



AIDS Healthcare Foundation Europe (AHF Europe)

Statement at the 65th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

Agenda item: Global health sector strategies on HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections (2016 – 2021)

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of AIDS Healthcare Foundation Europe.

It is important that issues connected with HIV epidemic in Europe continue to be high on the agenda of the Regional Committee.

The Global health strategy for HIV 2016-2021 guides actions needed to meet ambitious 2030 targets focused on ending the HIV epidemic. The goals and targets are aligned to those of UNAIDS. The 90-90-90 target for 2020 seeks to accelerate access to HIV diagnosis and treatment.

Based on country data, only one country, Sweden, is currently meeting all three targets and many others from the region are well below each of the 90% targets (ECDC, 2015). As we heard in the Regional Director's report, in 2014 the Region experienced the highest increase in new HIV infections since 2004. Especially worrying is continuous increase of new HIV cases in Eastern Europe. Not knowing the HIV status and late diagnosis (CD4<350) add to the picture.

Right now we have all the tools. We can test and diagnose, link to care, treat, retain in care and assure viral suppression. We also know when to treat - to initiate treatment regardless of CD4.

The challenge that remains is implementation: making it happen for people who live with HIV.

To address the challenge strong political commitment on the highest European level is still needed. Turning the tide of HIV epidemic in Africa was possible by the united efforts of world political leaders and African heads of states; PEPFAR and Global Fund resources supported by strong national political will made a change.

Unless European political leaders unanimously recognize the goal of ending the HIV epidemic as part of their political agenda, we will continue to report increase of HIV incidence in Europe and therefore more deaths related both to AIDS and TB; deaths which are preventable today.

We support the need of the Regional Action plan on HIV for 2016-2021 and related budget allocations. We encourage Member States to support the efficiencies on government spending on HIV in the face of diminishing donor funding through review of health policies and practices to maximize the impact of expenditures and we encourage intersectoral collaboration.

We applaud WHO resolution to urge member States to transform health services and move towards people-centered approach. Disease prevention, health care and condition management throughout the life-course, improved quality and health outcomes, reduced health inequalities within a comprehensive continuum of care is what is needed. HIV is a chronic disease. We strongly believe that similar approach would benefit people who are affected by HIV; everybody should be treated with respect.

Thank you.