

NDPHS STATEMENT

Impact of the HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis on people and economies of the Northern Dimension Countries – status quo and the way forward

Helsinki, 22 November 2013

Statement summary:

The governments recognise their responsibilities and renew their commitment to develop and support effective country and regional responses to further improve the current HIV and tuberculosis situations and reduce their impacts on human lives, economy and society.

NDPHS Partners will be engaged to:

- Exchange information and experiences in the work against HIV, AIDS and TB and HIV/TB co-infection;
- Support multilateral actions combining primary health and social care, improving early diagnostics, treatment, psychological care and access to services;
- Support NGOs working with vulnerable populations;
- Further develop national efforts, joint platforms and new regional approaches;
- Support the NDPHS in facilitating cooperation through joint international activities;
- Strengthen prevention, control and reduction of harmful consequences of HIV, AIDS and TB as well as other associated infections.

Background

The alarming increase of co-infections of HIV and TB, multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB) and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR TB) is a health threat and a great challenge for public health and, consequently, for health systems, not only in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, but also in the Baltic Sea Region in particular.

A powerful, multisectoral response involving the development of new working approaches is necessary to meet this worrying situation within the NDPHS Area and its neighbouring countries. The response should include wide and determined actions.

Previous efforts

In the past, partner countries have engaged in the work against the spread of HIV and TB through various commitments, such as MDG 6, the Dublin Declaration, UNAIDS Strategy for Three Zeros, 2011 UN GA Political Declaration, European Commission Communication to Combat HIV/AIDS in the European Union and Neighbouring Countries, national policies etc.

In addition, a many national, local, international and regional projects and programs have been implemented, including:

- Full endorsement of Regional Action Plans to prevent and combat M/XDR TB and control HIV/AIDS at the sixty-first WHO Regional Committee, Baku, Azerbaijan, September 2011
- Actions funded by UN organizations
- Actions funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other donors
- World Bank-Funded Projects
- EU programs
- Regional multinational programs
- 10 years of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being, based on the Oslo Declaration in 2003
- Task Force on Communicable Disease Control in the Baltic Sea Region
- Barents cooperation on health and related social issues
- Bilateral cooperation between various countries within the Northern Dimension region
- National activities.

Recognition

We, the undersigned partner countries and organizations, recognize the increasing number of HIV and TB co-infections, MDR and XDR TB cases, and other associated infections as serious challenges and threats to public health in the region.

We recognize the complexity and diversity of the current situation, including variations in access to drugs, quality and supply of drugs, patients' adherence to treatment, availability of patient support and outreach services. In addition the populations in question may suffer from the consequences of harmful use of alcohol, migratory situations, imprisonment, social marginalization and criminalization, human trafficking, and ineffective responses by health and social care systems.

There are populations which are at the greatest risk for HIV, TB and HIV/TB co-infection as well as other associated infections, in particular migrants, men who have sex with men (MSM), people who inject drugs (PWID) including their sexual partners and prisoners whose special needs are not adequately met.

We also recognize that within the area of Northern Dimension Partnership there is great variation in the epidemiological situation and availability of data. Responses are dependent on national policies and available resources.

We recognize the importance of providing integrated services and social and psychological support based on the needs of the vulnerable populations in question and also to counteract the negative impact of harmful use of alcohol and drugs on adherence to HIV/AIDS and TB treatment regimens. This requires coordinated policy responses and integrated prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care and support interventions.

We recognize that we share joint responsibilities in the provision of support to the implementation of shared policy recommendations.

Engagements for joint collaboration

Among partners, we will encourage and provide mutual support and exchange of relevant information and experiences among experts and between policy and decision makers.

We will provide support to comprehensive, multilateral and national, human rights oriented actions, combining primary health and social care to improve early diagnostics, treatment and care, the provision of psychological and social care, greater accessibility and utilization of health services, adequate supply of medication, especially for those high-risk populations which are most at need of support.

According to our common understanding, we recognize that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work with the most affected and often marginalized people play an important role in improving the HIV and tuberculosis situation, strengthening the prevention and control of TB and HIV/TB, and decreasing the harmful consequences of HIV and TB and HIV/TB co-infection. National authorities should strengthen support for the work of such NGOs in order to co-operate with them to improve access to and uptake of good medical and social care by everyone in need.

We underline the potential and crucial role of WHO, UNAIDS, the European Commission, ECDC, EMCDDA, IOM, UNODC, ILO, World Bank, BEAC, NCM as well as initiatives like NDPHS, the EUSBSR and the Russian Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of the North-West District for the period up to the year 2020 in providing support for the work to prevent the spread of HIV and TB and their consequences on human lives, societies and economies.

We declare that we will engage in the further development of national efforts, joint platforms and new regional approaches to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

In the current environment of active regional migration flow between different parts of Europe and considering HIV/TB infections spread beyond boundaries and limitations, we are ready to consider the possibility of expanding the territories of cooperation with the NDPHS.

We will support the NDPHS by all available means in the facilitation of cooperation through joint international activities that will be adapted to prevailing conditions in the countries of the Northern Dimension.

We support a strategy in which continuous, effective cooperation between governments, institutions, NGOs, wider civil society and private sector is encouraged.

Through this support we are engaged in strengthening the prevention, control and reduction of harmful consequences of HIV, AIDS, TB and other associated infections.