

ANNUAL REPORT 2008
AIDS Action Europe

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1 Executive summary

WHO Europe/ECDC's most recent HIV/AIDS surveillance data for Europe (update 2007) show that HIV remains of major public health importance, with evidence of increasing transmission of HIV in several countries. Since 2000 the rate of newly reported cases of HIV per million population has almost doubled in Europe. In 2007, a total of 48,892 cases of HIV infection were reported from 49 of 53 countries in the Region. Europe's HIV-epidemic affects most of all vulnerable groups like people who use drugs, men who have sex with men, sex workers, migrants and prisoners. Stigma and discrimination continue to affect not only quality of life of PLHIV but also access to prevention, treatment and care.

AIDS Action Europe's mission is to unite civil society to work towards a more effective response to the HIV epidemic in Europe. We strive for better protection of human rights and universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support. We work towards a reduction of health inequalities in Europe focussing on key vulnerable populations and Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

As regional office of the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), AIDS Action Europe is part of ICASO's mission to mobilize and support diverse community organizations to build an effective global response to HIV and AIDS. This is done within a vision of a world where people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS can enjoy life free from stigma, discrimination, and persecution, and have access to prevention, treatment and care.

In 2008, AIDS Action Europe worked specifically on the following objectives:

- To influence the European and international HIV and AIDS policies through advocacy;
- To strengthen the exchange of good practices and lessons learned and to improve skills of European NGOs by specific projects;
- To improve the exchange and cooperation between members by positioning AIDS Action Europe as matchmaker;
- To improve external communication between the network and different target groups.

Overall, the work plan was carried out as planned. The advocacy activities have grown considerably because there were several opportunities where AIDS Action Europe - often successfully – could strengthen the position of civil society.

As in previous years, AIDS Action Europe worked on its advocacy strategy predominantly through its active contribution to the European HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum (CSF) and the European HIV/AIDS Think Tank. We supported WHO Europe in its monitoring review of the Dublin Declaration. The discussion on the Dublin Declaration at the CSF enabled European NGOs to play an active role in the monitoring and evaluation of the current European HIV/AIDS Communication (policy plan). At the last CSF meeting a list of priorities for the future Communication was drafted. The European Commission (EC) will use this input in 2009 for their first draft of the new Communication. AIDS Action Europe, together with National AIDS Trust and EATG, developed an online petition to improve the protection of people with HIV in the new European legislation 'Equality Directive'.

The AIDS Action Europe Steering Committee met in Lisbon and Paris. To ensure the continuation of AIDS Action Europe's core activities, an application for an operating grant for 2009 was written and submitted to the EC and other donors, and granted.

AIDS Action Europe and the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) have been elected to be the regional coordinator of the Civil Society Support Mechanism (CCSM), established by UNAIDS to get civil society more involved in the implementation and review of the UNGASS Declaration.

AIDS Action Europe has also been involved in the Civil Society Action Team (CSAT). The team, coordinated by ICASO, identifies the barriers for NGO participation in grants from the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and supports NGOs in submitting grant applications.

AIDS Action Europe organized a meeting at the International AIDS Conference (IAC) in Mexico and as the chair of a session on monitoring and dissemination of information at East European and Central Asian AIDS Conference (EECAAC).

As part of the project European Partners in Action on AIDS 3 European seminars were held: voluntary counselling and testing; resource mobilization; and public policy dialogue. The clearinghouse had 490 users and 554 uploaded good practices, which were together downloaded over 27,000 times at the end of 2008.

As part of the project Community-based advocacy and networking to scale-up HIV prevention in an era of expanded treatment 260 NGO representatives attended 12 meetings and working groups organized within the project in Russian and Ukraine. Project also included developing an educational material for the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) community and a guide on advocacy on prevention and treatment adherence for harm reduction programs, among others.

The activities of AIDS Action Europe in 2008 were made possible thanks to financial contributions from the European Commission, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CIDA, GlaxoSmithKline's Positive Action Programme, Aids Fonds, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Deutsche AIDS Stiftung, Soa Aids Nederland, ARAS and in-kind support from other partners in the project European Partners in Action on AIDS.

2 Activities and results

2.1 Advocacy

As co-chair of the EU HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum (CSF) AIDS Action Europe organized together with the European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG) two meetings in 2008. Participants included the 40 CSF members consisting of European NGOs and networks, as well as the European Commission and European/international organizations such as ECDC, WHO Europe, UNAIDS. The conclusions of the CSF were presented to the EU HIV/AIDS Think Tank (TT), a working group of European Member States' representatives. Prominent agenda items of both the CSF and the TT were the review of the Dublin Declaration on Partnership to fight HIV / AIDS in Europe and Central Asia 2004 ('Dublin Declaration') and the involvement of NGOs in the development of the new EU Communication on HIV/AIDS. AIDS Action Europe has supported WHO Europe in its monitoring review of the Dublin Declaration, through evaluators and co-writers. The discussion on the Dublin Declaration at the CSF enabled European NGOs to play an active role in the monitoring and evaluation of the current European HIV/AIDS Communication (policy plan). WHO Europe also presented the Dublin Declaration monitoring reports during the AIDS Action Europe seminar on public policy dialogue. Five participants of the seminar used the report as a lobbying tool in their own country. As part of World AIDS day WHO reported about this process on their website. During the last CSF meeting the current European policy (2006-2009) was reviewed and a list of priorities for the future was established. The European Commission (EC) will use this input in 2009 for their first draft of the new Communication (2010-2013). Following the AIDS Action Europe seminar on legislation, AIDS Action Europe, together with National AIDS Trust and EATG, developed an online petition. The petition intends to improve the protection of people with HIV in the new European legislation 'Equality Directive'. The petition was presented to the European Parliament and the EC and signed by over 70 European organizations. AIDS Action Europe also participated in a public hearing of the EC. A letter was developed for national NGOs to use as a tool to lobby their ministries and EC representatives on the Equality Directive.

2.2 Network Management

As the European network of ICASO AIDS Action Europe took part in ICASO's strategic planning meeting in Kenya. During the meeting a work programme for the coming years was developed. In addition, ICASO started the development of a communication strategy. AIDS Action Europe is part of the working group responsible for the communication strategy and hosted its first meeting in October.

The AIDS Action Europe Steering Committee met in Lisbon and Paris. To ensure the continuation of AIDS Action Europe's core activities, an application for an operating grant for 2009 was written and submitted to the EC and other donors. The proposal was granted, and will focus on continuation of our advocacy and policy activities, as well as the further promotion of linking and learning among members, through the Clearinghouse online platform and other means.

2.3 Support and development of NGOs

AIDS Action Europe and the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) have been elected to be the regional coordinator of the Civil Society Support Mechanism (CCSM). The CCSM was

established by UNAIDS to get civil society more involved in the implementation and review of the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS Declaration). In its capacity as CCSM coordinator AIDS Action Europe wrote a report on the barriers for NGOs to be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the UNGASS Declaration. AIDS Action Europe supported NGOs in writing national shadow reports. The report on barriers was presented during the UNGASS monitoring meeting in New York. Also a list of advocacy items formulated by NGOs from Eastern Europe and Central Asia was presented.

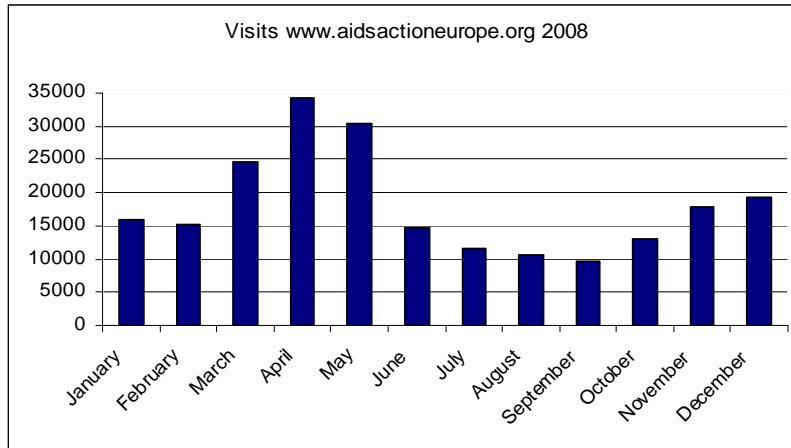
AIDS Action Europe has also been involved in Civil Society Action Team (CSAT). The team, coordinated by ICASO, identifies the barriers for NGO participation in grants from the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and supports NGOs in submitting grant applications. The CSAT informed 250 NGOs about grant procedures of the Global Fund and supported NGOs from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to write applications for the Global Fund.

2.4 Knowledge broker and Communication

AIDS Action Europe organized a meeting at the International Aids Conference (IAC) in Mexico that was attended by 25 people. Among the participants were representatives of member organizations, the European Commission, WHO, UNAIDS, the AIDS Action Europe steering committee and funders. Meetings with (potential) donors have led to new funding agreements. In addition various materials and 2 posters (on 'Gay health' and 'HIV and legislation') were presented. AIDS Action Europe also presented a poster on the Clearinghouse at the East European and Central Asian AIDS Conference (EECAAC) in Moscow. AIDS Action Europe was the chair of a session on monitoring and dissemination of information at EECAAC. The session was attended by representatives of 30 organizations.

Communication with AIDS Action Europe members took place in various ways. The website is regularly updated with announcements, events, vacancies and calls. Besides a comprehensive assessment of the website among several members was carried out. A number of recommendations were successfully followed up. With a total of 217,603 visits in 2008 (see Chart 1) the number of website visits increased by 40% compared to 2007. Through the online registration form AIDS Action Europe welcomed 30 new member organisations in 2008. The e-news was sent 4 times to all members (currently 218) and over 200 other contacts. A clearinghouse update was disseminated 6 times among users of the clearinghouse (currently 497).

Chart 1. Number of visits of AIDS Action Europe website per month in 2008



Source: Webalizer

2.5 Analysis of the results

Overall, the work plan was carried out as planned. The advocacy activities have grown considerably because there were several opportunities where AIDS Action Europe - often successfully – could strengthen the position of civil society. Unfortunately, the vacancy for an advocacy officer for Eastern Europe was not filled and the grant application for an advocacy officer in Brussels was declined. Due to a lack of funding the planned NGO Forum was cancelled.

2.6 Implications for the future

AIDS Action Europe has chosen to submit (an accepted) 'Operating Grant' to the European Commission, in stead of a project application with partner organizations. This new funding offers possibilities to develop AIDS Action Europe's key activities concerning advocacy and communication. The disadvantage is that this grant must be annually applied for.

3 Specific projects

3.1 Project European Partners in Action on AIDS (EPAA)

3.1.1 Objective

To strengthen the capacity of European NGOs through a series of European good practice seminars and the further development of the clearinghouse.

3.1.2 Activities

AIDS Action Europe and its project partners organised the following European seminars in 2008:

Voluntary counselling and testing, partner Aras, Romania

Resource mobilisation, partner STI AIDS Netherlands, Netherlands

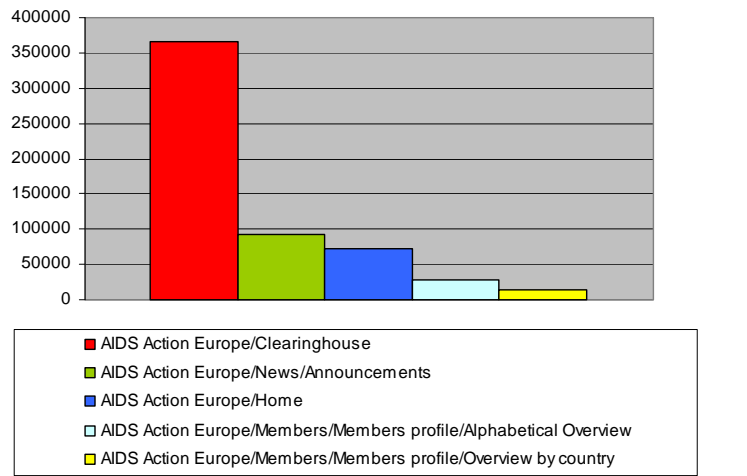
public policy dialogue, partner STI AIDS Netherlands, Netherlands

The AIDS Action Europe clearinghouse has improved its position as the central database for the exchange of good practices in the field of HIV and AIDS in Europe. AIDS Action Europe has conducted an extensive usability test early 2008, which yielded concrete recommendations. In addition a pop-up survey has been online between April and December to get some insight in the behaviour and preferences of the visitors. The most urgent recommendations of the usability test were directly implemented. The other recommendations are part of the 2009 work plan.

3.1.3 Results

The seminar on voluntary counselling and testing had 60 participants from 17 countries in Europe and Central Asia. The resource mobilisation seminar had 45 participants from 28 countries and the public policy dialogue seminar 39 participants from 27 countries. Prior to the seminars an inventory among member organizations and literature studies on the seminar subjects were carried out. The results were published in a pre-seminar report. Following the seminars, a seminar report and guidelines on the seminar subjects were published. All reports are available in English and Russian. A memory stick with all products of the EPAA project over the last 3 years is sent to more than 300 organizations.

The materials of the above mentioned seminars, like all materials from the EPAA seminars, are also available in the clearinghouse. The clearinghouse had 490 users and 554 uploaded good practices, which were together downloaded over 27,000 times at the end of 2008. As in 2007, the clearinghouse was the most visited part of the AIDS Action Europe website in 2008. (Source: AW stats)



3.1.4 Analysis of the results

In general the work is carried out as planned. The project contributed to the further consolidation of AIDS Action Europe as a network and helped positioning itself as a leading European network.

3.1.5 Funding

The project was funded by the European Commission, GlaxoSmithKline's Positive Action Program, Bristol-MyersSquibb, STI AIDS Netherlands, Aids Fonds, German AIDS Foundation, Romanian Ministry of Education and the King Baudouin Foundation.

3.1.6 Implications for the future

The 3-year project is completed. The project has had more positive impact than originally foreseen. It has become very clear that the project responded to a great need for information and linking and learning among NGOs to improve their response. Several follow-up activities ensure that the lessons learned and project products are used beyond the termination of the project.

The clearinghouse will continue through the operating grant. The recommendations from the usability test will be implemented. For instance a system to review and assess the uploaded documents will be built. AIDS Action Europe will also continue to disseminate regular clearinghouse updates.

3.2 Project Community-based advocacy and networking to scale-up HIV prevention in an era of expanded treatment

3.2.1 Objective

To mobilize NGOs stepping-up for advocacy and scaling-up HIV prevention alongside increased attention to treatment access in Russia and Ukraine.

3.2.2 Activities

260 NGO representatives attended 12 meetings and working groups organized within the project in Russia and Ukraine. Educational material for the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender)

community was developed to support the LGBT network advocacy in southern Ukraine. A guide on advocacy on prevention and treatment adherence was sent to harm reduction programs in the regions and is used as a reference guide for the improvement of the project work. Also a video was produced to increase tolerance towards injecting drug users and people living with HIV.

3.2.3 Results

Ukraine

Social contracting mechanism ensuring that HIV-service NGOs can provide services was included in the Bill of the National Program on HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support of PLWHA 2009-2013, also former prisoners were included in the list of most at risk populations. The Coalition of HIV Service Organisations has established a long term partnership and collaboration with the State Correction Department. In the draft amendments of the Ukrainian law the prohibition of discrimination directly or indirectly related to actual or suspected presence of HIV or related to most at risk population groups was included. In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Issues and Labour the concept of community-based rehabilitation services for released persons that include referral service to clinical facilities, which provide TB/HIV/STI prevention, treatment, care and support was developed.

Russia

Russian civil society with strong and active cooperation and coordination of efforts participated in processes related to UNGASS 2008. Mass media representatives made commitments to prepare articles aimed to decrease stigma and discrimination of injecting drug users and PLWHA. The project contributed to the strengthening of the Russian Union of PLWHA, which enables them to advocate more effectively for services for vulnerable groups and effective treatment schemes.

3.2.4 Evaluation of the results

In general the work was carried out as planned.

3.2.5 Funding

The project was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and GlaxoSmithKline's Positive Action programme.

3.2.6 Implications for the future

2009 is the last year of this 5 year project. Project evaluation is planned to capture main results and outcomes of the project. Also discussion about the future is started.

4 Financial report

AIDS Action Europe financial statement 2008 ¹						
Projectname:	AAE general	EPAA project	AAI project	Subtotal SANL	PTAP Lithuania	Total
Staff cost ²	44.754	108.943	2.387	156.084	25.865	181.949
Costs administration ³	9.957	21.179	362	31.498		31.498
Total staff costs	54.711	130.122	2.749	187.582	25.865	213.447
Direct programme/project costs	18.926	168.553	2.673	190.152	262.135	452.287
TOTAL COSTS	73.636	298.675	5.422	377.734	288.000	665.734
Income						
ICASO/ PTAP project				0	288.000	288.000
European Commission		179.956		179.956		179.956
Aids Fonds - Soa Aids Nederland	40.000	8.986		48.986		48.986
BristolMyersSquibb	8.000	27.000		35.000		35.000
Deutsche AIDS Stiftung	15.000			15.000		15.000
GlaxoSmithKline		76.000		76.000		76.000
ICASO	2.574			2.574		2.574
Other funders	4.836	2.500		7.336		7.336
TOTAL INCOME	70.411	294.443	0	364.854	288.000	652.854
RESULT	-3.226	-4.233	-5.422	-12.880	0	-12.880
Sustainability reserve Aids Action Europe per 1 January 2008				186.393		
Deficit 2009				-12.880		
Sustainability reserve AIDS Action Europe per 31 December 2008				173.213		

¹ The financial information that is synthesized in this statement originates from the accounts of STI AIDS Netherlands and the Eurasian Harm Reduction network (PTAP project), as well as the partners that have implemented activities of behalf of AIDS Action Europe, as contractually agreed in the EPAA project.

² Staff costs for STI AIDS Netherlands staff include salary and all related social liabilities, building and associated costs, utilities, telecommunication & computer costs, ordinary administrative expenditure, financial charges, insurances and administration costs.

³ Costs of administration include internal support services such as finances (part not included in staff costs), facility/reception, IT, personnel affairs, management.