

Theme statement

European Testing Week 2026

Reaching Those Who Need It Most: Testing with and for Key Populations

Test. Treat. Prevent. — No One Left Behind.

We are at a crossroads. The 2030 goals to end the epidemics of HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as public health threats are within sight — but also at serious risk. Across Europe, the data are unambiguous: testing gaps persist, late diagnoses remain alarmingly high, and the communities most affected continue to face the greatest barriers to a simple test.

In 2024, 48% of HIV diagnoses in the EU/EEA were classified as late [1], rising to 54% in the wider WHO European region [2], with the highest proportion of these being people infected heterosexually and people who inject drugs [2]. For viral hepatitis, an estimated 65% of HBV and 59% of HCV cases remain undiagnosed. At the same time, we are seeing sharp increases in STI diagnoses: between 2015 and 2023, syphilis rose by 86%, and between 2014 and 2023, gonorrhoea cases surged by 300% [3]. These rising figures clearly show that progress towards SDG 3.3 targets is off track.

This development does not only represent epidemiological failures, but underlying failures of access, trust, policy and funding. As political priorities shift and public budgets tighten, funding for HIV, viral hepatitis and STI responses (especially community-led services) is reduced, threatening progress made over the past two decades and widening testing and prevention gaps [7–9].

Yet, there is reason for hope. Access and uptake of testing services by key populations is improved by approaches such as peer involvement, culturally and linguistically tailored approaches, community outreach, lay-provider testing, self-testing, and network-based testing [10].

For European Testing Week 2026, we call for united action to reach those most in need of testing. Achieving the 2030 elimination goals requires strong political leadership, sustainable funding, and prioritisation of key populations that are most affected — including people who inject drugs, GBMSM, trans people, migrants, sex workers, and people in prisons. Without this focus, elimination will not be achieved.

Suggested Activities During Testing Week 2026

European Testing Week is what you make it. Large or small, clinical or community, national or local — every action counts.

For community and civil society organisations:

- Organise community-based or outreach testing events specifically targeting one or more key populations, with peer navigators and lay-provider testing where legally permitted.
- Distribute self-test kits through trusted channels — drop-in centres, harm reduction services, LGBTQ+ venues, migrant community hubs, pharmacies, and online platforms.
- Run social media campaigns using #EuroTestWeek that amplify voices from key population networks, share stories of testing access, and actively challenge stigma.
- Host a community forum or online discussion with members of key population networks on barriers to testing and what works in your setting.
- Partner with peer networks to train peer educators on how to support others to self-test and link to care.

For healthcare providers:

- Implement or promote opt-out testing for HIV, HBV and HCV in settings serving key populations: sexual health clinics, drug treatment services, prisons, emergency departments and antenatal care.
- Offer integrated testing — where someone presents for one condition, offer a test for a second — in line with ECDC integrated testing guidance.
- Create formal referral pathways between community testing initiatives and clinical care to optimize linkage to care.
- Review your testing data: are you capturing testing by key population, setting and transmission route? Use European Testing Week to highlight monitoring gaps and advocate for better data collection.

For networks and umbrella organisations:

- Map testing services and self-testing availability across your network's countries; celebrate good practice and name where gaps remain.
- Use testing week to advocate for the removal of legal and financial barriers to self-testing, lay-provider testing, and free testing access for all key populations, in line with current ECDC recommendations.
- Produce a joint statement with partner networks calling on governments and funders to protect and invest in community-based testing services for key populations in the current challenging financial climate.

For policymakers:

- Commit to ensuring national testing policies explicitly include key populations, are aligned with current ECDC guidance, and incorporate self-testing and peer-led approaches.
- Protect — and where possible increase — funding for community-based organisations that provide testing and linkage to care for key populations.

What is European Testing Week?

[European Testing Week](#) (ETW) is a biannual awareness campaign held every May and November to promote early diagnosis of HIV, viral hepatitis, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Since its launch, more than 850 [diverse organisations and institutions](#) across Europe have taken part.

Throughout the week, community-based groups, healthcare providers, policy bodies, and educational institutions host a range of local events to increase awareness and improve access to testing.

Join the movement - [sign up](#) now to participate and help accelerate progress toward eliminating HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs as public health threats!

Follow @EuroTestWeek on Instagram and Facebook

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A Note on the Current Context

European Testing Week has always been rooted in solidarity — the idea that hundreds of organisations acting together for one week can shift norms, reach people, and save lives. In 2026, that solidarity matters more than ever.

Public health funding is under pressure across Europe and globally. The political environment in many countries is making it harder — not easier — to sustain the community services, harm reduction programmes, and rights-based testing approaches that key populations depend on. Without a significant acceleration of efforts over the next four years, the 2030 targets will not be met.

European Testing Week 2026 is an opportunity not only to test more people, but to make visible the extraordinary work done by community networks every single day — and to advocate, clearly and loudly, for the resources, policies and protections they need to continue.

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Resources

European and international guidance:

1. **ECDC (2025)**. *Testing of HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C in the EU/EEA — 2025 Progress Report*. Stockholm: ECDC. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/testing-hiv-hepatitis-b-and-hepatitis-c-european-union-european-economic-area>
2. -area
3. **ECDC/WHO Europe (2025)**. *HIV/AIDS Surveillance in Europe 2025 — 2024 Data*. Stockholm: ECDC. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/hivaids-surveillance-europe-2025-2024-data>
4. **ECDC (2025)**. *STI cases continue to rise across Europe* (<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/sti-cases-continue-rise-across-europe>)
5. **ECDC (2025)**. *Progress towards reaching the SDG 3.3 Targets related to HIV, TB, Viral Hepatitis and STIs in the EU/EEA: 2024 Progress Report*. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/hiv-tb-hepatitis-progress-sustainable-development-goal-2025>
6. **ECDC (2018)**. *Public Health Guidance on HIV, Hepatitis B and C Testing in the EU/EEA*. Stockholm: ECDC. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/public-health-guidance-hiv-hepatitis-b-and-c-testing-eueea>
7. **ECDC/EMCDDA (2023)**. *Prevention and control of infectious diseases among people who inject drugs - 2023 update*. Stockholm: ECDC. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/prevention-and-control-infectious-diseases-among-people-who-inject-drugs-2023>
8. **EUDA (2024)**. *Viral Hepatitis Elimination Barometer among People Who Inject Drugs in Europe*. Lisbon: EUDA. https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/data-factsheet/viral-hepatitis-elimination-barometer-among-people-who-inject-drugs-in-europe_en
9. **EUDA (2025)**. *Drug-related Infectious Diseases — European Drug Report 2025*. Lisbon: EUDA. https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/european-drug-report/2025/drug-related-infectious-diseases_en
10. **WHO (2024)**. *WHO updates HIV testing guidance: more self-testing, integration, and prevention support*. Geneva: WHO. <https://www.who.int/news/item/19-07-2024-who-updates-hiv-testing-guidance--more-self-testing--integration--and-prevention-support>
11. **WHO (2022)**. *Consolidated Guidelines on HIV, Viral Hepatitis and STI Prevention, Diagnosis, Treatment and Care for Key Populations*. Geneva: WHO. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240052390>