

## Factsheet 1

### About European Testing Week

#### Facts

- European Testing Week was launched by the EuroTEST initiative (formerly known as HIV in Europe) in 2013 to encourage increased testing efforts and promote awareness of the benefits of earlier testing and linkage to care.
- European Testing Week offers a **unique opportunity** for partners across Europe to unite for **one week twice a year**, in Spring (**May**) and Autumn (**November**) to increase awareness regarding the benefits of HIV and hepatitis testing, so that more people become knowledgeable about their risks, understand that there is effective treatment available and are aware of their HIV and/or hepatitis status.
- The **theme** for the November 2019 ETW emphasises the importance of **integrated testing and other related activities focused on increasing awareness and access to testing and treatment of HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections**.
- European Testing Week is currently **supported by 45 international and national organisations**, including UNAIDS, European AIDS Clinical Society, AIDS Action Europe, European Liver Patients Association and the World Hepatitis Alliance.
- In **2018, more than 740** organisations from **49** European countries signed up to participate in European Testing Week activities
- **Further information** and details of supporting and participating organisations is available at: [www.testingweek.eu](http://www.testingweek.eu)
- **Follow us** on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/eurotestweek) and [Facebook](https://facebook.com/eurotestweek) to find out what activities are taking place in participating countries: [twitter.com/eurotestweek](https://twitter.com/eurotestweek), [facebook.com/eurotestweek](https://facebook.com/eurotestweek)
- Use our hashtags (**#EuroTestWeek** and **#TestTreatPrevent**) when posting and sharing your European Testing Week activities on social media.

#### Why is European Testing Week needed?

- In 2017, at least one in five of the estimated 2.3 million people living with HIV in Europe were unaware that they are HIV positive.<sup>1</sup> Over half of those living with HIV are diagnosed late – which delays access to treatment.<sup>1</sup>
- Hepatitis B and C are common among people at risk of and living with HIV.<sup>2</sup> Around 15 million people are living with hepatitis B in the WHO European Region; approximately 20-30% of infected individuals will develop cirrhosis,

liver failure or hepatocellular carcinoma.<sup>3</sup> Fourteen million people in the WHO European Region are infected with hepatitis C; however, the majority of people with hepatitis C remain undiagnosed.<sup>4</sup>

- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) continue to be an active epidemic in Europe, with many unaware that they may be infected because STIs often do not produce or show symptoms.<sup>5</sup> Data from ECDC has shown that the prevalence of STIs varies greatly across the EU/EEA, with a stabilised trend for chlamydia rates<sup>6</sup> but increasing trends for gonorrhoea<sup>7</sup> and syphilis.<sup>8</sup>
- These statistics suggest that we need to be doing more to encourage individuals who are unknowingly infected with HIV, viral hepatitis and/or an STI to get tested, provide them with better access to testing, and to better target people who could be at risk.

## What are the benefits of testing...

### ...For HIV?

- Those who are diagnosed with HIV early are more likely to respond well to treatment and live healthily for longer.
- Early diagnosis and treatment can reduce the likelihood of onward transmission to others.
- Those who are diagnosed later are more likely to suffer health complications and premature death.

### ...For hepatitis?

- Early diagnosis and treatment can reduce the likelihood of onward transmission to others.
- Those who are diagnosed later are more likely to suffer health complications such as cirrhosis, liver failure or hepatocellular carcinoma

### ...For STIs (chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis)

- Effective treatment with antibiotics is currently available for several bacterial STIs including syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia.
- Treatment immediately reduces the potential risk of transmission and health complications.
- Untreated STIs can have serious health consequences (e.g. pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy and tubal factor infertility).

## What activities will take place during European Testing Week?

- Activities will vary depending on the target populations and the local/regional objectives of each country/participating organisation. However, there is **no minimum expectation of participation**—each organisation plans and develops their own activities for the week. By signing-up to participate in

ETW, each organisations is indicating that they intend to **take action** to contribute to achieving the aims of ETW to increase awareness of the benefits of integrated testing.

- **Government bodies** are encouraged to support the benefits of free, confidential HIV, hepatitis and/or STI testing and to adopt guidelines for integrated testing on a national level.
- **Healthcare professionals** (including general practitioners and doctors working in hospital settings) are encouraged to offer HIV, hepatitis and STI tests, whenever relevant, adopt screening for HIV, hepatitis and STIs as part of routine care in high prevalence settings and employ indicator condition-guided HIV testing strategies.
- **NGOs and civil society** organisations are encouraged to carry out activities that increase awareness of (and/or access to) HIV, hepatitis and STI testing amongst key populations at higher risk in Europe: i.e. men who have sex with men; people who inject drugs; sex workers; migrants; prisoners; transgender communities.
- **For examples of previous year's activities**, please visit the 'Success stories' section on the website: [www.testingweek.eu/success-stories](http://www.testingweek.eu/success-stories)

## Who coordinates European Testing Week?

- The EuroTEST Initiative coordinates European Testing Week and has developed a range of materials and guidance to support participating partners in their local/regional activities.
- Any relevant organisations in the 53 countries of the WHO European Region are invited to participate in ETW activities.
- EuroTEST is a pan-European initiative. It is directed by an independent group of experts with representation from civil society, government bodies, health professionals and European public health institutions .
- Visit [www.eurotest.eu](http://www.eurotest.eu) for more information.

## References

1. WHO Regional Office for Europe. HIV/AIDS [Internet]. Copenhagen: World Health Organization; 2019 [cited 2019 Oct 02]. Available from: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/hivaids/hivaids>
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5. World Health Organization. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs): Key facts 2016 [updated 3. August 2016]. Available from: [http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sexually-transmitted-infections-\(stis\)](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sexually-transmitted-infections-(stis)).
6. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Chlamydia infection. In: ECDC. Annual epidemiological report for 2017. Stockholm: ECDC; 2019.
7. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Gonorrhoea. In: ECDC. Annual epidemiological report for 2017. Stockholm: ECDC; 2019.
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