

Report from the 1st meeting of the Think Tank on HIV/AIDS

14th of June 2004

Present: Representatives of 16 EU Member States, 2 EEA countries, 3 International and Regional Organization and number of Commission services.

1. Opening / introduction

The Commission services welcomed the participants to the meeting and explained the background of the establishment of the group. They introduced the structures that have been created recently within the Commission to address HIV/AIDS, such as the Interservice group on HIV/AIDS, in which all relevant Commission services are represented and a Task Force within the Public Health and Risk Assessment Directorate of Directorate General Health and Consumer Protection.

All participants in the meeting introduced themselves and presented their status within their organizations/governments.

2. Mandate of the group – scope and tasks for the group – discussion and approval

The Commission services introduced the draft mandate for the group, which was adopted unanimously.

3. “Coordinated Approach to Combat HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in its Neighbourhood” – discussion on the Commission services’ draft document

Commission services introduced the document and explained its purpose and main features. The participants agreed mostly with the document, but made some suggestions how to develop it further. Among the suggestions were the following points:

- Add a section on main objective
- Add an introductory chapter
- Put focus on how prevention and treatment have to work together and are not competing factors
- Discuss what are the vulnerable groups and what their situation is
- Focus on a multi-sectoral approach
- Document must be very focused so it will have any meaning
- Document must take into account existing work and lessons learned
- Document must focus more on risk groups/behaviour than on poverty
- Address the issue of access to generic pharmaceuticals for treatment of HIV/AIDS in the lower income countries of the EU
- Analyse different types of the epidemic in Europe
- Include section about research on HIV/AIDS
- Link to TB
- Look at the role of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
- Expand the section on discrimination
- Look at HIV/AIDS in terms of social cohesion
- Stress the involvement of other sectors than health such as social services, police, economic development, etc.

4. Vilnius Conference

The Lithuanians introduced the plans for the Conference that will take place in Vilnius on 15-17 September. The title of the Conference is “Europe and HIV/AIDS – New Challenges, New Opportunities”. The Conference will be in two parts: 1) technical expert meeting and 2) political high level meeting. They introduced the draft agenda for both parts and plans to have a declaration to come out of the Conference. There was some discussion if it would be better to have another title to the Conference and then link that to the declaration. It was decided to set up a drafting group, that would meet in Luxembourg in July.

There was discussion about what the Commission could finance in connection with the Conference and especially with regard to participation of NGOs. It was agreed that Governments should make an effort of including NGOs in their delegation to the Conference. The relevant Commission services should look into the possibility of supporting the participation of NGOs from the neighbouring countries in the conference.

5. Other issues

There were no other issues.

6. Next meeting

The Commission services proposed that the next meeting would take place in Vilnius on the 16th of September (the day before the political part of the Conference) and that next steps would be the following. 1) Draft document of the Coordinated Approach to HIV/AIDS and the draft declaration would be sent to the group. 2) Commissioner Telicka will be contacting ministers during the summer to discuss the issue. 3) The drafting group will meet in July to finish the working on the draft declaration.