



Joint Action on integrating prevention, testing and linkage to care strategies across HIV, viral hepatitis, TB and STIs in Europe

Newsletter

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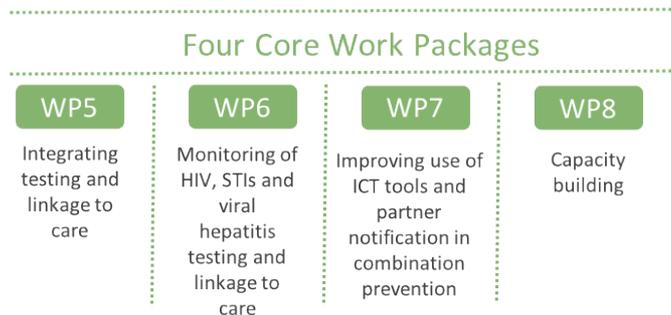
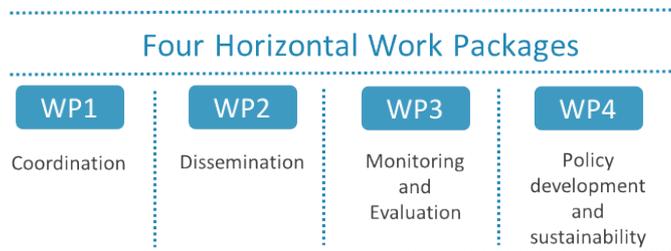
Welcome to theINTEGRATE Newsletter

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The INTEGRATE Joint Action aims to implement integrated activities to improve the awareness, prevention, early diagnosis and linkage to care of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), Viral hepatitis, TB (Tuberculosis) and STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) in Europe.

The four disease areas share common social and health determinants affecting the same vulnerable populations, are treatable and create unnecessary suffering of patients. INTEGRATE aspires to implement a multidimensional approach that will reduce the public health burden and determine the optimal profile of interventions to be implemented.



Objectives

- ▲ Support collaborative implementation of the Joint Action activities through timely reporting, dissemination and evaluation.
- ▲ Support national institutions in reviewing and revising policies and action plans to include integrated activities related to early diagnosis & prevention of the four diseases.
- ▲ Improve the monitoring & evaluation of these activities and assist in the integration of data into national surveillance and M&E (Monitoring & Evaluation) systems.
- ▲ Improve the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) tools and partner notification for prevention by 2020.
- ▲ Ensure better preparedness of healthcare professionals, civil society organizations and public health institutions through training and knowledge sharing on the integration of diagnosis and linkage to care for HIV, viral hepatitis, TB and STIs.



Partnership Forum Meeting in Bucharest (1)

The INTEGRATE Joint Action Partnership Forum meeting was held in Bucharest Romania in connection with the HepHIV2019 Conference. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Provide an overview of the status of INTEGRATE after year 1.
- Discuss challenges and opportunities, also structural and legal, in implementation of the various planned pilots and examine how the JA can make a difference in this context.
- Discuss the challenges within organisations and countries and utilise the insights gained from regional and national meetings and other communication activities.
- Promote synergies and ensure the sustainability of the JA activities.



The baseline data from the INTEGRATE Partner Survey has been analysed and has especially been used in the development of the WP5 pilots



The conclusions from the PFM are consolidated below:

- Move forward with the implementation of pilots and use this opportunity to move things forward also at a national level.
- Sustainability and impact were among the important topics for year 2. Dissemination needed to be in focus and to target policy makers and clinical societies to a larger extend.
- Commission/Chafea agreed to help disseminate information regarding INTEGRATE and start the discussion among Chafea, DG Sante and the Member States regarding the role and responsibilities of the Member States in relation to their participation in Joint Actions. Advisory Board members were linked more closely to the respective WPs to benefit more from their expertise and knowledge.
- Regional workshops and the national meetings expected to be a good opportunity to strengthen relevant and needed discussions at national level.



Partnership Forum Meeting in Bucharest (2)

Policy Development and Sustainability (WP4)

A sustainability plan for each of the pilot countries have been developed. The plans consist of policy guidance and profiles of the national health systems and health policies. Key stakeholders have been identified through a stakeholder consultation and an overview of the cost-effectiveness of the piloted activities have been developed. The patient survey is in the making and will be conducted in Croatia, Romania and Spain. The aim is to develop a toolkit for implementation of the survey.

Integrating Testing and Linkage to Care (WP5)

The baseline data from the INTEGRATE Partner Survey has been analysed and has been used in the development of the pilots in the WP - combined testing in community settings, indicator guided testing in health care settings in Lithuania and Romania and a literature search has started on HIV self-testing and self-sampling in Europe.

Monitoring and Evaluation of HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs testing and linkage to care (WP6)

Indicators to measure impact of combined testing has been developed and will be used in the upcoming pilots and European Testing Week.

Pilot partners have met and discussed the indicators to be piloted in Serbia, Spain, Slovakia, Poland, Estonia and Slovenia.

A review of testing monitoring in Europe has been conducted.

Improving the Use of ICT tools and Partner Notification in Combination Prevention (WP7)

The ICT tool review has been finalised 115 tools were collected, and 53 tools were shortlisted for review.

The proposed integrated toolkit (website and/or mobile app) will consist of: Risk calculator for all disease areas; Q&A section with info from ECDC website; Test Finder linked to the European Test Finder; Partner notification tool; PrEP component and TB component with info from ECDC website. The tool will be finalised, tested in focus groups, translated and piloted in Croatia, Lithuania and Italy.

An online repository of Partner Notification has been developed. PN training has been conducted for partners in Greece and Italy and Sops have been developed.

Capacity Building (WP8)

Based on feedback from partner survey the topics for the three regional workshops in INTEGRATE have been planned. Topics will be 'Testing in community and in health care settings', 'Self-testing and linkage to care & ICT-based combination prevention' and 'monitoring of linkage to care & integration of data from testing sites into national surveillance'

Publications

A paper regarding RiskRadar was accepted at the MIE2020 conference and the full paper has been published in

[“Studies in Health Technology and Informatics - Volume 270: Digital Personalized Health and Medicine”](#)



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Digital Personalized Health and Medicine
L.B. Pape-Haugaard et al. (Eds.)

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ICT Toolkit for Integrated Prevention, Testing and Linkage to Care Across HIV, Hepatitis, STIs and Tuberculosis in Europe

Christine KAKALOU^{a,1}, Lella COSMARO^b, Vlasios K. DIMITRIADIS^a,
Anne RAAHAUGE^c, Dorte RABEN^c and Vassilis KOUTKIAS^a

^a Institute of Applied Biosciences, Centre for Research & Technology Hellas, Thessaloniki, Greece

^b "Fondazione LILA Milano" - Italian League for Fighting AIDS, Italy

^c CHIP, Rigshospitalet, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark



HepHIV 2019 Conference (1)

Since 2007, the HIV in Europe (now known as EuroTEST) initiative has organised conferences focusing on earlier testing and linkage to care. The HepHIV conference in Bucharest took place in January 2019, under the patronage of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union; with the attendance of the Minister of Health of Romania, and representatives of the European Commission, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO Europe). Almost 250 delegates from 37 countries representing clinicians, community organisations, researchers and policy officials attended the three-day conference.

The theme of the conference was “Challenges of Timely and Integrated Testing and Care” with the aim to provide an overview of developments in the field of testing and care for viral hepatitis and HIV; to encourage stakeholders to develop creative solutions to research and implementation challenges in the field; and to find ways to translate ambitious goals and targets into action.

The conference was co-organised with the 3-year EU funded Joint Action INTEGRATE and commemorated the official re-naming announcement of the HIV in Europe initiative to EuroTEST. The aim of the renaming to EuroTEST was to broaden the disease scope of the initiative to address hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV), HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and tuberculosis (TB). EuroTEST aims to utilise integrated strategies to help increase early detection and earlier entry into treatment leading to better health outcomes and preventing the risk of further transmission.



Three methods of integration were highlighted in presentations throughout the conference; a) Integration of the responses to HIV, viral hepatitis, TB and STIs, b) integration of services across the cascade of care (prevention, testing, linkage to care and treatment and psychosocial interventions) to provide infected individuals with a holistic, patient-centred approach that better meets their needs and facilitates their retention in care and c) incorporating different settings in national disease strategies and responses, enabling testing and treatment where test takers find it most convenient and supportive.

Policy barriers to integration remain widespread, including restrictions on evidence-based interventions such as lay testing, self-testing and -sampling, partner notification, pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP and PEP) for HIV and various forms of harm reduction. In addition, both the continuing criminalisation of certain risk behaviours, especially in the eastern part of the European Region, and restrictions to service access for people who inject drugs (PWID), migrants and prisoners make it difficult to reach many of the people affected most by these diseases. At the same time, lesser forms of stigma and discrimination remain a seemingly intractable obstacle to HIV and HCV elimination efforts throughout the Region.

It was acknowledged during the conference that Romania is representative of the progress made within Central and Eastern Europe, whilst also highlighting the work that is still needed to address these four infectious diseases. Despite slight decreases in HBV and HCV prevalence, Romania still has one of the highest burdens of viral hepatitis in the general population within Europe.



HepHIV 2019 Conference (2)

Portugal was highlighted as a country-case example in its success of using more intense HIV testing strategies for high-prevalence districts. HIV-related stigma and other forms of prejudice need to be addressed holistically utilising a rights-based approach and integrating anti-stigma strategies and efforts across disease areas in the context of the fourth 90, which highlights health-related quality of life for people living with HIV. The UNAIDS goal of eliminating stigma in healthcare settings and the WHO Europe goal of abolishing all discriminatory laws and policies are positive steps, as is the work of both the Stigma Index (stigmaindex.org) and the Stigma Pillar in the Fast-Track Cities initiative.

Despite being an effective intervention recommended by ECDC, the International Union Against Sexually Transmitted Infections (IUSTI) and WHO, partner notification remains underutilised throughout the Region.

Sixty-five abstracts representing 20 countries were presented during the conference, which also had high profiled political representation and almost 250 delegates. The conference highlighted the need to shift towards further disease integration because of the epidemiological characteristics of the HIV, HBV, HCV, STI and TB epidemics in the Region. Integration should be a priority in the response to the epidemics to better reach key populations and ensure a better testing coverage, integration of services in the form of shared care models and integration involving different settings and stakeholders in national strategies.



The conference concluded the need for further and continued political support to implement the necessary policy changes. Normalisation efforts were highlighted as key to integration impact. The conference ended with a call to action to guide actions in testing and linkage to care intervention across the European Region.

The HepHIV2019 Conference Call to Action can be found [here](#).



Consortium

Croatia

 HRVATSKI ZAVOD
ZA JAVNO ZDRAVSTVO

Hrvatski zavod za javno zdravstvo Croatian
Institute of Public Health

 LET
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Organisation "FLIGHT"

Life Quality Improvement Organisation
"FLIGHT"

 HUIV
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infectivnih i virusnih
oboljenja

Croatian association for HIV and viral hepatitis

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chip
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Health, Immunity and Infections

Region Hovedstaden / CHIP

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Tervise Arengu Instituut
National Institute for Health
Development

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Development

 Greece
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National Public Health Organization (NPHO)

 Hungary



Semmelweis University

 Ireland

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DUBLIN

University College Dublin,
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Lega Italiana per la Lotta contro l'AIDS

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Fondazione Villa Maraini Onlus

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NVSPL

Nacionalinė visuomenės
sveikatos priežiūros laboratorija

National Public Health
Surveillance Laboratory

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DISORDERS

Republican Centre for Addictive Disorders

 UIAC
Užkrečiamųjų ligų ir AIDS centras

Centre for Communicable Diseases and AIDS



Vilnius University Hospital
Santaros Klinikos

 Malta
health.gov.mt

Health Promotion and
Disease Prevention

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AIDS

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Agency of the Ministry of Health

 Romania



"Victor Babes" Clinical Hospital of Infectious
Diseases and Pneumophtisiology Craiova



"Marius Nasta"
Pneumophtisiology Institute

 Serbia



Institute of Public Health of Serbia "Dr
Milan Jovanovic Batut"

 Slovakia



Slovak Medical University in Bratislava

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za javno zdravje

National Institute of Public Health
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Centre d'Estudis Epidemiològics sobre
les ITS i Sida de Catalunya

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Consorci Institut d'Investigacions
Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer

 ISPLN
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Pública y Laboral de Navarra

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 United Kingdom



Public Health England

Further information

Find out more about the INTEGRATE Joint Action

Visit the [JA website](#)

integrate.rigshospitalet@regionh.dk

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