

Working Group Session – EU4Health Funding Opportunities for HIV Projects Beyond Viral Suppression (Notes)

17 June 2021

1. Opening and Welcome

Prof. Jeffrey Lazarus (Co-Chair of HIV Outcomes) welcomed participants to the Working Group Session.

2. HIV Outcomes Overview

Prof. Lazarus explained the core vision and mission of HIV Outcomes: improving the long-term health outcomes and health-related quality of life of all people living with HIV across Europe, by sharing evidence-based best practices and innovative approaches to care, while advocating for the implementation of policy and clinical changes in European countries.

3. Objective for the Working Group Session and Tour de Table

Prof. Lazarus set the context for the discussion and reminded participants of the objective of the session: *to brainstorm and identify four to six proven, translatable and substantive projects beyond viral suppression that may be scaled up with EU4Health's 2021*. Participants were then asked to introduce themselves and where appropriate their organisations (a full list of participants is included at the end of this Note).

4. EU4Health's 2021 Work Programme

Action:

- The Secretariat will inform the HIV Outcomes Steering Group and General Members as soon as the call for projects is launched on the HaDEA's [website](#).

Discussion:

The HIV Outcomes Secretariat (Jesus Olivares) briefed participants on the EU4Health Programme (2021-2026) – the largest funding programme for health projects in the history of the European Union. Key issues raised by the Secretariat included:

- The total six-year budget (5.1 billion euro) and the budget allocated for 2021 (311 million euro).
- The significant budget increase for health projects, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in line with a strong European Health Union.
- The agency responsible for the Programme (the European Health and Digital Executive Agency, HaDEA), which identifies annual priority areas for funding, in consultation with civil society, the European Commission and the EU Member States.
- The inclusion of communicable diseases as a priority in the EU4Health's 2021 Work Programme under two of EU4Health's main strands: *crisis preparedness*, to help Europe control viral threats, and *disease prevention*, to enhance the prevention, testing and linkage to care of communicable diseases, including HIV.
- The entities (health organisations, research institutions, NGOs) that can apply for funding as long as they have legal representation in the EU, and how 'BREXIT' can potentially impact UK-based organisations seeking funds.
- The launch of the 2021's call for projects, which is expected anytime in summer, and the project pre-requisites from previous health funding programmes:
 - The Commission funds on average 60-70% of the total costs of the project.
 - Most projects must be carried out in at least three countries and have a three-year duration.
 - Most proposals are submitted by consortiums involving +1 organisation.

The Secretariat (Usman Khan) then briefed participants on the outcome of the meeting HIV Outcomes had in March with the European Commission to discuss funding opportunities for HIV projects under EU4Health at which:

- The Commission highlighted funding opportunities for HIV facilitated by EU4Health's budget increase.
- The Commission asked for concrete, scalable and proven projects beyond viral suppression that could add value.

Q&A:

- Q: **Will UK-based organisations be eligible for funding following ‘BREXIT’?**
- A: There will be funding for non-EU countries and UK-based organisations are very likely to benefit from EU4Health funding. We are waiting for the call for projects to confirm it.

- Q: **Are projects carried out in neighbouring countries eligible for EU4Health funding?**
- A: While the call for projects in summer will confirm it, previous health programmes have funded projects in non-EU countries that have a bilateral agreement with the EU (e.g. Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova).

- Q: **Do the ‘disease prevention’ and ‘crisis preparedness’ strands cover funding for projects beyond viral suppression?**
- A: With the significant funding increase, the Commission is well-positioned to consider funding projects in the wider area of communicable diseases that are concrete and scalable regardless of their focus. The Programme’s strands give a holistic vision of the annual priorities but should be not seen in a strict light, given the synergies that will exist with the other two strands (*‘digital’, ‘health systems & healthcare workforce’*) and the large budget.

5. Responses to the Google Form.

The Secretariat (Jesus Olivares) presented a summary of the responses submitted via Google Form by some HIV Outcomes General Members ahead of the Working Group Session:

- Q: **What are examples of priority areas beyond viral suppression for the projects?**
 - Addressing the interconnections between COVID-19 and HIV.
 - Improving the quality of life of people living with HIV and cure prospects.
 - Integrating and improving HIV care models and reducing access inequalities in healthcare settings.
 - Addressing HIV comorbidities (e.g., mental health).
 - Reducing stigma and discrimination.
 - Improving the HRQoL of women and vulnerable populations living with HIV.
- Q: **What are examples of ongoing projects that could be considered for EU4Health’s 2021 funding?**
 - [Happi app.](#)
 - [Clinic Screening Tool](#) by ISGlobal & SEISIDA.
 - [EU2Cure Consortium.](#)
- Q: **What are examples of future projects that could be considered for EU4Health’s 2021 funding?**
 - Projects on Mental Health Service Delivery.
 - Piloting of new HIV models of care.
 - Scaling up ongoing projects (EU2Cure, Clinic Screening Tool).

6. Question-driven discussion

Prof. Lazarus introduced the questions driving the discussion and moderated the brainstorming session alongside the Secretariat (Usman Khan).

Discussion:

- Q: **What problems/challenges could the upcoming EU4Health programme address on HIV beyond viral suppression?**
- Responses by the participants:
 - Integrate e-health in HIV care and facilitate care provision through virtual platforms.
 - Combat stigma and discrimination for people living with HIV.
 - Address the impact of physical frailty on the HRQoL of people living with HIV.
 - Provide better management for social frailty and mental health issues, and research the underlying causes (e.g. stigma, discrimination, physical decay) for a better response.
 - Address the connections between COVID-19 and HIV.

- Address the impact of HIV on the HRQoL of vulnerable populations (including migrants and sex workers), and expand qualitative and quantitative research on such topic.
- Address the impact of HIV on the HRQoL of women, and expand qualitative and quantitative research on topics, such as frailty and menopause.
- **Q: What existing initiatives/projects on HIV beyond viral suppression could be considered for EU4Health's 2021 Funding?**
 - Scale up $U = U$ (Undetectable=Untransmittable) in other countries.
 - Scale up the Clinic Screening Tool by ISGlobal & SEISIDA.
 - Scale up the EATG's [EmERGE](#), a virtual platform to enable self-management for people living with HIV.
 - Participants to provide further examples on updated Google Form.
- **Q: What new initiatives/projects on HIV beyond viral suppression could be considered for EU4Health's 2021 Funding?**
 - Participants to provide examples on updated Google Form.

7. Next Steps

- The Secretariat will send an updated Google Form for the HIV Outcomes Members to rank the areas of priority identified and provide concrete examples of ongoing and future projects in such areas, that could be considered for EU4Health's 2021 funding.

Participants

Co-Chairs:

- Prof. Jane Anderson, Homerton University & HIV Outcomes
- Prof. Jeff Lazarus, ISGlobal & HIV Outcomes

Steering Group Members:

- Anton Basenko, European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)
- Ferenc Bagyinszky, AIDS Action Europe (AAE)
- Marina Cognee, European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)
- Mario Cascio, European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)
- Professor Antonella D'Arminio Monforte, University of Milan
- Stéphan Vernhes, Coalition Plus
- Yulia Komo, AFEW International

General Members:

- Alejandro Berto-Moran, Adhara Sevilla (Adhara)
- Dr. Diana Barger, University of Bordeaux
- Jules James, International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)
- Luca Stevenson, International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)
- Maureen Ndawana, One Voice Network
- Prof. Alan Winston-O'Keefe, Imperial College London (ICL)
- Prof. Caroline Sabin, University College London (UCL)
- Prof. Lorraine Sherr, University College London (UCL)
- Roberto Perez-Gayo, Correlation – European Harm Reduction Association (C-EHRN)
- Yvonne Gilleece, Supporting Women with HIV Information Network (SWIFT Network)

Co-Sponsors

- Rhon Reynolds, ViiV Healthcare

Secretariat:

- Usman Khan
- Sorina Chivu
- Jesus Olivares Guerrero

INITIATIVE PARTNERS



OBSERVER MEMBERS

- European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS)
- European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)
- Fast-Track Cities
- UNAIDS

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