

MINUTES AIDS ACTION EUROPE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

MINSK, 15-16 OCTOBER 2012

Participants:

BRIAN WEST (EATG, UK), **FERENC BAGYINSZKY** (Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, Hungary), **ANKE VAN DAM** (AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW), the Netherlands), **DASHA OCHERET** (Eurasian Harm Reduction Network, Lithuania), **ELENA GRIGORYEVA** (Belarusian national network of PLWH – NGO Belarusian PLWH Community, Belarus), **MARTIN VAN OOSTROM** (Soa Aids Nederland, the Netherlands), **ASSEL JANAYEVA** (Public Organization “Amulet”, Kazakhstan), **DEJANA RANKOVIC** (Youth of Jazas, Serbia), **SVITLANA MOROZ** (All-Ukraine PLWH Network, Ukraine), **MARTINE DE SCHUTTER** (AIDS Action Europe Office (Soa Aids Nederland), The Netherlands), **NINA SCHAT** (AIDS Action Europe Office (Soa Aids Nederland), The Netherlands), **MAUREEN SELLMEIJER** (AIDS Action Europe Office (Soa Aids Nederland), The Netherlands), **DIEUWKE BOSMANS** (AIDS Action Europe Office (Soa Aids Nederland), The Netherlands)

Apologies:

HARRY WITZTHUM (Swiss AIDS Federation, Switzerland), **YUSEF AZAD** (National AIDS Trust, UK), **LELLA COSMARO** (LILA Milano ONLUS – Lega Italiana per la Lotta contro l’AIDS, Italy)

1 HIV/AIDS in Belarus

Lena Grigoryeva, Chair of the AIDS Action Europe Steering Committee, gave a presentation on the current situation and the burning issues around HIV/AIDS in Belarus. The presentation was followed by a discussion between the Steering Committee (SC) and board members of Belarusian PLHIV Community.

2 Strategic developments & choices

2.1 Review action list Milan SC meeting

Most actions on the action list were followed up or are back on the agenda of this meeting.

2.2 Update on the financial situation and perspectives on the future.

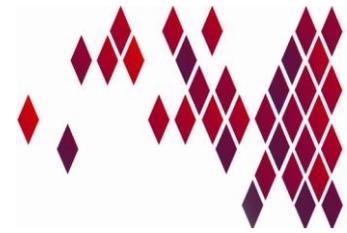
As often at the autumn SC meeting, AIDS Action Europe does not know at this moment in time what financial coverage there will be for next year. So every year at this point we look into the different scenarios for the (near) future. Due to the financial crisis funders take their decisions about money later and subsequently, at this meeting the SC cannot make decisions regarding the different scenarios yet.

2.3 European HIV Legal Forum

The Legal Forum will focus this first period on access to services and health insurance for migrants with HIV in an irregular situation. A questionnaire is being prepared based on the questions sent in from 5 pilot countries. The Legal Forum will function under the umbrella of AIDS Action Europe. But the legal experts are not necessarily connected to AIDS Action Europe or AIDS Action Europe member organisations: AIDS Action Europe is the platform where the legal expert can meet for this Legal Forum. AIDS Action Europe needs to secure some funding for this project.

2.4 Joint Action on Quality in HIV Prevention & IQHIV

AIDS Action Europe will be a partner in the Joint Action, which starts in 2013. It is primarily of interest to EU and neighbouring countries. AIDS Action Europe will be a member of the managing group and especially of the dissemination part of the project: share it through the Clearinghouse and into Eastern Europe and Russian speaking countries. AIDS Action Europe will also be involved in the policy development part: making sure it is being put on the CSF and Think Tank



agenda's.

2.5 HIV In Europe initiative

The draft work plan was shared for input. AIDS Action Europe looks into how the plans can be connected to existing AIDS Action Europe projects. The SC appeals to the organisers to understand the importance of the conference taking place in Eastern Europe and to have a more gender sensitive agenda than was the case at the last conference.

3 Strategic issues & work with partners

3.1 CIS initiative & Future activities for members in EECA

In Milan the SC decided it would focus its advocacy actions for EECA in 2012 on the Commonwealth of Independent States to improve the access of AIDS Action Europe members in their native countries to national/local funding and strengthen NGO's capacity. The idea is trying to get a seat for the Chair of the SC at the newly to be installed CIS council on HIV, Malaria and TB. Getting a seat is about recognition of the value of civil society as a partner.

3.2 Discussing members needs and our focus for the coming year(s)

Several suggestions were made by the SC regarding members needs and future projects:

- The chair together with the office will keep the contacts with the CIS made until now and explore further.
- Contact other regional networks to explore joint interests and a joint strategy on advocacy.
- Keep supporting our members in their advocacy skills through technical expertise/assistance/networking.
- Explore other possibilities for advocacy: is CIS the only way to go forward?

A strategy working group was formed to define further steps for the next SC meeting.

3.3 Civil Society Forum & Think Tank

An update was given on what the CSF has been working on during the last few months: among other things, sending several protest letters as part of their advocacy role. Next to that the SC gave input for the agenda of the CSF as well as of the Think Tank. Also the SC discussed the lack of attendance from participants at the last CSF. The SC decided that AIDS Action Europe members would be informed about who is their country representative in the CSF.

3.4 Strategy of cooperation with regional/sub regional networks

AIDS Action Europe has had several expressions of interest from other regional networks for partnership. At the moment there is a distinction between partners and members of AIDS Action Europe. As a network AIDS Action Europe serves its members and co-operates with its partners.

A general Memorandum of Understanding for partnership will be written. The regional networks that contacted AIDS Action Europe will be invited to register through the website as partners.

3.5 Upcoming key meetings

The Steering Committee reviewed the list of upcoming meetings and decided on representation and roles of the Steering Committee and AIDS Action Europe staff. For an updated list of key meetings, click [here](#).

4 Communication, work plan & governance

4.1 Communication Strategy

A presentation was given about statistics of AIDS Action Europe's communication tools. What AIDS Action Europe has been doing in the past years is "building reach". The next step is "collaboration": increasing interaction with our members. The SC held a brainstorm session on how to achieve this. The Communications Coordinator will compile an overview of the



outcomes of the session and work out realistic ideas in concrete steps to be carried out in the coming months.

4.2 Work plans, budget and fundraising issues

The SC was updated on the 2012 work plan and budget. The general and core activities are managed well. The ROST project that will not have a third year, due to lack of funding. The office has been more actively trying to get organisations to upload their materials in the Clearinghouse. Concern is both short and longer term sustainability. The strategy working group develops short and longer term financial scenarios to be discussed at December conference call.

4.3 Governance

There will be a vacancy in the SC from January 1, 2013 on. The profile of the SC members and the function of the SC as a whole is a question to be addressed as well by the long-term strategy working group. An updated version of the Ethical Code was presented on which the SC members gave their suggestions and remarks, which will be incorporated in the updated version of the ethical code.

5 Any other business

5.1 Place and date next meeting

Amsterdam 22nd + 23rd of April 2013.

5.2 Evaluation of the meeting

The organisation and preparations of the meeting were very well rated. The SC expressed its respect for the bravery of the Belarusian NGOs who have to work under very difficult circumstances.

Press conference

A well-attended press conference was held for Belarusian mass media, titled **HIV-positive citizens of Belarus have the right to live**. At the press conference Belarus Community of PLHIV and AIDS Action Europe jointly stressed the vulnerable position of people living with HIV and appealed to the Belarusian government to provide the right to live, by:

- increasing funding for HIV prevention efforts based on GIPA;
- including national networks of PLHIV in the execution of country HIV programs;
- fulfilling its obligations to finance antiretroviral drugs from the state budget.

AIDS Action Europe featured in several Belarusian news items on websites and national television.

AIDS Action Europe Members and Stakeholder meeting

10 people from 10 different Belarusian NGOs came to discuss with the AIDS Action Europe SC the main challenges in Belarus regarding HIV/AIDS. Main topics were:

- The vulnerability of Civil Society in Belarus. In general NGOs are focused on survival, because of no funding and constant changing of rules. This makes the need for networking be pushed to the background.
- How to advocate for PLHIV. It is difficult to make the government understand the importance of listening to the community. It appeared not to be clear whom to address and how.
- Gaining influence with political and governmental structures. Civil Society needs to build long term relationships with people in key positions, use mass media if possible and should find innovative forms of partnership (CIS, parliament, local businesses, tax authorities, etc).