

HIV in Europe Copenhagen 2012 Conference

Time: Monday 19 – Tuesday 20 March 2011

Background

The conference marks five years of the HIV in Europe Initiative which has the overall objective of ensuring that HIV positive patients enter care earlier than is currently the case. Today 30-50% of European people living with HIV/AIDS are unaware of their status and approximately 50% of them present late for care.

The bi-annual conferences of HIV in Europe (Brussels 2007 and Stockholm 2009 under the Swedish Presidency of the European Union) are seen as an important step towards decreasing the number of persons presenting late for care by creating a platform for national and innovative best practice initiatives on testing around Europe and sharing knowledge and experiences across borders. The importance of having effective systems for testing in place and to work towards creating a positive perception of testing will be an important focus area of the conference.

The HIV in Europe initiative has influenced and in some cases dictated the policy and normative discourse on testing and early access to care in Europe through the research projects it has initiated, the scientific conferences it has organised and its policy & advocacy work. The initiative has established itself as a pan-European platform for sharing ideas and knowledge and is recognised as an important stakeholder in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It has generated numerous abstracts and articles to a large number of conferences and journals during the last 3 years. One of the strengths of the initiative is the representation from both civil society, policy makers, health professionals and European public health institutions, as WHO Europe and ECDC, both of which sit as observers to the Steering Committee and the European Commission.

Lastly, the ECDC launched a new set of testing guidelines 1 December 2010. At the ceremony to launch these at the European Parliament, Commissioner Dalli underlined that testing makes good public health sense and urged all member states to have effective systems for testing in place and to work towards creating a positive perception of testing.

Conference Objectives

The main objectives of the HIV in Europe Copenhagen Conference 2012 are to:

1. Provide an overview of European innovative initiatives and best practices on optimal testing and earlier care - how to bring people to testing?
2. Sustain and fuel the political discussion of the WHO EURO testing guidelines (2010), ECDC testing guidelines (2010) and ECDC-EMCDDA Guidance "Prevention and control of infections among people who inject drugs" (2011), the EU Communication on HIV/AIDS and EP Resolution adopted 1 Dec 2011 and their implementation at national levels
3. Accompany the debate at EU HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum and Think Tank level on HIV testing
4. Provide opportunities for multi-stakeholder dialogue to develop creative solutions to unresolved challenges in research and implementation of HIV policies and programmes to improve early diagnosis and care of HIV across Europe - which people are prevented from testing and treatment, which measures are needed to overcome these problems, which are the incentives for policy makers and people undiagnosed to become more active?
5. Discuss and take forward the strategy for implementation of changes based on the concrete outcomes of the projects and initiative.

6. Inform leaders, including key policy makers and donors, as to increase their commitment to ensure that HIV infected patients enter care earlier in the course of their infection than is currently the case.
7. Increase public awareness of the public health problems associated with late presentation for HIV care.
8. Present data available on temporal trends of late presenters and the undiagnosed population and data on the cost-effectiveness of HIV testing demonstrating how scaling up HIV testing can contribute to more sustainable health systems.
9. Discuss HIV testing and linkage to care and testing among key populations and the role of new HIV testing diagnostic technologies

Structure of HIV in Europe

The Coordinating Centre of the HIV in Europe initiative is based at: Copenhagen HIV Programme, University of Copenhagen.

The initiative further has a Political Secretariat based at European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG) in Brussels and the financial administration is based at: AIDS Fonds Netherlands.

Abstract categories

A call for abstracts was sent out in September 2011. 124 abstracts were submitted of which 33 accepted for oral presentation and 67 for poster presentation.

Abstract categories:

1. Lessons learned in the implementation of novel (national) HIV testing strategies and guidelines
2. Approaches and results from the evaluation of testing programmes
3. Scaling up HIV testing among hard-to-reach and heavily affected populations
4. Linking testing to treatment and care
5. Characteristics of PLHIV who present late for HIV care
6. Cost-effectiveness of HIV testing
7. Implications of stigmatisation, criminalisation of HIV and other legal issues for the offer and uptake of HIV testing
8. Use and performance of new HIV testing diagnostic technologies

The abstracts accepted for presentation were based on scores by a scientific committee. The abstracts have a very high scientific level – gathering lessons learned from different HIV testing strategies and programmes from more than 25 European countries.

Funding

HIV in Europe has received a grant from the European Commission for the organising of the conference. The initiative also receives unrestricted funding from a number of pharmaceutical companies.

Participants

Around 300 participants will attend the conference.

One of the strengths of the initiative is the representation from both civil society, policy makers, health professionals and European public health institutions, as WHO Europe and ECDC, both of which sit as observers to the Steering Committee and the European Commission. Participants to the conference will come from all of these groups.

Geographical representation is also important and more than 40 countries will be represented at the conference.

Scholarships

40 scholarships out of 135 received applications have been granted for conference participation. Applications were encouraged from persons working with late presentation for HIV care, optimal testing and earlier care on different levels. In previous conferences, there has been the aim of securing an equal division of participants between civil society, policy makers, health professionals and European public health institutions, which forms the basis of the HIV in Europe initiative.

Scholarship priorities:

- Priority given to applicants from Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries.

Centre	East
Albania	Armenia
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Azerbaijan
Bulgaria	Belarus
Croatia	Estonia
Cyprus	Georgia
Czech Republic	Latvia
Hungary	Lithuania
Montenegro	Republic of Moldova
Poland	Russian Federation
Romania	Ukraine
Serbia	Central Asia
Slovakia	Kazakhstan
Slovenia	Kyrgyzstan
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Tajikistan
	Turkmenistan
	Uzbekistan

- Applicants under 35 years

Organising Committee HIV in Europe Copenhagen 2012 Conference

HIV in Europe – Steering Committee

The Co-Chairs

Ton Coenen AIDS Action Europe, Executive Director, Aids Fonds and STI Aids Netherlands The Netherlands

Jens Lundgren Professor & Chief Physician, University of Copenhagen & Rigshospitalet

Director, Copenhagen HIV Programme, Denmark

Members

Jordi Casabona Scientific Director, Center for HIV/STI Epidemiological Studies of Catalonia (CEEISCAT)

Nikos Dedes Past Chair of the Board of Directors European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG), Greece

José Gatell	Head, Infectious Diseases & AIDS Units, Clinical Institute of Medicine & Dermatology, Hospital Clinic. Professor of Medicine, University of Barcelona, Spain
Brian Gazzard	Professor of Medicine, Imperial College School of Medicine. HIV Research Director, Chelsea & Westminster Hospital, UK
Igor Karpov	Professor, Department of Infectious Diseases Belarus State Medical University
Jürgen Rockstroh	Professor of Medicine, University of Bonn, and Head of an HIV outpatient clinic, Germany
Anders Sönnernborg	MD, PhD, Professor, Department of Medicine Karolinska University Hospital, Sweden
John de Wit	Professor of Sociology, Utrecht University, The Netherlands
Observers	
Vitaly Zhumagliev	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Switzerland
Lali Khotenashvili	WHO Regional Office for Europe, Denmark
Marita Van de Laar	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), Sweden
Lucas Wiessing	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), Portugal
Kevin Fenton	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), USA
Jean-Elie Malkin	UNAIDS RST/ECA, Russia

Other organising committee members

Jeffrey V Lazarus	Copenhagen HIV Programme, Denmark
Ferenc Bagyinszky	Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU), Hungary
Ferran Pujol	HISPANOSIDA, Spain
Henrik Arildsen	HIVEurope, Denmark
Luis Mendao	EATG, Portugal
Miriam Sabin	UNAIDS, Switzerland
Ulrich Marcus	Robert Koch Institute, Germany
Vincent Douris	Sidaction, France
Yusef Azad	NAT, UK
Jan Fouchard	Danish National Board of Health, Denmark
Klaus Legau	STOP AIDS, Denmark
Anna Zakowicz	EATG, Belgium
Maryna Zelenskaya	Ministry of Health, Ukraine
Igor Sobolev	Estonia PLWHA Network, Estonia
Alexey Yakovlev	Botkin Hospital of Infectious Diseases in St. Petersburg, Russia