

Fast-track HIV/TB responses among key populations in the cities of Eastern Europe and Central Asia

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Cities play an increasing role in HIV and TB responses globally. Such initiatives, as Fast-track Cities and Paris Declaration by UNAIDS, Zero TB cities, Healthy cities of WHO and City Health International forum are all about city leadership and efficiencies in health.

EECA is a region severely hit by AIDS and TB. This is one of the only two regions globally where AIDS epidemic is still growing. Not much better in Tuberculosis with Ukraine being the world's fifth worst MDR-TB burden countries. It is well known, that the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region is still driven by most affected key populations, which are concentrated in urban areas.

Alliance for Public Health (Ukraine) together with AFEW International (The Netherlands), licit/Contact (Switzerland) and Stop TB Partnership under technical guidance of UNAIDS EECA office with funding of The Global Fund have initiated a regional project to support city responses to HIV and TB in key populations in the cities of EECA.

The project will be implemented throughout 2017-2019 and plans to develop efficient and sustainable city models of HIV/TB responses that would allow to reduce AIDS and TB mortalities in the project cities as well as increase the allocation of city funding to HIV/TB interventions for key populations. Support to the models will be provided from Bern and Amsterdam – partnering cities in the project, whose municipalities and civil society have committed to share experiences and support their peers from EECA.

Five cities have been selected for the project based on disease burden, the ability and commitment of municipalities to release resources (financial or in-kind) and the feasibility of effective implementation of the pilot project. They are: Almaty (Kazakhstan), Beltsi (Moldova), Odesa (Ukraine), Sofia (Bulgaria) and Tbilisi (Georgia). In each of the cities a partner civil society organization will be coordinating the activities: “Initiative for Health Foundation” in Sofia (Bulgaria); NGO “Center for Information and Counseling on Reproductive Health “Tanadgoma” in Tbilisi (Georgia); Public Foundation AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW) in Kazakhstan; NGO “Youth for the Right to Live” in Balti (Moldova); NGO ‘Youth Center for Development’ – in Odesa (Ukraine).

Importantly, regional key populations networks – Eurasian Network of People who Use Drugs, Eurasian Key Populations Network, South Caucasus Network, Sex Workers’ Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) – have been engaged to prioritize involvement in the project of key groups both on the regional and cities’ levels.

The project will conduct several strategic operational research themes to inform EECA city models to improve outpatient Tuberculosis treatment (Odesa, Ukraine), collaborative HIV/TB interventions (Beltsi, Moldova), and increased uptake of ART by key populations based on case management model (Almaty, Kazakhstan).

The nearest plans include conduct of city situation assessments, establishment of City Task Forces (or strengthening of City Coordinating Council where they exist), development of City Improvement Plans, exchange with Western European peers and advocacy on local resource allocation.

For more information, please contact: www.hivtbcities.org or Tetiana Deshko deshko@aph.org.ua