

Annual Report 2004

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

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Introduction

As 2005 unfolds with very promising perspectives, we want to thank all of you for your support and commitment throughout the first year of AIDS Action Europe. As the new Pan European NGO Partnership on HIV and AIDS, it is our aim to contribute to the global fight against HIV and AIDS. We are the European partner of the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations.

The past year has been a productive one. AIDS Action Europe was launched officially at the Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe, last March in Brussels. Many of you attended that meeting, and together with around 100 European NGOs, we were able to set the priorities for our work for the coming years.

AIDS Action Europe has three priority lines of action:

- Addressing the rise of HIV and STIs in Western Europe
- Supporting an effective response to HIV and AIDS in Central and Eastern Europe
- Advocating for a sufficient resource mobilisation for the global epidemic

For each of these priority areas, work will take place at the policy, advocacy, lobbying and practice level.

We have been able 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. In 2005, we will continue our active advocacy. We are happy to inform you that AIDS Action Europe has become a member of the European Union's Think Tank on HIV/AIDS. Together with the European Aids Treatment Group, we will represent European NGOs, who will be consulted prior to each meeting of the Think Tank.

Due to budgetary restrictions and general start-up processes, we have not been in contact with our members as much as we would have liked to. We are working very hard on developing a good communication strategy. Shortly, we plan to send the first AIDS Action Europe Newsletter and launch our website.

In order to lower the barriers for joining us, we have waived all membership fees for the first two years of registration. However, it is clear that AIDS Action Europe is definitely in need of voluntary contributions from its members, next to other funding mechanisms. AIDS Action Europe will therefore answer to the call for proposals that the European Commission has sent out. A broader financial basis would enable us to develop our role as a switchboard for *your* expertise and experience. Because that's what our partnership is all about: bringing people and organisations together, physically and virtually, so we can learn from each other and improve the response that the HIV epidemic calls for. We hope we can count on your support.

We are grateful as well for the support of our 2004 activities by GlaxoSmithKline's Positive Action Programme, Aids Fonds, Soa Aids Nederland, Aids Fondet, Deutsche Aids Stiftung and member organisations.

Martine de Schutter
Coordinator
AIDS Action Europe

Chris Lambrechts
Chair Steering Committee
AIDS Action Europe

March 2005

Executive Summary

In general, AIDS Action Europe has developed its activities according to the work plan 2004. Below are presented some highlights of the main achievements.

Three state-of-the-art papers were developed and widely disseminated on AIDS Action Europe's priority lines of action:

- Addressing the rise of HIV and STIs in Western Europe
- Supporting an effective response to HIV and AIDS in Central and Eastern Europe
- Advocating for a sufficient resource mobilisation for the global epidemic

On March 22 & 23 The Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe took place in Brussels. About 100 European NGOs attended the meeting. The Open Forum brought consensus among the NGOs on the priority actions to halt the further spread of the epidemic. It resulted in action plans for the three priority lines of action.

A Secretariat was established at Soa Aids Nederland in the Netherlands. In addition, preparatory work was initiated for a merger with ICASO's Eastern European Partnership Office in Lithuania, which is now called Eastern Office.

AIDS Action Europe was very successful in establishing closer relationships with the European Commission. We played an active role in assuring that the voices and needs of civil society were heard at the Ministerial Conferences on HIV/AIDS in Dublin and Vilnius. AIDS Action Europe, together with the European AIDS Treatment Group, were invited to become a member of the European Think Tank on HIV/AIDS. At the Think Tank, we represent the voices and concerns of European NGOs.

Due to budgetary restrictions, we have not been able yet to establish an advocacy liaison office in Brussels. We'll keep working on realising this goal in the coming period.

We contributed towards the strengthening of NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, through a scholarship programme to enable participation at the Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe. In addition, we contributed to the development of the proposal for the AIDS Action & Integration projects 2005-2008, lead by Aides.

In conclusion, the first year of AIDS Action Europe has been a very challenging one. We have reached many of our objectives, but realise at the same time that there is much work ahead and we're only at the start of what is to become a broad European movement of NGOs advocating for more active involvement in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Mission and guiding principles

AIDS Action Europe wants to contribute to the global fight against HIV and AIDS. The Partnership is an integral part of a global effort and is linked to global partnerships including the International Council of Aids Service Organisations (ICASO).

AIDS Action Europe is the European partner of ICASO and subscribes 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, 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

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
- "Europe" is defined according to the World Health Organization definition
- The Eastern Office 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 AIDS service organisations (ASOs) can bring to European and global HIV efforts is valued and endeavoured. Civil society – best represented by ASOs, organisations of people living with HIV and other vulnerable groups – has enormous experience and expertise to bring to the international fight against AIDS
- AIDS Action Europe values clarity and focus; AIDS Action Europe 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

Working areas and working levels of AIDS Action Europe

There are three priority 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
- HIV in Central and Eastern European countries – the role of NGOs, capacity building and the exchange of experience and information and resource mobilisation
- Resource mobilisation for the global epidemic – activating the role of Europe in mobilising resources (nationally and internationally)

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

Goals, activities and results in 2004

In general, the work has been carried out according to the work plan 2004 decided upon at the Steering Committee meeting in January.

AIDS Action Europe had defined the following actions for 2004:

- Develop lines of action on 3 priority areas
- Organise a Policy Meeting on HIV/AIDS
- Establish a Secretariat
- Organise European HIV/AIDS NGO representation
- Establish (participation in) a Liaison Office in Brussels
- Capacity building and training

Development of lines of action on 3 priority areas

Goal: To develop the key thematic areas on which AIDS Action Europe will focus in 2004 and 2005.

In the first half of 2004, experts developed key papers on each of the three thematic areas that were prioritised:

- Towards a framework for accelerated innovation in HIV and STI prevention in Europe. P. Adam & J. de Wit. 2004
- Situation analysis and action plan on HIV & AIDS in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the context of the EU enlargement. A. W. Simon. 2004

- The role of Europe in mobilising resources to fight the global AIDS Pandemic: Advocacy Priorities 2004-2005. J. Godwin. 2004

The key papers provided AIDS Action Europe with a thorough analysis of the current situation, identification of existing policies and practices in Europe, identification of gaps in response and suggested plans for action. The activities were co-ordinated through three working groups led by Steering Committee members and Steering Committee co-chairs have been elected to take the lead in the development of each priority area. The background documents were distributed among a wide audience, in preparation of a policy meeting early 2004, and are accessible through the AIDS Action Europe webpage www.aidsactioneurope.org.

Policy meeting on HIV/AIDS

Goal: To launch AIDS Action Europe, establish an inclusive and representative membership and jointly define a European agenda for action.

In order to proceed rapidly with the objective of an inclusive, representative and democratic partnership, the interim Steering Committee organised the Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe on March 22&23 2004 in Brussels. AIDS Action Europe was formally launched at this meeting.

The invitation to attend the Open Forum was sent to around 500 organisations in Europe. The Secretariat received 42 scholarship applications from Central and Eastern Europe, 20 of these were granted. The Secretariat developed criteria to facilitate a transparent scholarship selection. Additional scholarships were provided through funding resulting from the Integration Projects coordinated by AIDES (France) In preparation of the Open Forum, the Secretariat coordinated the development of 3 background papers on the key lines of action of AIDS Action Europe. These papers served as the starting point for the discussion among the Open Forum audience.

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.

The Open Forum brought together about 100 participants from Western, Central and Eastern Europe. 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.

At the Open Forum, working groups met during two days and developed action plans on the three core lines of action for AIDS Action Europe and associated members, partners and sponsors, to fight the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Europe and world-wide. These action plans are the basis for the future activities of the AIDS Action Europe Steering Committee, Secretariat and members.

The report from the Open Forum was distributed widely among the conference participants and through the database of 500 contacts. The report is available in English and Russian and was disseminated among 300 participants of the 2nd Open Europe Conference 'Europe and HIV/AIDS: new challenges, new opportunities' (September 16-17, Vilnius, Lithuania). The report was disseminated as well through the stands from the Aids Fonds and GlaxoSmithKline at the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok.

Establish a Secretariat

Goal: Establish a Secretariat of AIDS Action Europe.

In October 2003 the interim Steering Committee decided that Aids Fonds would act as the interim Secretariat for AIDS Action Europe and would provide it with an interim co-ordinator. At the Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe the location of the Secretariat (Amsterdam) and coordinator were confirmed.

The AIDS Action Europe Secretariat consisted in 2004 of a part-time coordinator and secretary. The first trimester of 2004 was dedicated to a large extent to the organisation of the Brussels meeting to formally launch the start of AIDS Action Europe. The second trimester focused on the recruitment of member organisations and establishment of an updated database. The second half of 2004 focused heavily on strengthening of relations with the European Commission in order to get HIV/AIDS higher on the European public health agenda.

Database of organisations:

The Secretariat has worked on the development of an updated database of European AIDS-related NGOs and CBOs. The EuroCASO database developed by Groupe Sida Geneve was utilised as a starting point, updated and further enriched with other contacts, including from the Eastern Office database. The database can and has been used for both e-mail communications as well as regular mailings.

Membership:

The Steering Committee decided to send out a call to formalise membership of AIDS Action Europe through registration and payment of a membership fee. The Secretariat developed the necessary registration forms and systems. In July the invitation to become a member, partner or sponsor was sent out to around 500 European contacts. By the end of the year, 20 organisations had signed-up as a member.

AIDS Action Europe website:

The Secretariat explored the possibility to develop an AIDS Action Europe website. However, the estimated costs exceeded by far the available budget, both in terms of web-site design and building as well as maintenance. As a temporary solution, the webpage www.aidsfonds.nl/AIDSActionEurope was improved and is regularly updated. Currently it is directly accessible through www.aidsactioneurope.org

Communication and dissemination of information:

The invitation to the Open Forum was disseminated among a wide audience, as well as the invitation to become a member. Recently, the Secretariat started to utilise the e-mail database to disseminate and forward relevant information. The Secretariat kept the Steering Committee regularly informed on new publications and (outcomes of) important meetings.

External Exchange and Coordination:

The Secretariat received an increasing number of requests for information and for putting organisations and people in contact with each other. This signifies that the AIDS Action Europe Secretariat is definitely considered to be a resource for information and networking. The number of requests received by email has increased so substantially, that it has become difficult for the Secretariat to respond adequately, timely and personally. The development of a communication strategy is a priority. The Secretariat has met and discussed roles, responsibilities and opportunities for exchange and coordination with several European AIDS networks, like AIDS & Mobility, and stands in close contact with organisations like OSI, UNAIDS, Stop AIDS Alliance.

The Secretariat prepared two Steering Committee meetings and the Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe and coordinated the participation of AIDS Action Europe representatives in 6 European events.

Meetings of the Steering Committee:

The Steering Committee met three times

- Antwerp, Belgium, January 22 & 23
- Brussels, Belgium, March 21 & 23
- Vilnius, Lithuania, September 15

Funding and fundraising:

The Secretariat maintained close contact with the main sponsor, GlaxoSmithKline, and was successful in securing additional funding for the Open Forum and the general Secretariat. AIDES, a member of the Steering Committee, applied for and was granted by the European Commission the project "AIDS Action & Integration projects 2005-2008", in which AIDS Action Europe is a partner. At the Open Forum, the funding organisations that are part of the Steering Committee decided on a separate meeting on fund-raising for NGO support in Central and Eastern Europe. This meeting took place in Bonn in April. At the meeting, the participating organisations committed to increase their support and funding.

AIDS Action Europe's activities in 2004 were made possible by financial contributions from Glaxo Smith Kline's Positive Prevention Programme, Aidsfonds, AIDS-Fondet, Deutsche Aids Stiftung, Aides, Finnish AIDS Council and contributions from AIDS Action Europe members.

European HIV/AIDS NGO representation

Goal: To support the representation of European NGOs in different international organisations like UNAIDS, GFATM and ICASO and to organise/support the process of identifying representatives.

AIDS Action Europe has strengthened its relations with many external contacts, with a special focus on the European Commission. AIDS Action Europe representatives were invited to participate in several meetings, which are summarised below. These meetings were excellent advocacy moments and have served to disseminate AIDS Action Europe's point of view.

Dublin Conference on Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia
Dublin, February 2004

AIDS Action Europe Representative: Arnaud W. Simon

AIDS Action Europe played an active role in the development of the 'Civil society perspective on the Dublin Declaration to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia'

Global Video Link on HIV/AIDS in Europe
Brussels, March 23

AIDS Action Europe representatives: Arnaud W. Simon, Peter van Rooijen

Video Conference organised by the World Bank that brought together AIDS Action Europe representatives with World Bank offices in Washington DC, Brussels, Chisinau and Moscow. The AIDS Action Europe representatives presented the outcomes of the Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe, focusing particularly on the action plan for Central and Eastern Europe.

First EU Open Health Forum
Brussels, May 17

AIDS Action Europe Representative: Martine de Schutter

Theme: Health in an enlarged Europe.

At the closing session, the New EU Commissioner Telicka announced to put HIV/AIDS back on the EC health agenda.

Meeting combating social exclusion HIV/AIDS
Bucharest, June 17-18

Organised by the European Forum on HIV/AIDS, Children, Young People and Families

AIDS Action Europe representative: Arnaud W. Simon who gave a presentation on AIDS Action Europe.

Partners in Europe session
Bangkok, July 13

Organised by GlaxoSmithKline.

AIDS Action Europe representatives: Peter van Rooijen, Ton Coenen, Henriette Laursen, Arnaud W. Simon.

Meetings with EU Commissioner Telicka

On August 30 the Coordinator Martine de Schutter and Steering Committee member Ton Coenen met with European Commissioner Mr. Telicka. AIDS Action Europe was invited by Mr. Telicka to inform him about AIDS Action Europe and discuss the EC strategy on HIV/AIDS. All agreed that these meetings should be held regularly and Mr. Telicka's committed to include AIDS Action Europe among an advisory committee on HIV/AIDS for the European Commission.

On September 17, AIDS Action Europe representatives were invited to a breakfast session with EC Commissioner Telicka to inform him about the concerns and demands from civil society, in relation to the draft Vilnius Declaration to be discussed at the Ministerial Conference on HIV/AIDS.

NGO advocacy meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania

On September 15, AIDS Action Europe organised the NGO meeting 'Uniting our voices and strengths in the fight against HIV & AIDS' in Vilnius, Lithuania, prior to the 2nd Open Europe Conference 'Europe and HIV/AIDS: new challenges, new opportunities'.

Number of participants: 30.

Result: joint review by NGOs of the draft Vilnius Declaration on Measures to Strengthen Responses to HIV/AIDS in the European Union and in Neighbouring Countries. This resulted in a joint statement 'Civil society demands commitments rather than promises'. This statement was sent out as a press release and distributed among the hundreds of participants at the 2nd European Conference (September 16-17) and at the Ministerial Conference on HIV/AIDS on September 17.

Plenary presentation on AIDS Action Europe at 2nd Open Europe Conference

The AIDS Action Europe coordinator presented the mission and activities, especially in relation to Central and Eastern Europe, to the audience of 300 persons present at this European conference in Vilnius.

Advocacy moment at Ministerial Conference

AIDS Action Europe managed to get a slot of 15 minutes during a plenary session of the closed Ministerial Conference, at which the NGO statement was delivered and the demands and concerns of civil society were explained.

Further relations with the European Commission

As a consequence of the active strengthening of relations with the European Commission, AIDS Action Europe was invited to become part of several committees and groups set up by the European Commission to monitor the implementation of the Vilnius Declaration and EU working paper on HIV/AIDS. Among these, the most important one is the Think Tank on HIV/AIDS.

Coordination with ICASO

The Secretariat initiated a working relation with ICASO. However, due to the workload related to the Open Forum and the start-up phase, these contacts were limited. At the Open Forum, a meeting with ICASO representatives led to decisions on the process of ICASO representation in Europe, including the merger with the ICASO Eastern European Partnership Office, to become part of the AIDS Action Europe Secretariat, starting January 1, 2005. The AIDS Action Europe Western and Eastern Office Coordinators attended the ICASO annual planning meeting with all regional Secretariats end November and contributed to the meeting of experts and stakeholders on 'Monitoring the progress made on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment: Rolling out ICASO's UNGASS Monitoring and Evaluation Project.

Establish a Liaison office in Brussels

Goal: Establish (participation in) a Liaison Office for AIDS Action Europe and a European HIV/AIDS NGO Liaison Officer in Brussels.

More than in the years before, Brussels (the European Commission and the European Parliament) will play a key role in policy development on areas that are of priority to the work of European HIV/AIDS NGOs, such as Health, Development, Research and Trade (WTO). The International HIV/AIDS Alliance and Aids Fonds have established a lobbying and liaison office in Brussels, the STOP AIDS Alliance. The focus of this work is international development and HIV and HIV research issues.

At the beginning of 2004 AIDS Action Europe decided to work towards establishing a liaison/lobbying function, alongside the Stop AIDS Alliance, with a focus on HIV in Western, Eastern and Central Europe. The fundraising for this position has been partially successful through the AIDS Action & Integration projects 2005-2008, but no funds were secured for 2004.

Capacity Building & Training

Goal: To stimulate the sharing of information and to organise opportunities for exchange and learning.

Existing AIDS service organisations in most Eastern European and Central Asian countries generally are quite young and do not have enough capacity and experience. This is also one of the reasons they encounter difficulties in searching for funding sources. Therefore, not surprisingly, many of the respondents in the Inventory conducted for AIDS Action Europe flagged the importance of capacity building and training.

In 2004, AIDS Action Europe has contributed to the proposal developed by Aides on the AIDS Action & Integration Projects 2005-2008, which was granted by the European Commission. This project is entirely dedicated to capacity building and training of NGO from Central and Eastern Europe.

AIDS Action Europe contributed as well to the strengthening of capacities in Central and Eastern Europe through its scholarship programme for the Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe, that enabled 20 NGOs to attend.

Reports produced

- The Open Forum on AIDS Action in Europe. Brussels, March 22 & 23, 2004. Report and Action Plan (in English & Russian)
- Mission, Governance and Membership Paper (in English & Russian)
- Towards a framework for accelerated innovation in HIV and STI prevention in Europe. P. Adam & J. de Wit.
- Situation analysis and action plan on HIV & AIDS in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the context of the EU enlargement. A. W. Simon.
- The role of Europe in mobilising resources to fight the global AIDS Pandemic: Advocacy Priorities 2004-2005. J. Godwin.

All reports are available on www.aidsactioneurope.org.

Press and articles

- Article on the launch of AIDS Action Europe in Soa Aids Magazine Yr 1, number 1, 2004, the Netherlands.
- Message on AIDS Action Europe and the Open Forum in Central & Eastern European Harm Reduction Network NEWS DIGEST March 1-31, 2004
- Press note on AIDS Action Europe for meeting with the Dutch press prior to the Bangkok International AIDS Conference.
- Press note 'Civil society demands commitments rather than promises', September 17 released in Vilnius.

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2004 Steering Committee members

- Yusef Azad/Hannah Bate - National AIDS Trust – United Kingdom
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- Rian van de Braak – AFEW – Russian Federation
- Peter van Rooijen/Ton Coenen – Aids Fonds ~Soa Aids Nederland– the Netherlands
- Henriette Laursen - Aids Fondet - Denmark
- Emmanuel Trenado – Aides - France
- Maria Georgescu- Aras – Romania
- Pedro Marques – Abraco – Portugal
- Ulrich Heide – Deutsche AIDS Stiftung – Germany

AIDS Action Europe's activities in 2004 were made possible by financial contributions from Glaxo Smith Kline's Positive Prevention Programme, Aidsfonds, AIDS-Fondet, Deutsche Aids Stiftung, Aides, Finnish AIDS Council and contributions from AIDS Action Europe members.