itself.

Commitment for AIDS Action in Europe

At the plenary closing session, Chris Lambrechts from the Interim Steering Committee presented some general feelings recollected among the audience about the key results from the Open Forum. The Forum succeeded in bringing people together, in getting well-prepared issue papers, in getting a framework for a Partnership started, in getting useful feed-back from participants, and was an opportunity for setting an agenda supported by many actors in Europe.

It was acknowledged that there was room for improvement. In particular, a larger participation from Southern Europe, Central Asia, the Russian Federation and the Ukraine should be aimed for. And as a consequence of the large number of participants, it was sometimes difficult to maintain the focus on the key issues.

Peter van Rooijen concluded that the challenge ahead for AIDS Action Europe was to get the funding for doing the job that was defined in the 3 working groups. He summarised several achievements:

- It was the first meeting that NGOs and PLWHA sat and worked together in a real partnership;
- It was the first meeting where East and West came together and developed joint strategies and action;
- The Open Forum led to the commitment of people and organisations for follow-up on the agreements with concrete steps;
- A group will follow-up on prevention and migration, another group on resource mobilisation, another on EU advocacy;
- A group of funding NGOs has decided to meet and discuss how to support Central and Eastern European AIDS-NGOs.

In summary, the Open Forum provided an important opportunity for AIDS-related organisations to exchange experiences and learn from each other, to network, to agree on shared visions and strategies and commit to further action.

'AIDS Action Europe will only succeed if we share energy, time and money, if we develop a shared set of goals, beliefs and values, if we dare to confront our differences (and there are many) and if we are willing to make the effort; to make it a joint effort...or even better: if we are willing to make AAE our 'joint venture'. Because the challenges that lies ahead of us – in the old Europe, the new Europe and in the global community – do urge us to make a next step, and to make the joint venture AIDS Action Europe a success.'

(Presentation by Peter van Rooijen in representation of the Interim Steering Committee of AIDS Action Europe)

Background information on AIDS Action Europe

There is a long history of European collaboration between NGOs (Aids Service Organisations and others) that are active in the fight against HIV/AIDS. These collaborative efforts varied in scope and magnitude but have altogether played a valuable role in shaping the NGO response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The decision of the European Commission to cease funding the CHANGE initiative, coupled with the call of the Board of the International Council of Aids Service Organisations (ICASO) to seek new hosting arrangements for the EU secretariat (EuroCASO), led to an exchange of ideas about the need for a new initiative by NGOs at the World AIDS Conference in Barcelona in 2002. It was agreed that an extension of the existing networks was needed and that, given the challenges European NGOs in the region and globally are facing, there was a need to move beyond networking towards a European NGO partnership with a strong focus on policy, advocacy and practical support.

The Barcelona meeting did not lead to a concrete follow-up. Therefore the management of some of the organisations present at that meeting gathered in December 2002 in London and discussed ways to take the work forward. Present were: NAT (UK), Deutsche Aids Stiftung (Germany), AIDES (France), STOP AIDS Alliance (Belgium) and Aids Fonds (Netherlands). At that meeting the organisations agreed to join forces, forming an interim steering committee to take on the responsibility for establishing a new European NGO partnership. In order to take the work to the next phase, representatives from Southern, Central & Eastern Europe were approached to participate. These organisations were ARAS (Romania), AFEW (Russia) and Abraco (Portugal).

In 2003, the interim steering decided to carry out an inventory among NGOs and key players in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention and control in Europe in order to assess the needs, opportunities and support for a new European partnership. Both the results of the written consultation as well as the telephone interviews strongly supported the conviction of the interim steering committee that there was an urgent need for a new PAN-European partnership on HIV/AIDS. Also, in November 2003 AIDS Action Europe was assigned as the host for the European representation of ICASO.

The Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe was a first public event to formally present AIDS Action Europe to the former EuroCASO constituencies and other European actors involved in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

AIDS Action Europe wants to contribute to the global fight against HIV&AIDS. It therefore needs to be an integral part of a global effort and needs to be linked to global partnerships including the International Council of AIDS Service Organisations. AIDS Action Europe therefore subscribes to the ICASO Mission:

- Mobilise communities and their organisations to participate in the response to HIV/AIDS;
- Articulate and advocate the needs and concerns of communities and their organisations;
- Ensure that community-based organisations, particularly those with fewer resources and within affected communities, are strengthened in their work to prevent HIV infection, and to provide treatment, care and support for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS;
- Promote the greater involvement of people living with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS in all aspects of prevention, treatment, care and support, and research;
- Promote human rights in the development and implementation of policies and programs responding to all aspects of HIV/AIDS.

In addition, AIDS Action Europe has committed itself to the following guiding principles:

- The UNGASS Declaration of Commitment is considered as the primary guiding document for the work undertaken by the Partnership;
- The Dublin Declaration on Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia;
- "Europe" is defined according to the WHO definition;
- The EuroCASO Partnership Office for Eastern Europe (EEPO) is a crucial and integral part of AIDS Action Europe;
- AIDS Action Europe is committed to preventing duplication of existing activities;

- AIDS Action Europe is committed to build on existing experiences, expertise and infrastructure provided by its members and the organisations and institutions with whom it will work;
- The expertise that ASOs can bring to European and global HIV efforts is valued and endeavoured. Civil society – best represented by ASOs and organisations of people living with HIV in HIV developments – has enormous experience and expertise to bring to the international fight against AIDS;
- AIDS Action Europe values clarity and focus; it intends to be focused and pragmatic about achieving objectives;
- AIDS Action Europe intends to be pro-active, to respect differences and to remain goal-oriented – it wants to make a difference;
- AIDS Action Europe wants to operate independently and therefore finance its core support functions on the basis of a membership fee.

There are three areas in which AIDS Action Europe will develop activities:

- HIV in Western Europe – re-prioritising HIV on national and European Commission and Parliament agendas, focusing attention on the needs of vulnerable groups (people with HIV, migrants, women, drug users and gay men);
- HIV in Central and Eastern European Countries – the role of NGOs, capacity building and the exchange of experience and information;
- Resource mobilisation for the global epidemic.

Activities in these three areas will take place on the levels of Policy development, Advocacy/lobby and Practice (implementing programs).

Contact information Secretariat AIDS Action Europe

For information on how to become a member, partner or sponsor of AIDS Action Europe, please contact the AIDS Action Europe secretariat:

Soa Aids Nederland
Coordinator: Ms. Martine de Schutter
Keizersgracht 390
1016 GB Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 6262669
Fax: +31 (0)20 6275221
AidsActionEurope@soaids.nl
www.aidsfonds.nl/europe

Participant list Open Forum (A-K)

Surname	Name	Organisation	Country	E-mail
Adam	Philippe	Institute for Psycho Social Research	THE NETHERLANDS	philippe.adam@i-psr.org
Adanse Pipim	K.	AFAPAC Foundation	THE NETHERLANDS	adanse@planet.nl
Aguiar	Filomena	Fundação Portuguesa "A Comunidade Contra a Sida"	PORTUGAL	filomena.aguiar@clix.pt
Alekseeva	Evgeniya	Public health and Social Development Foundation "FOCUS-MEDIA"	RUSSIA	zhanya_alexeeva@focus-media.ru
Almeida	J.C.		PORTUGAL	efrexes@cm-lisboa.pt
Andersen	Hans-Erik	Positiva Gruppen Syd	SWEDEN	hans00andersen@hotmail.com
Ankiersztejn	Magdalena	FUNDATION OF THE SOCIAL EDUCATION	POLAND	MEGAMA@POCZTA.ONET.PL
Berglöf	Andreas	The Swedish Association for HIV-positive People	SWEDEN	ombudsman@rfhp.a.se
Billet	Alain-C	European Forum Children & Young People Affected By HIV/AIDS	UK	cifbr@yahoo.com
Block	Koen	Sensoa	BELGIUM	koen.block@sensoa.be
Bodell	Derek	World AIDS Campaign	UNITED KINGDOM	derek.bodell@btinternet.com
Boeder	Pieter	Stichting HIV Monitoring	THE NETHERLANDS	p.boeder@amc.uva.nl
Boras	Karlo	Yugoslav Youth Association against AIDS - Youth of JAZAS	SERBIA/MONTENEGRO	karloboras@yahoo.com
Brands	Ronald Alfred Maria	Dutch HIV Association	THE NETHERLANDS	R.Brands@hivnet.org
Brussa	Licia	TAMPEP International Foundation	THE NETHERLANDS	tampep@xs4all.nl
Brzezi	Kamila	Association for Prevention HIV/AIDS and Other STD	POLAND	tada@free.ngo.pl
Buhuceanu	Florin	ACCEPT Association	ROMANIA	florin_b@fx.ro
Burzynski	Richard	ICASO	CANADA	RichardB@lcsaso.org
Clouzeau	Fabrice	SIDA INFO SERVICE	FRANCE	enah@sida-info-service.org
Coenen	Ton	Aids Fonds/Soa Aids Nederland	THE NETHERLANDS	tcoenen@soaids.nl
Cravero	Kathleen	UNAIDS	SWITZERLAND	bauerlec@unaids.org
Csernus	Eszter	Hungarian Civil Liberties Union	HUNGARY	csemuse@tasz.hu
Dan	Monica	ARAS-The Romanian Association Against AIDS	ROMANIA	monica.dan@arasnet.ro
Dangor	Achmat	World AIDS Campaign	UNITED STATES	adangor@unicef.org
De Clercq	Katy	Sensoa	BELGIUM	katv.declercq@sensoa.be
Dechamp	Jean-Francois	independent	BELGIUM	jidechamp@yahoo.fr
Diawara	Estelle	AIDES	FRANCE	ediawara@aidess.org
Donoghoe	Martin	World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe	DENMARK	mdo@who.dk
Einarsson	Dadi	Health Determinants Unit, DG SANCO, European Commission	BELGIUM	Dadi.EINARSSON@cec.eu.int
El Gaddari	Alim	SIDA INFO SERVICE	FRANCE	enah@sida-info-service.org
Esch, van	Jan	AIDS Foundation East-West	RUSSIA	jan_van_esch@afew.org
Fransen	Raoul	Aids Fonds	THE NETHERLANDS	rfransen@soaids.nl
Georgescu	Maria	ARAS	ROMANIA	maria.georgescu@arasnet.ro
Goetz	Michael	AIDES	FRANCE	mgoetz@aidess.org
Groot, de	Kathelijne	AIDS & Mobility / NIGZ	THE NETHERLANDS	kdegroot@nigz.nl
Gur-Arie	Inbal	Jerusalem Aids Project	ISRAEL	jaipisrael@yahoo.com
Heide	Ulrich	Deutsche Aids Stiftung	GERMANY	ulrich_heide@aidss-stiftung.de
Hermans	Angelia	IAVI	THE NETHERLANDS	ahermans@iavi.org
Hows	Julian	ENP+	UNITED KINGDOM	julian@drag.org
Hübner	Florian	Groupe sida Genève	SWITZERLAND	florian.hubner@groupesida.ch
Hussey	Julien	GlaxoSmithKline	UK	julian.hussey@btinternet.com
Jiresova	Katarina	Odysseus	SLOVAK REPUBLIC	KatJir@yahoo.com
Kalikov	Juri	NGO AIDS Information & Support Center	ESTONIA	tuqikeskus@hotmail.com
Kaube	Ruta	DIA+LOGS NGO	LATVIA	rutins@parks.lv
Kelliher	Jerry	Development Cooperation Ireland	IRELAND	jerry.kelliher@iveagh.gov.ie
Kesaniemi	Jari	Finnish AIDS Council Finland	FINLAND	jari.kesaniemi@aidscouncil.fi
Klavins	Sandris	AGIHAS (PLWHA Support group)	LATVIA	agihass@latnet.lv
Knittel	Hannelore	Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe e.V.	GERMANY	hannelore.knittel@dah.aidshilfe.de
Konov	Svilen Kolev	EATG/Plus and Minus Foundation	BULGARIA	svilen.konov@aidsbq.info
Kucheruk	Olena	Ukrainian Harm Reduction Association	UKRAINE	kucheruk@irf.kiev.ua
Kuderna	Claudia	Aids Hilfe Wien	AUSTRIA	kuderna@aidss.at
Kugener	Tom	AIDS Berodung Crois-Rouge	LUXEMBOURG	tom@aidss.lx

Participant list Open Forum (L-Z)

Surname	Name	Organisation	Country	E-mail
Laczó	Zoltán	PLUS Hungary	HUNGARY	zlaczo@egnet.hu
Lambrechts	Chris	Sensoa	BELGIUM	chris.lambrechts@sensoa.be
Laursen	Henriette	AIDS-Fondet	DENMARK	info@aidsfondet.dk
Leonchuk	Nataliya	All-Ukrainian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS	UKRAINE	nleonchuk@ukr.net
Mahase	Joseph	ICASO	CANADA	ioem@icaso.org
Marques	Pedro	Abraço	PORTUGAL	psm.abraco@netcabo.pt
Mattholie	Tessa	IAVI	THE NETHERLANDS	tmattholie@iavi.org
Mayer	Vlastimil	League against AIDS in Slovakia	SLOVAK REPUBLIC	mayer@upkm.sk
McNeill	Kirsty	Stop Aids Campaign/ UK NGO Consortium	UK	info@stopaidscampaign.org.uk
Mikkelsen	Henning	UNAIDS	SWITZERLAND	mikkelsen@unaids.org
Modinos	Alexander F.	Gay Liberation Movement of Cyprus	CYPRUS	soarli@hotmail.com
Moshkova	Anna	Open Society Institute	USA	amoshkova@sorosny.org
Nicholls	Jo	World Bank	USA	inicholls@worldbank.org
Nichols	Edwin	IAVI	THE NETHERLANDS	ENichols@iavi.org
Oostrom, van	Martin	Aids Fonds/Soa Aids Nederland	THE NETHERLANDS	mvanoostrom@soaids.nl
Pardal	Alexandra	Global Progressive Forum	BELGIUM	apardal@europarl.eu.int
Pelletier	Vincent	AIDES	FRANCE	vpelletier@aides.org
Perry	James	European Forum Children, Young People and Families Affected HIV/AIDS	UK	jamesperry@btinternet.com
Pickard	Russell	Open Society Institute - Brussels	BELGIUM	russell.pickard@osi-eu.org
Pickstone	Tim	George House Trust	UK	tim@ght.org.uk
Prochazka	Ivo	Czech AIDS Help Society	CZECH REPUBLIC	ivo.prochazka@seznam.cz
Purdon	Scott	GlaxoSmithKline	UK	scott.d.purdon@gsk.com
Rooijen, van	Peter	Aids Fonds/Soa Aids Nederland	THE NETHERLANDS	pvanrooijen@aidsfonds.nl
Roth	Benny	PG-SYD	SWEDEN	info@positivagruppernsyd.org.se
Sargsyan	Nona	Armenian National AIDS Foundation	ARMENIA	nonasb@yahoo.com
Schenker	Inon	Jerusalem AIDS project (JAIP)	ISRAEL	inon@mssc.huji.ac.il
Schutter, de	Martine	Aids Fonds/Soa Aids Nederland	THE NETHERLANDS	mdeschutter@soaids.nl
Seery	Deirdre	Alliance Sexual Health Centre	IRELAND	dseery@eircom.net
Sempe	Sandie	AIDES	FRANCE	sandiesempe@aides.org
Seybold	Rainer	AIDS Action Germany	GERMANY	seybold@difaem.de
Sibilia	Aleksandar	Swiss Federal Office of Public Health	SWITZERLAND	aleksandar.sibilia@bag.admin.ch
Soest, van	Marcel	World AIDS Campaign	THE NETHERLANDS	momvans@xs4all.nl
Šolinc	Miran	ŠKUC-Magnus	SLOVENIA	miran.solinc@amis.net
Sprenger	Harald	STOP AIDS ALLIANCE	BELGIUM	hsprenger@stopaidalliance.org
Strouhal	Vaclav	Czech AIDS Help Society	CZECH REPUBLIC	aids-pomoc@iol.cz
Suarez	Maite	IAVI	THE NETHERLANDS	msuarez@iavi.org
Subataite	Marija	EuroCASO's Eastern European Partnership Office	LITHUANIA	marija@ceehrn.org
Tomczynski	Wojciech Jerzy	Stowarzyszenie "Badz z Nami"	POLAND	vovtek46@neotrada.pl
Veenker	Janherman	Aids Fonds/STOP AIDS NOW!	THE NETHERLANDS	jveenker@stopaidsnow.nl
Vurusic	Tomislav	Croatian Association for HIV (HUHIV/CAHIV)	CROATIA	tomislav.vurusic@huhiv.hr
Wasson Simon	Arnaud	AIDES	FRANCE	asimon@aides.org
Webb	Rebekah	Global Campaign Europe	BELGIUM	rwebb@global-campaign.org
Wit, de	John	Institute for Psycho Social Research	THE NETHERLANDS	john.dewit@i-psr.nl
Witlox	Robert	Hiv Vereniging Nederland	THE NETHERLANDS	r.witlox@hivnet.org
Wood	Josephine	GlaxoSmithKline	BELGIUM	josephine.j.wood@gsk.com
Zuilhof	Wim	Schorerstichting	THE NETHERLANDS	w.zuilhof@schorernet.nl
Zweep, van der	Esther	Aids Fonds - Soa Aids Nederland	THE NETHERLANDS	evanderzweep@soaids.nl

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