

A message from European Testing Week:

“Take proactive measures to ensure people, particularly from vulnerable groups, can access HIV, [viral hepatitis and STI] treatment and prevention services and meet other basic needs...”

- Adapted quote from [Rights in a Pandemic](#), [UNAIDS](#)

As the world continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ETW Secretariat recognises that many communities, especially those most marginalised, continue to struggle with closed, restricted and/or overloaded services, relative to current capacity. The 2020 Spring ETW showcased the resilience of many testing services in face of the COVID-19 pandemic. We found through [responses to the post-SETW survey](#) that despite hardships, many of you were able to adapt to this new reality and ensure service provision to your communities who need continued access across the WHO European region.

For the upcoming European Testing Week, 20 – 27 November 2020, ETW is committed to support your efforts to provide access to prevention, testing and care services for HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs, throughout Europe and Central Asia, however feasible in your organisation

Prolonged interruption of HIV, viral hepatitis and STI services is unacceptable, however, we recognise that in certain circumstances, service closures due to administrative, financial and/or resource strain is the reality for many. We are all still learning how to adapt and minimise/overcome the services gaps caused by COVID-19 and COVID-19-related policies, therefore we will strive to showcase new options for service delivery and advocacy towards long-term sustainable solutions.

ETW encourages a cooperative approach at the local level to create dialogues on how to provide the most effective prevention, testing and support services, and ensure that all components of the response are again made available as we move into the second half of 2020. If a service is unavailable, alternative services or solutions within the local community should be promoted/implemented/ensured.

We have learned from SETW 2020 that there have been numerous adaptations to services since the start of the pandemic, including:

- Teleservices for counselling and other support services;
- Appointment-only based services;
- Expansion of self-testing and/or self-sampling services;
- Integration of testing;
- Webinars and online meetings;
- Among many others...

For those who can participate in the November 2020 ETW, we ask you to continue to advocate and raise awareness on the importance of HIV, viral

hepatitis and STI services and share how your organisation is supporting your communities during this global pandemic

How will the 2020 November ETW work?

Due to the varying response levels and the changing epidemiological nature of the pandemic, we expect that ETW activities will be organised differently from country to country. Organisations that are capable of coordinating in-person activities should ensure safety precautions are in place, in accordance with recommendations from national/local health authorities.

We invite you to keep sharing how you have adapted and maintained your services, whether through online, in-person, or a combination of both!

The ETW secretariat plans to support your activities by:

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

How can I participate in the November 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.

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

References:

UNAIDS. Rights in a pandemic – Lockdowns, rights and lessons from HIV in the early response to COVID-19. Geneva: UNAIDS; 2020.