



Annual Report 2005

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

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Executive summary

2005 has been a challenging and exciting year for AIDS Action Europe, the Pan European NGO Partnership on HIV and AIDS. While 2004 was the year when AIDS Action Europe was launched, characterised by exploratory work, 2005 has been the year of consolidation and advocacy, leading to the firm positioning of AIDS Action Europe at the centre of European action in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

AIDS Action Europe has three priority lines of action:

- Address the rise of HIV and STIs in Western Europe;
- Support an effective response to HIV and AIDS in Central and Eastern Europe;
- Advocate for an increase in resources for the global epidemic.

In 2005, our work has focused primarily on the first and second line of action. Whenever possible however, we have supported the work of other European and international networks in their efforts to increase resources for the global epidemic.

Even more than in 2004, we have been able in 2005 to move forward strongly, especially in our advocacy work with the European Commission, scaling up action at the European level in the fight against HIV and AIDS. With very active involvement of AIDS Action Europe and the European AIDS Treatment Group, the European Commission created the Civil Society Forum on HIV/AIDS, which is an informal advisory forum for the European Think Tank on HIV/AIDS. AIDS Action Europe and the European AIDS Treatment Group co-chair this Civil Society Forum and prepared the agenda and supported the European Commission in assuring a wide representation of non governmental organisations and networks in the Civil Society Forum. Both AIDS Action Europe and the European AIDS Treatment Group provided substantial input into the new European Commission communication on combating HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in the neighbouring countries. We are also a member of the European Union's Think Tank on HIV/AIDS in which we have three seats. Together with the European AIDS Treatment Group, we represent European NGOs, who will be consulted prior to each meeting of the Think Tank.

2005 also implied a merger process, leading to a Secretariat consisting of two offices: an Eastern office in Vilnius, Lithuania and a Western office in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The Western office is responsible for overall financial and administrative management of AIDS Action Europe and its projects. The Eastern office focuses more on management of AIDS Action Europe projects in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The Eastern office secured funding for and focused this year on the start of the project "Community-based Advocacy and Networking to Scale-up HIV Prevention in an Era of Expanded Treatment" in Russia and Ukraine. This exciting project is part of a 10-country initiative led by ICASO, the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations. AIDS Action Europe is the regional partner of ICASO.

The Western office was successful in its fundraising efforts, as the European Commission tentatively approved the project European Partners in Action on AIDS, which will allow us to develop a series of European best practice seminars and an interactive information service for non governmental organisations in Europe.

2005 has also been the year to improve our communication strategy. We worked very hard on developing a clear house style which will facilitate awareness about our activities among non governmental organisations and networks in Europe. We developed an information leaflet that was disseminated widely in the European region and Central Asia. Our network now includes about 60 non governmental organisations from 30 countries in Europe and Central Asia. We also developed a new website which is about to be launched. Please check www.aidsactioneurope.org.

In general, we can conclude that AIDS Action Europe has been able to consolidate many of its actions in 2005 into a strong advocacy and capacity building work plan. We strive for more advocacy and closer connection with and support of non governmental organisations in 2006. We are thankful for the trust shown in us by non governmental organisations and networks and the European Commission in 2005.

We are also grateful for the support of our 2005 activities by GlaxoSmithKline's Positive Action Programme, Aids Fonds, Soa Aids Nederland, Aids Fondet, Deutsche Aids Stiftung and member organisations.

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AIDS Action Europe

January 2006

Mission and guiding principles

Mission

AIDS Action Europe wants to work towards a more effective response on the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Europe and neighbouring countries. Advocacy and linking among NGOs are the main means to do so, at the global, European, national and local level.

Our three aims

- Address the rise of HIV and STIs in Western Europe;
- Support an effective response to HIV and AIDS in Central and Eastern Europe;
- Advocate for an increase in resources for the global epidemic.

We are the European partner of ICASO, the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations and have a seat on the ICASO board. We subscribe to the ICASO Mission to:

- 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 are strengthened in their work;
- promote the greater involvement of people living with, and affected by, HIV/; and
- promote human rights in policies and programs responding to all aspects of HIV/AIDS.

Goals, activities and results in 2005

In general, the work has been carried out according to the work plan 2005 decided upon at the Steering Committee meeting in January. Some highlights of our work are presented below. For a detailed description of our work plan and results or other specific inquiries, please contact the Western office.

European advocacy work on HIV/AIDS

Even more than in 2004, we have been able in 2005 to move forward strongly, especially in our advocacy work with the European Commission, scaling up action at the European level in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

AIDS Action Europe, together with the European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG), lobbied successfully to ensure that the voices and concerns of civil society were being heard. In consequence, the European Commission, together with our networks, organised the 'Informal Consultation with NGOs on HIV/AIDS' on June 13 in Brussels. At that time, the European Commission was initiating the development of EU policy on HIV/AIDS. At this meeting, AIDS Action Europe and EATG were able to bring together 26 NGOs and networks from Europe to discuss in 6 workshops the main issues to be included in this new policy. AIDS Action Europe prepared the report of the meeting that was presented to the European Commission as input for the development of the new policy.

In follow-up of the informal consultation, and with very active involvement of AIDS Action Europe and EATG, the European Commission created the Civil Society Forum on HIV/AIDS, which is an informal advisory forum for the European Think Tank on HIV/AIDS. AIDS Action Europe and EATG are co-chairs of this Forum and prepared the agenda and supported the European Commission in assuring a wide representation of non governmental organisations and networks in the Civil Society Forum. The first Civil Society Forum took place on 5 & 6 September in Brussels. 35 NGOs and European network representatives provided input into the draft EU Communication on HIV/AIDS. AIDS Action Europe and EATG prepared the report of the meeting that was used by the Commission as input for the final Communication.

We have also become a member of the European Union's Think Tank on HIV/AIDS which consists of representatives from the Ministries of Health of all Member States. Together with EATG, we represent the voices of European NGOs. Through the Civil Society Forums we ensure that the wider NGO networks will be consulted on the topics of the agenda of the Think Tank, prior to each meeting. We have secured three seats at this Think Tank. In 2005, we attended two meetings of the Think Tank where we presented the outcomes of the respective Informal Consultation on HIV/AIDS and the first Civil Society Forum.

Through our role in the Civil Society Forum and Think Tank, both AIDS Action Europe and EATG, as well as a large group of other European non governmental organisations and networks, together provided substantial input into the new European Commission communication on combating HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in the neighbouring countries, that was launched mid December

The establishment of the Civil Society Forum – in connection with the Think Tank on HIV/AIDS is an important step forward in securing that the voices and needs of NGOs are being expressed and heard at the European Commission and government levels. The Commission plans to hold two Civil Society Forums and Think Tanks yearly in which AIDS Action Europe will play a key role through its co-chairing role in the Civil Society Forum.

In order to enable better exchange of lessons learned and best practices at the European level, we presented a proposal to the European Commission for the project European Partners in Action on AIDS. The proposal was selected for funding and is planned to start early 2006. The project goal is to strengthen knowledge, capacities, discussion and exchange among AIDS-related non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations in Western and Eastern Europe in order to encourage concerted action and the acceleration of innovation in their approaches in the fight against HIV and AIDS. This includes an increased involvement of civil society at the European level and the linkage between HIV/AIDS and health policies and structures of the European Union with NGO practices and approaches.

Specifically, the project activities include a series of 7 European best practice seminars as well as the development of an information Clearinghouse that will provide information on NGOs and their projects, lessons learned and best practices, and develop into an interactive means for NGOs to obtain peer advice and discuss newly emerging topics.

Project “Community-based Advocacy and Networking to Scale-up HIV Prevention in an Era of Expanded Treatment”

The project “Community-based Advocacy and Networking to Scale-up HIV Prevention in an Era of Expanded Treatment” is a five year ICASO project implemented together with its Regional Secretariats in 10 countries around the world (Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, China, India, Jamaica, Belize, Russia and Ukraine). AIDS Action Europe is responsible for the project implementation in Russia and Ukraine and the Eastern Office is the coordinator of the work. Given the risk of prevention efforts falling behind expanded treatment access initiatives, this project aims to support a broad-sweeping policy and programming shift to increase access to comprehensive prevention services alongside expanded treatment services. The project concentrates on advocating for and local capacity building on treatment and prevention alignment in the countries where the project is implemented via various components. The project is structured as a set of 9 activities the content of which are decided from country to country.

The project started in late January 2005. In the countries it is implemented by in-country partner organisations. In Russia and Ukraine the in-country partners are Russian Harm Reduction Network and Coalition of HIV Service Organisations respectively.

Regardless that the project started in the countries only in the second half of the year, the work planned was achieved, with some activities to be rounded up in January 2006.

In summary the results of the project in 2005 in Russian and Ukraine are:

- Baseline information reports about Russian and Ukraine prepared;
- Around 300 stakeholders and representatives of various groups involved in the HIV/AIDS field benefited for the project through involvement in the events organised. The project covered representatives of community and vulnerable groups, AIDS Service NGOs and harm reduction projects, governmental organisations and institutions;

- The activities within the project covered such issues as active NGO involvement in legislative proceedings, analysis of and advocacy of NGO participation in state budget policy on HIV/AIDS, anti-discrimination legislation and environment, prevention measures at the workplace; building advocacy skills for injecting drug users (IDUs), harm reduction project workers and people living with HIV/AIDS; treatment for IDUs; networking of people living with HIV/AIDS as means of fighting stigma and discrimination; advocacy and activism in vaccine and medication clinical trials; cooperation of NGOs and networks of people living with HIV/AIDS in Russia;
- Publications prepared focused on advocacy guidance adapted to the Russian situation and legal environment and analysis of social standards for HIV/AIDS prevention services in Ukraine;
- Events were organised in partnership with WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP, EATG, Harm Reduction Knowledge Hub for Europe and Central Asia, "Humanitarian Action", "Svecha" and "Delo" (Russia), Academy of Education Development, POLICY Project, Substance Abuse and AIDS Prevention Foundation (Ukraine) and others.

Next steps will include finalising the reports for 2005 and starting activities planned for 2006.

Communication strategy

The Secretariat dedicated considerable time to develop a sound communication strategy. This included the development of an information leaflet and house-style products like logo, legal paper etc. A Europe-wide mailing of 2000 information leaflets to non governmental organisations took place Fall 2005. As a consequence, an increasing number of organisations, totalling 58, signed-up as members, next to 9 new partner organisations. Right now, AIDS Action Europe has members and partners in 30 countries, half of them in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

In addition, the Secretariat worked on the development of a new AIDS Action Europe website, which will be launched early 2006.

European meetings

In November 2005 we organised a European Expert meeting on positive prevention. 35 experts from 12 European countries gathered in the Netherlands to formulate underlying principles of positive prevention and exchange best practices and lessons learned at a European level. These best practices showed cases of professionals and people living with HIV/AIDS working together in order to achieve a common goal: effective prevention for both people with and without HIV and adequate care for people with HIV.

We also supported two European seminars organised by the AIDS Action & Integration Projects: "Women: facing HIV in our wider Europe" (Paris – October 8-9, 2005 with 50 participants representing 33 NGOs from 20 countries) and "Sustainable Services for Vulnerable Populations" (Bucharest – November 11-13, 2005 with 121 participants representing 58 NGOs from 19 countries). More info on www.integration-projects.org

The Coordinator Eastern office attended a meeting organised by ICASO in Toronto (February) related to the project "Community-based Advocacy and Networking to Scale-up HIV Prevention in an Era of Expanded Treatment". The Eastern Office participated also in the CEEHRN (Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network – host organizations of Eastern Office since 2003) Steering Committee meeting in Moscow (September).

Governance

In 2005 the Steering Committee met twice: in January in Amsterdam and in September in Copenhagen. In between, the Steering Committee monitored the work of the AIDS Action Europe Secretariat through 6-weekly conference calls. Several new members joined the Steering Committee, in response to our effort to ensure good geographical representation, as well as a balance in terms of gender, HIV-status and thematic diversity.

2005 Steering Committee members:

- Hannah Bate - National AIDS Trust – United Kingdom;
- Chris Lambrechts – Sensoa – Belgium;
- Rian van de Braak – AIDS Foundation East West– Russian Federation;
- Ton Coenen – Aids Fonds ~Soa Aids Nederland– the Netherlands;
- Kirsten Jensen - Aids Fondet – Denmark;
- Emmanuel Trenado – Aides – France;
- Maria Georgescu- Aras – Romania;
- Ulrich Heide – Deutsche AIDS Stiftung – Germany;
- Mauro Guarinieri – European AIDS Treatment Group – Italy;
- Ophelia Haanyama – Noak’s Ark Red Cross – Sweden;
- Zuhra Halimova - OSI – Tajikistan;
- Olena Kucheruk – IHRD – Ukraine.

The Secretariat consisted in 2005 of a part-time Coordinator and Assistant in the Western Office in Amsterdam and a full-time Coordinator in the Eastern Office in Vilnius.

Contact details AIDS Action Europe Secretariat

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