

Highlights from the 15th meeting of the HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum

The HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum (CSF) has been established by the European Commission as a working group to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organisations, including those representing people living with HIV/AIDS, in policy development and implementation and in information exchange activities.

Below is a short overview of some of the topics that were discussed at the meeting (Luxembourg, June 4 & 5, 2012). The full meeting report and all presentations are available for download on the AIDS Action Europe website <http://www.aidsactioneurope.org>.

Access to treatment in times of financial crisis

Participants discussed the results of a second inventory on stock-outs in HIV & HCV treatment diagnostics and their cause. No stock-outs were reported in 13 countries. However, in a number of countries problems with stock-outs, challenges in the availability of more expensive drugs, no availability for viral load checks, and no adequate supplies of syringes were reported. These countries include France, Portugal, Belgium, Spain, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Macedonia, Latvia, Lithuania. The CSF statement “Accelerating progress in Europe to Universal Access to HIV treatment during a time of financial crisis”, which was released last March at the HIV in Europe conference, will be further disseminated towards the EU and European Parliament.

Human rights and criminalisation

The CSF discussed worrisome developments in Europe, in particular the anti-LGTB laws adopted in Russian cities; the criminalisation of HIV-positive sex workers and stigmatisation of migrants in Greece; de facto end of funding for prevention and NGO work; and the ending of access to treatment for undocumented migrants and for the unemployed/uninsured population in Spain. We discussed together how the CSF could support local actions and looked also into useful tools and positive developments such as the Oslo Declaration (www.hivjustice.net/oslo) and a new legislative proposal on decriminalisation of HIV transmission in Switzerland.

HIV effective prevention strategies for key populations

Preliminary results of a tender desk study on effective HIV prevention strategies for key populations, funded by the EC, were discussed. The final products are expected to be available in November and will consist of: a report based on a quick scan of 33 countries; a guide for policy makers on effective targeted HIV prevention with dedicated and systematic scenarios; and a visualisation of HIV ECDC surveillance data with the impact produced by effective prevention interventions targeted to key populations over time.

And more:

- EU Presidencies: how to make sure that HIV is part of the health agenda
- Promoting earlier testing and care: outcomes of the HIV in Europe initiative and qualitative study results of the Cobatest project
- European network of people who use drugs: findings from a mapping
- Updates from European Commission, WHO Europe, ECDC, UNODA, EMCDDA, Global Fund

