

Catch up on testing! For HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs

Register and join Autumn European Testing Week 2021 22-29 November

Why participate in European Testing Week (ETW) this year? More than ever, ETW can help us refocus our attention to HIV, viral hepatitis and STI priorities in our countries and regions.

The COVID-19 pandemic and measures to control it have shifted staff, funding and resources away from other healthcare essentials. In October 2020, UNAIDS reported “*significant decreases in HIV testing services in nearly all countries with available data*”. Country level surveys report similar trends across Europe. While some countries have rebounded to pre-COVID-19 testing levels, in other countries, testing remains low.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the ability of communities, governments and international bodies to take extraordinary measures to tackle infectious diseases. Let’s build on this in our work to increase testing.

It’s time to catch up on testing and regain focus on HIV, viral hepatitis and STI priorities.

Significant gaps remain in diagnosis of all these infections which can undermine international strategies to end HIV, viral hepatitis and STI as public health threats by 2030. Testing, especially in the context of combination prevention, is an essential health service, especially for marginalised and stigmatised populations such as sex workers, people who use drugs, migrants, people in prison, trans people and men who have sex with men, all of whom are often most at risk and most in need of targeted services.

ETW calls for

- [Integrated testing](#)
- Self-testing + self-sampling (for some infections where self-testing is not available)
- Testing in the framework of [Combination Prevention](#)

This year, ETW will launch simultaneously with International Testing Week, which is promoted by [Coalition PLUS](#), with the participation of organizations around the globe.

We are all part of the solution!

Let ETW’s network and resources be part of your solution!

We recognise how difficult it has been to adapt services during the COVID-19 pandemic. During ETW in 2020 and Spring 2021, our webinars and online videos highlighted a number of innovations developed by you including telemedicine, online services, self-testing, open air testing, integrated testing, among many others. We encourage you to continue these great efforts.

In times of limited resources and heightened competition between priority areas, integrated testing for HIV, HBV/HCV and STIs can be a way to improve early diagnosis for all these infections with limited investment, as they share modes of transmission and overlaps in affected groups and high levels of co-infection. As highlighted in the HepHIV 2021 Conference, some of the things that can be done to increase testing and improve early diagnosis are:

- **Investigate opportunities to include HIV, viral hepatitis, STI and TB testing within SARS-CoV-2 testing programmes** in high prevalence areas, settings or populations (e.g. emergency/intensive care units, prisons, homeless shelters etc.).
- **Engage the general public** in the discussion and response to infectious diseases, leveraging the opportunities opened by COVID-19 to communicate with the general public on these subjects;
- **Ensure that messaging is positive, clear and consistent**, originates from trustworthy sources, is relevant to the target groups, and includes a focus on the role of inequalities in controlling infectious diseases.
- **Work to remove criminalising laws and policies and legal barriers to testing interventions**, including barriers to lay-provider testing, testing at home and partner notification by taking advantage of the change in how health service delivery has been changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please register and join ETW, 22-29 November 2021! Make sure to sign up [on the ETW website!](#)

How will November ETW 2021 work?

As restrictions are lifted in most countries across Europe, we hope to see many activities – in-person and online. We invite you to keep sharing your activities, either by tagging us (#EuroTestWeek) on FB or Twitter, or by writing to us to share stories and pictures of your ETW activities!

The ETW secretariat plans to support your activities by:

- providing free online promotional materials;
- developing more interactive online activities (please see www.testingweek.eu or our FB page for more about these activities);
- continuing to provide an online platform where you can share your ETW activities.

How can I participate in ETW?

Similar to past ETWs, all organisations interested in participating are asked to [sign up on the ETW website](#). By signing up on our website, you pledge to engage in activities for the week. There is no minimum requirement for participation, and you can organise as many activities as you wish. For inspiration and support to implement activities, please visit the [ETW website](#).

The ETW secretariat will collect and share your activities within the network so that other organisations can learn from your experience. You can email your plans directly to the secretariat at eurotest.rigshospitalet@regionh.dk or tag us on social media using @EuroTestWeek or our hashtags #EuroTestWeek and #TestTreatPrevent