

To: Mr Taavi Rõivas, Prime Minister of Estonia

CC:

Mr Jevgeni Ossinovski, Minister of Health and Labor

Ms Marina Kaljurand, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Mr Margus Tsahkna, Minister for Social Protection

Ms Kaja Tael, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Estonian to the EU

Brussels, 12 September, 2016

Subject: 2017 Estonian Presidency of the European Union

Dear Mr Rõivas,

In view of the upcoming Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2017, the undersigned **66** organizations from **34** European countries would like to urge Estonia to prioritize the issue of **funding crisis for tuberculosis (TB), HIV, hepatitis B and C (HCV) programmes in the European region** in your Presidency's health agenda.

The region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) is home to the **fastest growing HIV and HCV epidemics and the highest rates of multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) in the world**. According to WHO, 2013 there were 80% more new HIV cases in Europe compared to 2004¹. UNAIDS considers the EECA as the only region in the world where HIV prevalence continues to grow². At the same time, in many countries of the European region, rates of MDR-TB³ are alarming. EECA has the **world's highest rates of new TB patients with MDR-TB**⁴, which has become an epidemic on its own, and TB is among one of the leading causes of death of HIV positive people in the region. Moreover, in many countries hepatitis C prevalence nears 80% in people who use drugs⁵ and the number of related deaths rises yearly.

In addition to the catastrophic human cost, the economic burden caused by TB in the region is enormous. It is estimated that by 2050, drug resistant TB will be responsible for an additional **2.1 million deaths** at an **economic cost of \$1.1 trillion** in Europe⁶. This is an appalling situation for the European region, which, compared to many other regions in the world, has much higher living standards and more stable political, economic and social situation, thus should be better positioned to fight these deadly diseases. It is in the EU's best interest to prevent HIV and TB epidemics from crippling Europe's social and economic development.

Many countries in EECA substantially rely on international funding to tackle HIV and TB, and

¹ WHO Infographic, HIV in Europe, November 2014, http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/264788/Infographic-HIV-in-Europe-80-percent-more-600-Eng.pdf

² UNAIDS GAP Report 2014 http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2014/20140716_UNAIDS_gap_report

³ MDR-TB - a form of the disease that does not respond to the standard treatment of TB drugs and is much more difficult and costly to treat

⁴ Global Tuberculosis Report 2013, World Health Organisation, http://www.who.int/tb/publications/global_report/en/

⁵ Harm Reduction International. The Global State of Harm Reduction 2014 <https://www.hri.global/files/2015/02/16/GSHR2014.pdf>

⁶ Review on Anti-Microbial Resistance, May 2016, Jim O'Neill

national funding for HCV is absent. External donor funding is still very often the main source to finance programmes targeting vulnerable groups and key affected populations. With economic growth in the region, EECA countries are gradually becoming ineligible for development assistance. The phasing out of international donors, such as the [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria](#) and USAID, is raising concerns that funding gaps may not be met by increases in domestic funding, **putting at risk the progress made so far in the TB and HIV response.**

In view of the recent progress made in TB and HIV in Estonia and with very successful transition from donor to domestic funding in the country, **we are calling on the Estonian government to seize the unique opportunity of the upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union to play a leadership role by including TB and HIV in the European region as one of its health priorities.** In particular, we ask the Estonian government to convene within its presidency a High Level Meeting to discuss and agree on concrete roadmaps for filling the financial gaps and increase the political commitment to eliminate TB, viral hepatitis and HIV in the region. The Eastern Partnership Summit could be a good platform for such a High Level Event, bringing together all stakeholders from EECA.

We, as civil society, stay at the Estonian government's disposal for any kind of support for discussions on funding and transition issues and believe that together we will be able to generate the much needed regional political leadership to start turning the tide of the TB, viral hepatitis and HIV epidemics in Europe.

Yours sincerely,



**Act For Involvement
(Moldova)**



**Georgian Harm
Reduction Network
(Georgia)**



ADHARA (Spain)



Global Health Advocates



**AGIHAS - support group
for people living with HIV
and AIDS (Latvia)**



**Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos
(Portugal)**



AIDES (France)



**HOPS
HEALTHY OPTIONS PROJECT SKOPJE**

**Healthy Options
Project Skopje
(Macedonia)**



AIDS Action Europe



Hepatitis, AIDS, Research Trust



Aids Hilfe (Austria)



HIV Ireland



AIDS Solidarity Movement (Cyprus)



HPLGBT (Ukraine)



AIDS-Fondet (Denmark)



International HIV Partnerships



AIDS-Hilfe Steiermark (Austria)



"I Can Live" Coalition of NGOs and Experts (Lithuania)



AJPAS (Portugal)



Life Quality Improvement Organisation Flight (Croatia)



Ameliya OO (Kazakhstan)



Medical Foundation for HIV & Sexual Health (UK)



Apoyo Positivo (Spain)



menZDRAV Foundation (Russia and Ukraine)



Association HIV.LV (Latvia)



National AIDS Trust (UK)



CASO - Associated Users Survive United (Portugal)



New Life AIDS (Russia)



CAZAS NGO (Montenegro)



"Positive People Armenian Network" Soc. NGO (Armenia)

ԳԻՐԿԱՆ ՄԱՐԿԿԱՆՆԵՑ
ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՑԱՆԵՑ



Center For The Empowerment Youth Of People Who Are Living With HIV and AIDS (Serbia)



Positive Voice (Greece)



Civic Association Odysseus (Slovakia)



Public Foundation "Kyrgyz Coalition for TB "Coalition against Tuberculosis" (Kyrgyzstan)



Civil Society Organisations Forum on HIV and AIDS (FOCDHA) (Serbia)



Q-klub (Serbia)



Convictus (Ukraine)



RESULTS UK



Community of PLHIV (Uzbekistan)



Romanian Angel Appeal Foundation (Romania)



Coordinadora estatal de VIH y sida

Coordinadora estatal de VIH y sida (Spain)



Romanian Harm Reduction Network (Romania)



CORRELATION Network (Netherlands)



SALUS Charitable Foundation (Ukraine)



Czech AIDS Help Society (Czech Republic)



Sens Pozitiv Association (Romania)



Demetra, Association of HIV affected women and their families (Lithuania)



SENSOA (Belgium)



"Dose of love" Association (Bulgaria)



SKUC Association (Slovenia)

Dose of Love association



East Europe and Central Asia Union of People Living with HIV (ECUO)



Stop AIDS Alliance (Belgium)



Eesti HIV-positiivsete Võrgustik
Estonian Network of PLWH

Estonian Network of PLWH (Estonia)



STOP TB Partnership Coalition (Tajikistan)



Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM)



Stop-TB Forum (Germany)



European AIDS Treatment Group

European AIDS Treatment Group



Stronger Together, Association for Support of People Living with HIV Skopje (Macedonia)



Eurasian Harm Reduction Network



Terra-1530 NGO (Romania, Moldova)

The HIV Justice Network (UK)



Fondazione LILA Milano ONLUS (Italy)



Gay-alliance, PO (Ukraine)

The John Mordaunt Trust, London (UK)



TB Georgian Coalition (Georgia)



Welfare Foundation (Georgia)

საქართველოს ტუბერკულოზის წინააღმდეგ
TB GEORGIAN COALITION

Welfare Foundation