

Dear European Testing Week network,

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting everyone at the moment and public health responses to the outbreak are rapidly evolving. In light of this, the **Spring European Testing Week (SETW), planned for 15-22 May 2020** will occur but not in the same way as previous years. We suggest proceeding with the week, but to primarily **focus on virtual-based SETW-related activities**. By using ETW's diverse online network and hosting ETW activities virtually, promotion for awareness on the importance of services for HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections (STI), *especially* in times of emergency, can continue while also creating a platform for knowledge-sharing on how you and/or your organisation have adapted services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We recognise that many within the ETW network have had to shift their focus to the COVID-19 response and we stand in solidarity with them as they work on the frontlines of the pandemic. We also recognise that many organisations who have had to close their doors during this time will face uncertainty after the crisis is resolved. It is likely that the people vulnerable to HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs will have great need for services affected by the pandemic. The work of organisations that support them is needed now more than ever, therefore, we want to use Spring European Testing Week to recognise that

- **HIV, viral hepatitis and STI prevention, testing, care and support services are essential services, which must continue to be supported**
- **We must all unite to use our diverse expertise, experiences and lessons learned to support efforts against COVID-19.**

We know from past experiences that cutting back on services can increase new infections, shortages and more stigma and discrimination. We cannot lose sight of the continued work that needs to be done to prevent the transmission of these infections, *especially* during times of crisis. People vulnerable to HIV, hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HCV) overlap with groups at-risk of COVID-19 including people living with HIV with immune suppression and/or advanced chronic viral hepatitis, migrants, persons with tuberculosis, people who use drugs, sex workers, people in prisons and closed settings, and people experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, these groups continue to experience stigma and barriers in accessing prevention, testing and care, which will be further worsened by the ongoing crisis. Together, we can inform the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic with lessons already learned from the HIV, viral hepatitis and STI responses. In particular, how to lead effective, community-led and community-influenced efforts to support work towards earlier diagnosis.

This Spring European Testing Week 2020, we are asking those who can participate to continue to advocate and raise awareness on the importance of HIV, viral hepatitis and STI services through online platforms and to also share how you and your organisation is supporting your community during this global pandemic.

How will the virtual SETW work?

Due to the recommended physical distancing measures put in place throughout the world, we expect that most activities during this time will be focused primarily online and/or by phone. However, if your organisation is capable of coordinating other activities that are

safe and in accordance with recommendations from national/local health authorities, we invite you to share how you have adapted your services.

The ETW secretariat plans to support your activities by:

- providing more free online promotional materials;
- developing more interactive online activities;
- continuing to provide an online platform where you can share your adapted ETW activities.

How can I participate in SETW?

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.

This SETW, we recommend utilising both your online network and the ETW platform to promote awareness on the importance of HIV, viral hepatitis and STI services and to share how your organisation has adapted services during this time.

We have already seen some organisations make the transition to teleservices including [providing counselling via phone or online](#) and [providing self-tests for HIV, syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhoea via mail-delivery](#). Others have organised online meetings, live streamed discussions with experts in the field, developed [statements](#), guidance and [resource centres](#).

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 hashtag #EuroTestWeek

To learn more about SETW 2020, please visit the special page on our website [here](#). As the global pandemic continues to evolve, we will keep you up to date on ETW activities via announcements on our website and social media accounts on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).