The Croatian example of national strategy on HIV/AIDS prevention & strategies on hepatitis and tuberculosis

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Republic of Croatia:

Population – 4.3 million inhabitants

2015:
- 1321 cumulative HIV/AIDS cases
- 2.7 newly diagnosed HIV cases per 100,000 (n=116)
- ♂ / ♀ 87%/13%
- 817 HIV MSM cases (62% of all cases)
- 27% heterosexuals, 5.5% PWID of all HIV infections
- HIV incidence among MSM is raising (>80% of new cases)
- 953 HIV/AIDS patients in care
Key dates in HIV/AIDS policy

from 1985 - surveillance of HIV/AIDS
1987 - mandatory testing of blood, organs, tissues
1992 - Committe for combating HIV/AIDS was founded by MoH
1993 - first National Programme for HIV/AIDS Prevention
1998 - National HIV/AIDS Reference centre of Ministry of Health was established at University Hospital for infectious diseases
1996 - The Croatian Parliament adopted „Harm Reduction" as a part of the National Strategy for Combating Drug Abuse
1998 - ART became available, financed by the Croatian Health Insurance Fund
2003-2006 HIV Counselling & testing scale up
- anonymous, free of charge
- 2012- community–based testing
Cumulative HIV/AIDS cases
Croatia, 1985-2015

77-116 new HIV/AIDS cases reported annually
1.8-2.7/100.000

Total number of HIV/AIDS cases N=1321; AIDS cases N=458; Deaths N=246

Low-level epidemic

Data from Croatian HIV/AIDS Register
HIV/AIDS in Croatia - Mode of transmission

Data from Croatian HIV/AIDS Register
Newly HIV diagnosed persons according to mode of transmission, Croatia, 2004-2015

Begovac, Dominković, Nemeth-Blazić, Kosanović Ličina, Zidovec Lepej, Lukas, Handanagic, Bozicevic,
The improving trend in the HIV continuum of care in Croatia in the period 2010-2014, 25th ECCMID, Amsterdam 2015.

Overarching goal:

- strengthening the national response to HIV/AIDS epidemic in Croatia with the goal of maintaining a low level epidemic and decreasing the risk of infection and HIV/AIDS spread in the future

- To reduce/keep low yearly HIV incidence (below 20 per 1 mil.)

Linked to:

National strategy of development of health 2012-2020
Strategic plan of development of public health,
National strategy for Youth 2013-2017...
National response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic - Strategic priorities

• To maintain continuity of universal access to treatment & care for PLWHA

• To increase the level of protective behaviours among youth

• To implement targeted interventions for populations at heightened risk

• To ensure the safety of blood and blood products
National HIV/AIDS program-objectives

1. To strengthen surveillance (HIV/AIDS, STI, drug abuse)
2. Prevention among populations (key populations, general populations)
3. To increase access to HTS (early diagnosis)
4. To ensure continuity of treatment & care for PLWH including decreasing stigma and discrimination
5. Implementation of standard protection measures
6. Keep blood & blood products safe
7. To maintain good coordination among stakeholders
HIV prevention and control program in Croatia

Primary prevention
Protection on individual and population level
Raising awareness, education, sexual health promotion, harm reduction, condom distribution, Prevention of infections through blood & blood derivatives

Secondary prevention
Early detection of new HIV infections
Regular & community-based HIV testing

Tertiary prevention
Treatment & care
Linkage to care, support PLWH

Structural changes
Decreasing stigma and discrimination, decreasing barriers to access health care, improvement of health system through partnerships, education and advocacy.
Target, key populations

- Most at risk populations, general population

- Men who have sex with men
- Drug users
- Commercial sex workers
- Mobile groups, work migrants
- Prison inmates
- Youth
- General population
- PLWHA
COMPOSITION OF COMMISSION FOR HIV/AIDS PREVENTION

28 members

11 Ministries
Ministries of Health, Education, Justice, Social Welfare and Youth, Economy, Tourism, Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure, Internal Affairs, Defence, Veterans, Foreign and European Affairs

Office for Combating Narcotic Drug Abuse

Office for Human Rights and National Minorities

Croatian Institute of Transfusion Medicine

Croatian Institute of Public Health

Reference Centre for HIV/AIDS

NGO, Religious & international representatives (WHO office in Croatia)

professional societies of the Croatian Medical Association (STI, school medicine)

Faculty of Dental Medicine

Croatian Nurses Association

Croatian Red Cross

Croatian Institute for Transfusion Medicine

Faculty of Dental Medicine
2016-2020 Updated National HIV/AIDS Program

steps taken to create and adopt this document

- Discussed and agreed at meeting of Commission for HIV/AIDS prevention in 2015
- Commission work group revised old program and make draft of new National HIV/AIDS Program 2016-2020 (concept and structure remained the same, content is updated)
  - Targets 90-90-90 to be included
  - PrEP is included as consideration depending on evidence & possibilities
- Online consultation completed
- Currently in the final stage of being adopted
Legal framework

- Health Care Protection Act
- Health Insurance Act
- Act on the protection of the population from infectious diseases and its Regulations
- Health Care Measures Program
- Personal data protection act, Act on protection on patient’s wright
- Yearly plan of statistical research
- and others...
## Financial framework

- **Sources:** state budget (MoH, Lottery Act), local communities (not much, rarely), health insurance fund (treatment), private sector (very little), international projects and donations
- **Average total finances for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, M&E, research** for the 2010-2013: **64.500.000 HRK (cca 8.6000.000 EUR)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIV/AIDS spending category</th>
<th>2015 HRK</th>
<th>2014 HRK</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prevention of sexual transmission</td>
<td>760.000</td>
<td>884.406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention for PWID (Harm-reduction programmes)</td>
<td>3.055.600</td>
<td>2.715.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synergies with development sector</td>
<td>16.265.711</td>
<td>14.171.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigma reduction</td>
<td>100.000</td>
<td>170.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal access (ART, HIV testing, support and retention)</td>
<td>50.064.508</td>
<td>59.337.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>70.245.819</strong></td>
<td><strong>77.279.334</strong></td>
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Monitoring & evaluation

- **Continuous data collection** of national key indicators (HIV/AIDS register, UNAIDS GARPR reporting)
- **Bio-behavioral periodic surveys** among key populations (MSM, PWID)
- **Treatment cascade**, including estimate of total PWLH and proportion of undiagnosed cases
The trend in the cascade of care in Croatia in the period 2010-2014
Achievements

- Good epidemiological school and surveillance
- Early and continuous prevention and control
- GF Project “Scaling up HIV/AIDS Response in Croatia” (2003-2006) as an integral part of the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Programme - significant contribution to HIV prevention
- Mobilization of NGOs
- Successful transition from GF to domestic funding (continuity/sustainability)
- Integration of HBV, HCV and TB and STI measures (second generation surveillance)
- Low level of HIV epidemic, relative favoruable epidemiological situation - less than 1% of PWID is infected and the trend among them is stable
- Improvements in the cascade of care in the period 2010-2014 - increase of the proportion of patients on ART and of those being suppressed - proportion of undiagnosed was reduced
Challenges

• **MSM** most affected, need to **intensify prevention**

• **Increase testing coverage**: early HIV-diagnosis and reducing the number of persons who do not know that they are HIV infected

• More **attention to the evaluation of preventive programmes**

• **Improving quality in HIV prevention** (JA Quality Acton)

• **Combat still existing prejudice** towards the HIV/AIDS

• **To improve implementation of health education** (sexual education) **within the school** curriculum and for general population as comprehensive approach to HIV prevention (health literacy)
Some goals for upcoming period actions to take

• To finish the process of adopting a new HIV/AIDS prevention program 2016-2020

• Organize ECDC country visit (plan September 2016)

• To finalize guidelines for the management of exposures to HIV, HBV and HCV (Croatian Epidemiology Society of the Croatian Medical Association)

• To finish development and implementation of improved electronic HIV information system for new revised ECDC protocol (now in testing phase)
## SWOT ANALYSIS

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Weaknesses</strong></th>
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| • Good epidemiological school, continuity, sustainability in control and prevention  
  • Network and common goal of stakeholders  
  • Inclusiveness into IS ECDC/WHO  
  • Collaboration of GO and NGO institutions  
  • Innovation, networking, motivation (enough motivated people) | • Insufficient coordination  
  • Regional networks not equally strong  
  • Insufficient implementation of health education in schools  
  • Lack of human resources |

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<tr>
<th><strong>Opportunities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Threats</strong></th>
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| • Support from EU projects  
  • Lobbying, advocacy  
  • Inclusion into global partnerships, projects  
  • Better use of intersectoral collaboration  
  • Exchange of experience and information through regular communication with professionals from other countries and from the ECDC, WHO and EC meetings (Think Tank) | • Limited finances  
  • In state budget for 2016 less funds for line allocated to HIV prevention  
  • Changes in the health system |

Evaluation of the GF project 2007; Survey 2015 (qualitative evaluation)  
Evaluation of the National Programme for HIV / AIDS, UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, 2009  
Strategic Development Plan of Public Health from 2013 to 2015, CIPH 2013  
National strategies on hepatitis and tuberculosis
HEPATITIS

• The National Hepatitis Strategy is in its preparatory phase. It is based on a National Consensus Conference held for the third time in February 2013 and Resolution on fight against viral hepatitises adopted by Croatian Parliament in 2009.

Activities: The outputs of the Consensus Conference was special issue of Acta Medica Croatica journal, with recommendations on prevention, screening, diagnosing, control, and treatment of viral hepatitides with recommendation to adopt a comprehensive National Hepatitis Strategy - conferences, round tables, press conferences with stakeholders, meetings of the working group

• No national strategy or plan exclusively or primarily on the prevention and control of viral hepatitis.

The control and prevention of hepatitis in Croatia is integrated and implemented within the control and prevention measures for all infectious diseases that is under surveillance in Croatia which is regulated by Act on the Protection of Population from Infectious Diseases, Health Care Act, Health Care Measures Program and linked to other related strategies (the same situation is with STI)
TUBERCULOSIS

- Prevention and control of tuberculosis in Croatia is framed by National Guidelines for prevention and control of tuberculosis (Official Gazette No. 150/08, 71/10, 139/10, 22/11, 84/11, 12/12, 35/12 and 70/12)

- Includes coordination and collaboration between HIV/AIDS and TB prevention and control measures
Selected activities from HIV prevention programme in Croatia
World AIDS day activities

- World AIDS Day every year: Public health educational campaign "Knowledge Wins"
- Symposium at University Hospital for Infectious Diseases „Dr.Fran Mihaljević”
- Video TV spot: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MD5vh_Nq4TI
- Online:
  - Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/CroAids/
  - Knowledge quiz: http://javno-zdravlje.hr/kvizovi/aids/
  - Marking world AIDS Day: http://javno-zdravlje.hr/svjetski-dan-aids-a/
World AIDS day activities
WAD 2015, Zagreb
National Campaign
wide national campaign on promotion HIV prevention
summer (beaches), winter (public transport, health facilities)
postres, leaflets, TV& radio spots
Educational and promotional materials

Flyer „Knowledge wins” - promoting HIV testing
European testing week activities

ETW 2015
Community rapid testing

4 cities:
Zagreb, Rijeka, Split, Osijek
Community-based rapid HIV testing @ LGBT centre Zagreb

Started in Oct 2013

Rapid HIV tests

Free & anonymous

Centre of the town

A few minutes from most gay venues in Zagreb

About 500 people tested per year with 2% positivity rate

Partnership with Public Health Institute
Use of media and new tech

Facebook
National LGBT website: gay.hr
Netreach and ads on dating sites/apps
EU MSM App Action
THANK YOU