

SEISIDA Meeting: "Hacer VIHsible lo invisible" 17 May 2023 – Madrid, Spain  
**HIV Stigma and Discrimination: A European Approach**  
HIV Outcomes roundtable

**Event Report**

**'Stigma and Discrimination: A European Approach.'** HIV Outcomes events shares evidence and best practices to inspire the Spanish EU Presidency

*The HIV Outcomes initiative held a meeting in Madrid on 17 May 2023 to inform and support a European approach to addressing stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV. Through examples and policy recommendations from across Europe, input from MEPs and the Spanish authorities, the event added momentum to the drive for political action that can improve the lives of individuals and meet public health goals.*



**HIV STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION: A EUROPEAN APPROACH**

**HIV OUTCOMES ROUNDTABLE**  
WITHIN SEISIDA  
SCIENTIFIC MEETING:  
"HACER VIH SIBLE LO INVISIBLE"

**17 MAY 2023**  
16:00-17:45 CET

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL  
DE EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA (UNED)  
CALLE JUAN DEL ROSAL, 14  
28040 - MADRID, SPAIN

**MODERATORS**



**PROF. JEFFREY V. LAZARUS**  
ISGLOBAL



**PROF. MARÍA JOSÉ FUSTER**  
SEISIDA



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**hivoutcomes.eu**

Life expectancy for people living with HIV is close to that of the general population, thanks to advances in treatment. However, quality of life remains a major concern. Stigma and discrimination discourage people from getting tested, accessing services, and availing of innovative therapies. In addition, people living with HIV may have negative experiences in the workplace, in education, in communities, and even in health systems. Stigma and discrimination are a significant barrier to improving the lives of people with HIV and to reducing the impact of HIV.

European cooperation can support evidence-based policy measures and initiatives at Member State, regional and local levels. Spain will make combating stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV a priority of its six-month EU Presidency which begins on 1 July. To support this work, HIV Outcomes has collected and shared examples of good practice from members across Europe and hosted an in-person event attended by experts, policymakers, and HIV advocates.

### Expert contributions

- **Dr. Julia del Amo**, Director of the National Plan on AIDS in the Spanish Ministry of Health, outlined Spain's priorities during its EU Presidency. In Spain, the Social Pact approved in 2018 aims to eliminate structural discrimination and was followed by several legislative measures designed to prevent discrimination and exclusion. Spain aims, with the support of other Member States, to bring these protections to all in Europe.
- **Dr. Esteban Martínez**, President of European AIDS Clinical Society, discussed harmful structural stigma across Europe. While Europe has made some progress compared to global peers, there is room for improvement. For examples, most people living with HIV find it difficult to tell people about their HIV status, implying that fear and shame remain major challenges.
- **Prof. Jane Anderson**, HIV Outcomes Co-Chair & Consultant Physician at Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, said stigma is ruining people's lives and is a roadblock to progress, despite the advances in therapies and infrastructure. She provided positive examples of multi-stakeholder collaboration from the Fast Track London initiative which aims to achieve zero infections, zero deaths and zero stigma by 2030.
- **Sini Pasanen**, HIV Outcomes Steering Group Member, Steering Committee Member of AIDS Action Europe & Executive Director of Positiiviset ry, discussed discrimination in healthcare settings and legislative measures that can address discrimination. She recommended ensuring countries have anti-discrimination legal framework that includes protections for people living with HIV, abolishing

requirements to disclose HIV status in healthcare settings, maintaining data protection, and training and education for healthcare workers.

- **Stéphan Vernhes**, HIV Outcomes Steering Group Member & Coordinator European Platform AIDES, presented cases of discrimination against people living with HIV, including refusal of access to dental care in France. He also offered examples of good practices from Sweden where local groups of people with HIV have developed anti-discrimination guidelines for professionals in health and elderly care, and a case from Romania where psychological support is available for victims of stigma and discrimination.
- **Prof. María José Fuster**, HIV Outcomes Spain / SEISIDA / co-moderator, gave an overview of the drivers and facilitators of stigma and their impact on outcomes. She said stigma and discrimination can influence access to justice, the right to health services, and adherence to treatment.
- **Prof. Jeffrey V. Lazarus**, HIV Outcomes Steering Group Member / ISGlobal / co-moderator, offered an overview of the HIV Outcomes initiative, discussed the importance of innovation in reaching HIV goals, and summarised recommendations based on good practices shared by HIV Outcomes members. He commended Spain on choosing HIV as a priority issue and urged all EU Member States to co-sign a declaration on stigma and discrimination ahead of World AIDS Day on 1 December 2023.

### **Cross-party support in the European Parliament**

Five MEPs from five political groups in the European Parliament contributed strong messages of support in a video message to the roundtable event.

- **MEP Frédérique Ries** (Renew Europe, Belgium) said stigma and discrimination have no place in Europe, and she expressed support for the work of the Spanish EU Presidency in guaranteeing people's rights.
- **MEP Sara Cerdas** (Socialists & Democrats, Portugal) expressed solidarity with those affected by stigma and discrimination which can prevent many people from seeking the support they need.
- **MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen** (European People's Party, Finland) urged policymakers to come together to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV.
- **MEP Tilly Metz** (Green/EFA, Luxembourg) said everybody deserves dignity and respect, regardless of HIV status. This is essential in a truly inclusive society.

- **MEP Marisa Matias** (GUE/NGL, Portugal) welcomed Spain's prioritisation of HIV-related stigma and discrimination, and said she looks forward to seeing this commitment translate into policies that improve quality of life.

### Key takeaways

- Stigma and discrimination are a major barrier to people seeking the services they need. This is affecting outcomes for individuals and undermining public health.
- Key messages around U=U have not yet reached the public, and some healthcare workers also require education and training.
- Innovation can facilitate the development of new delivery models for HIV services, which can improve access to care and reduce stigma and discrimination.
- Good practices, ranging from initiatives by civil society and other stakeholders to legal and policy measures by governments, can help to address stigma and discrimination. HIV Outcomes has collated and shared these positive examples.
- Political momentum is behind the broad coalition of stakeholders committed to tackling stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV. There is cross-party support from MEPs and strong commitment from the incoming Spanish EU Presidency.
- The Spanish authorities rely on the support of the other EU Presidencies (Belgium and Hungary) for the development of the EU declaration on HIV and stigma. Informal discussions with other EU Member States took place as well, in an effort to build support for the declaration ahead of the Spanish EU Presidency.

### Next steps

- **1 July 2023:** Spain assumes the EU Presidency for six months.
- **15 September 2023:** Spain will host a high-level meeting in Seville.
- **1 December 2023:** Target date for agreed EU statement on combating stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

# HIV Outcomes

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