

Call for the expression of interest to become a member of the EU HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum

The Directorate General Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) of the European Commission is looking for non-governmental organisations and networks interested to become a member of the EU HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum (CSF).

The "HIV/AIDS Think Tank" established at its meeting in January 2005 the first Civil Society Forum which is comprised of NGOs and other civil society organisations from EU Member States, candidate and accession countries, EEA countries, and countries belonging to the European Neighbourhood Policy area (ENP).

The aim of the CSF is to be a forum for informal consultation of the Think Tank and Commission services with Civil Society; to facilitate the participation of NGOs and networks, including those representing People Living with HIV/AIDS, in European policy development and implementation, and to exchange information. In between CSF meetings, members communicate, exchange information and take joint action where necessary. For detailed information about the meetings of the CSF you can read the reports of past meetings at the AAE website on www.aidsactioneurope.org.

The CSF meetings are organised twice per year in close co-operation with the current co-chairs, appointed by AIDS Action Europe (AAE) and the European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG). The CSF's role is to provide advice and identify issues of relevance to the Think Tank and the European Commission services, in particular in relation to the implementation of EU HIV/AIDS policy. The Forum is not a formal structure within the Commission.

Organisations interested in becoming a member of the CSF for the period of 1 October 2009 to 30 September 2012 should express their interest. Each organisation will be selected for a three year period. Each organisation can re-apply for membership after their term has expired. However, no preference will be given to these organisations in the selection process. Applying organisations will have to fulfil the following criteria:

1. The organisation has to fit within the following definition: "Civil society organisations are all non-profit, organised groups, clubs and associations in society that operate independently from government and the state except firms and political parties".
2. The organisation has to have its main base of operation in a Member State, Accession country, Western Balkan country, EEA country, Russia or a European Neighbourhood Policy country.
3. The organisation has to have HIV/AIDS activities as a main focus of their work.
4. The organisation has to fall under one or more of the following categories: 1) organisation of people living with HIV, 2) NGO working in/with the affected communities, 3) Regional network/umbrella organisation on HIV/AIDS. This includes organisations working on specific themes related to HIV/AIDS.
5. The organisation has to have sufficient/visible presence at the national level(s).
6. The organisation should possess good communication links with other local NGOs to be able to offer a good representation of the country situation(s) and to become a focal point in the CSF for the country (and/or specific theme) in question.

Member organisations will be selected by DG SANCO on behalf of the HIV/AIDS Think Tank, with advice from the co-chairs of the current CSF. The Task Force will base its decisions on the following principles:

1. A geographical balance shall be reached.
2. A minimum of five places in the CSF are reserved for organisations from Russia and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries.
3. An appropriate balance between different categories of organisation.
4. Balance between different topics shall be reached through different organisations having expertise on, e.g. people living with HIV/AIDS, migrants, sex workers, men having sex with men, drug users and their sexual partners, youth and gender issues, and more.
5. The organisation should be able to contribute to policy developments on a European level demonstrated through its work experience at national/regional level.
6. The organisation should be engaged in community-based work at the national level(s).

Information requested from organisations wishing to participate in the HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum

The HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum is an informal group linked to the HIV/AIDS Think Tank, which is a working group of Member States, Candidate and EEA countries, and selected ENP countries.

The proposal for the establishment of the Civil Society Forum as approved in the January 2005 meeting of the Think Tank sets out the aims and main tasks of the Forum. Organisations that fulfil the criteria for membership can be selected as members. Organisations interested in participating in the Forum shall send their expression of interest including the following information on no more than 3 A4 pages by 15 August 2009 to Wolfgang Philipp, European Commission, DG Health and Consumers, (wolfgang.philipp@ec.europa.eu, tel. +352-430138243) with "renewal HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum" in the subject line.

1. Name of organisation
2. Contact information, including a contact person
3. Information about area of operation
 - a. main topics and activities (i.e. human rights protection, counselling, assistance, prevention, outreach etc.)
 - b. main targets of activities (i.e. sex workers, migrants, people living with HIV/AIDS, drug users etc.)
 - c. What is the geographical coverage of activities
 - d. information on effectiveness of operations
 - e. examples of the positive impact on HIV issues or for people with HIV
4. Information about organisation
 - a. What type of organisation (legal status)?
 - b. When was it established?
 - c. Number of members (organisations/individuals)?
 - d. Indicators of activities/outputs of the organisation?
5. How does the organisation plan to contribute to policy development on European level?
6. Describe how the organisation will involve other HIV/AIDS organisations in your country and how the Forum will be informed on a regular basis about consultations with these organisations.

The total number of organisations in the Forum will be limited to 40. Organisations will be selected to participate in the CSF based on the guidelines for selection of members of the HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum. Each selected organisation will be in the Forum for three years, starting on 1 October 2009 and at the end of its term it may re-apply for a membership in the Forum.

On the basis of available budget and policy needs it is foreseen to organise 2 meetings each year, usually one in April/May, and another one in November/December. In order to facilitate the participation of members in the meetings, the European Commission will, on the basis of available funds, reimburse travel and per-diem expenses for one participant from up to 30 member organisations in accordance with Commission rules and regulations. The selection of organisations for reimbursements will be based on following priority groups: 1) Member organisations from EU-12 Member States, Candidate countries, and neighbouring countries, 2) National NGOs from other countries in Europe, and 3) European networks.