



REGIONAL WORKSHOP REPORT

Country name / Visit Date(s): **BULGARIA, 14-15 February 2019**

Overview

- In February 2019, TB Europe Coalition (hereafter, TBEC) together with the E-DETECT project organised a two-day advocacy workshop for civil society organisations and activists from all around Bulgaria.
- In addition to the E-DETECT and TBEC moderators, the workshop gathered nine representatives from civil society organisations and experts from KPMG, commissioned by the Global Fund to review the sustainability of HIV and TB grants after the Global Fund's withdrawal in March 2019.
- The workshop ended with an advocacy meeting between civil society organisations and National TB Programme Manager, Dr Tonka Varleva, to discuss the next steps after the end of the Global Fund grant, for example a public tender for TB services for the NGOs.
- The key objectives of the workshop were:
 - For TB-interested civil society organisations (CSOs) to learn more about each other and their respective organisations;
 - To develop national and local strategies for TB advocacy in the face of the Global Fund (GF) withdrawal;
 - To build and strengthen coordination among TB-interested CSOs for support and operational engagement in activities linked to the National TB Programme;
- The workshop participants were actively involved in developing the content of the workshop by answering a questionnaire on key issues in TB care and desirable outcomes from the workshop before the event so a more tailored event could be organised, and by leading some of the workshop sessions during the event itself.
- The two-day workshop focused both on passive and active learning, ranging from collaborative group work to individual presentations by TBEC and E-DETECT moderators.
- The workshop covered a variety of issue areas, including developing an assessment of the overall situation and best practices in TB care in Bulgaria, learning about the E-DETECT project, and discussing engagement opportunities at regional level via ERS, TBEC or Global TB Caucus networks, amongst others.
- Furthermore, the participants created a listserv for further collaboration amongst NGOs in TB advocacy towards NTP and local municipalities.
- Following the end of the workshop, the participants were asked to fill in a feedback questionnaire with regards to the quality of the workshop.

Key recommendations/follow-up activities:

- TBEC to continue engaging with key civil society organisations, working on TB advocacy, capacity building and service delivery in Bulgaria, with a specific focus on increased coordination and

collaboration at the regional level. For example, via regional civil society capacity building or advocacy workshops.

- TBEC to actively engage workshop participants in overall TB advocacy at regional and international level, for example, within the framework of the WHO RCC-THV and/or EU CSF on HIV, TB and Hepatitis, Wolfheze conference in 2021, the global Union conference on lung health in 2019, and various regional submissions to the WHO (analysis of the available psycho-social support and/or access to child friendly TB drugs etc.), the UN and the EU.
- TBEC to link workshop participants to various regional networks to enhance their advocacy capabilities, for example, Global TB Caucus, TBPeople, European Harm Reduction Association and AIDS Action Europe amongst others.
- TBEC to explore opportunities for peer-to-peer learning/exchange, for example, linking Bulgarian CSOs to those from the Balkan region, Romania, and Baltic states , allowing for knowledge exchange regarding transition and sustainability following the withdrawal of the Global Fund and quality aspects of people centered care– psycho-social support, food packages, money incentives amongst others.
- TBEC to explore the opportunities for further regional coordination and engagement within the framework of the Global Fund Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM).

Lessons learned:

- Coordinate an initial outline for the advocacy plan/priorities ahead of the workshop so that the participants can use it as a reference during the workshop.
- Develop a list of suggestions for practical follow-up activities ahead of the workshop for the participants to use as a reference during the workshop.
- Involve a higher number of participants in the preparation of the workshop as leads on specific presentations.
- Consider expanding the workshop to include TB healthcare experts – nurses, TB doctors, etc.



This webpage is the product of an activity that has received funding under an operating grant from the European Union's Health Programme (2014-2020).

The content of this webpage represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

Report Details

Name of Country	Sofia, Bulgaria
Dates of Visit	14-15 February 2019
Primary Objectives	<p>To increase knowledge of each other and their organisations among TB-interested civil society organisations (CSOs).</p> <p>To develop national and local strategies for TB advocacy in the face of the Global Fund (GF) withdrawal.</p> <p>To build and strengthen coordination among TB-interested CSOs for advocacy and operational engagement in activities linked to the National TB Programme.</p>
Prepared Date	23 rd May 2019

Visit Agenda	<p>Day 1 (13 February 2019 - Traveling to Sofia, Bulgaria;</p> <p>Day 2 (14 February 2019) – TBEC capacity building workshop;</p> <p>Day 3 (15 February 2019) – TBEC capacity building workshop and departure;</p>
--------------	--

TB situation in Bulgaria

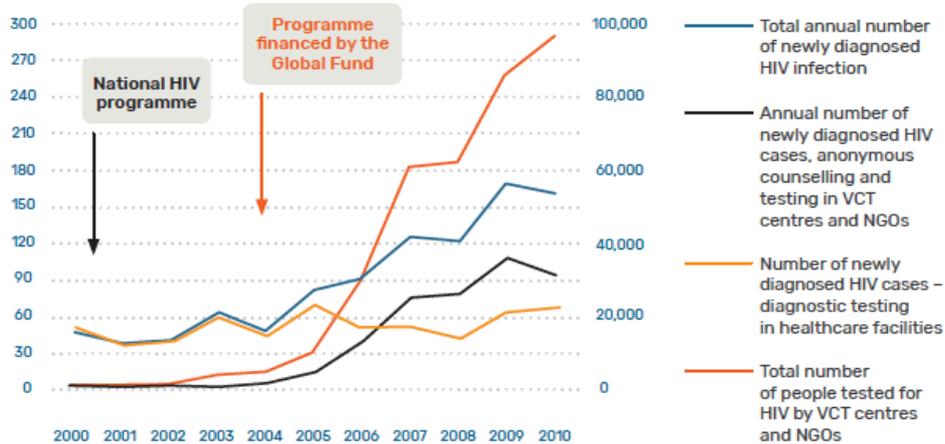
Bulgaria has been a member state of the European Union (EU) since 2007 and is currently classified as an upper middle-income country, according to the World Bank country income classification. Currently, TB case numbers in Bulgaria remain more than three times higher than the European Union average. The country has been a recipient of donor support to their HIV/AIDS and TB programmes from the Global Fund since 2004 and 2008 respectively.

Throughout the years, Bulgaria has been praised as an example amongst other countries in the region for successful engagement of NGOs in service delivery and subsequent substantial decline in HIV and TB epidemics in the country. Unfortunately, the Global Fund had exclusively financed civil society's work.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ANNUAL NUMBER OF NEWLY DIAGNOSED HIV BY TYPE OF HIV TESTING SERVICE PROVIDER IN BULGARIA BETWEEN 2000 AND 2010

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF HEALTH, PROGRAMME "PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF HIV/AIDS", 2011

Graph 2



Following Bulgaria's accession to the EU and its continuously improving economic status, the Global Fund has been gradually withdrawing its support from national TB and HIV programmes, with HIV grant's administrative closure taking place in May 2017 and TB grant's closure to take place on 31st March 2019. Although Bulgarian government has foreseen budget for the new national TB and HIV programmes, adopted for period 2017-2020, there are very few funds to support NGO work, and what is more difficult – the access to these funds is further complicated by complicated public procurement mechanisms. Thus, following the end of HIV grant, the first call for proposals with regards to NGO engagement in service delivery received only a few applications from previously active and committed NGOs due to impossible indicators and financial restrictions. At the end of the call, only two contracts were signed, although the funding was foreseen for 13 civil society organisations. The second call for proposals, with the amended requirements, received a more positive response from civil society but is still considered relatively rigid and financially unviable in the long term.

On the 5th of March, the Ministry of Health announced a public tender for TB services for the NGOs. Unfortunately, the call for tender covers only four cities – Vidin, Gabrovo, Sliven and Pernik and only for the six months, with the total amount of 9300 euro per town. The scope of services includes: First of all, 200 persons screened by inquiries; secondly, 100 persons screened by Mantoux skin tests and finally, only ten people accompanied and assisted for treatment. **Thus, although the initiative of the Ministry of Health is commendable, the actual amount allocated is minuscule and cannot be considered as a sustainable long-term solution.**

Workshop overview

On 14th and 15th of February, TB Europe Coalition organised a two-day advocacy workshop for civil society organisations and activists from all around Bulgaria. The workshop aimed to build and strengthen coordination amongst tuberculosis (TB) interested civil society organisations and activists ahead of the withdrawal of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (Global Fund) from the country.

Participants:

Nine civil society organisations and TB activists in Bulgaria

- Alexander Yordanov, Foundation "P.U.L.S."
- Elizabet Marinova, Foundation "P.U.L.S."
- Hristo Mitakov, „Dose of love” Association

- Nela Ivanova, „Dose of love” Association
- Nikolai Tsolov, Free youth centre - Vidin
- Trendafil Meretev, Foundation "Fund for prevention of crimes - IGA."
- Tatiana Kirilova, Foundation "Roma – Lom"
- Yuliya Georgieva, "Center for human policies."
- Anna Lybenova, Foundation "Initiative for health."

1 TBEC facilitators:

- Anete Cook, TBEC Senior Officer;
- Paul Sommerfeld, TBEC Co-Chair;

1 E-DETECT facilitator:

- Dr Dan Gainaru, E-DETECT / Maria Nasta Institute;

Other

- KPMG experts, commissioned by the Global Fund to review the sustainability of HIV and TB grants after the withdrawal in March 2019

**For a full attendee list, please see Annex 1.*

The **key objectives of the workshop** were to:

- To increase knowledge of each other and their organisations among TB-interested civil society organisations (CSOs).
- To develop national and local strategies for TB advocacy in the face of the Global Fund (GF) withdrawal.
- To build and strengthen coordination among TB-interested CSOs for advocacy and operational engagement in activities linked to the National TB Programme.

The workshop participants were actively involved in developing the content of the workshop by answering a questionnaire on key issues in TB care and desirable outcomes from the workshop.

**For the overview of an online survey, please see Annex 2.*

The civil society organisations discussed the importance of TB prevention, care, and outreach for their communities, reflected on what are the problems civil society organisations, working on TB, are currently facing and exchanged views on what will happen after the withdrawal of the Global Fund. Further, the civil society organisations then discussed a potential advocacy strategy and specific targets for this year that would allow better engagement for NGOs in TB service delivery.

**For a detailed workshop programme, please see Annex 3.*

The workshop was joined by E-DETECT TB partner from the Marius Nasta Institute in Romania, Dr Dan Gainaru, who presented E-DETECT project and its activities in Romania and Bulgaria, specifically, development and use of the mobile TB screening unit, a modified truck. Furthermore, the Director of national TB and HIV programmes in Bulgaria, Dr Tonka Varleva and her team attended one of the workshop sessions and discussed what can be expected following the end of the Global Fund grant in March 2019. Dr Tonka Varleva reiterated the crucial role of NGOs in TB prevention, care and outreach and promised her support in continuing NGO engagement in service delivery.

**For PPT presentations, please reach out to TBEC at coordinator@tbcoalition.eu*

The NGOs also created an online listserv to exchange plans and views of developments within the country. This listserv is essential as it is providing a concrete tool for future action and for giving reality to their agreement to work as a common Forum of TB-interested NGOs.

Following the workshop, the participants were asked to fill the evaluation forms. The majority of the participants valued the workshop and opportunity to discuss the withdrawal from the Global Fund with the Ministry of Health. However, they did repeat the overarching "feeling of stagnation" – the issues have been discussed on

numerous occasions, but the interest of the NGOs are waning and there are no substantial movements on the government side to include the NGOs in TB service delivery.

**For the detailed translation of the forms, please see Annex 4.*

Throughout the workshop, TBEC communicated activities via social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter. Following the workshop, the workshop report and blog article was published on the TBEC website in EN and RU, widely distributed via TBEC newsletter.



TBEC WORKSHOP
PARTICIPANT LIST

Organisation	Name/Surname Position	14/02	15/02
* Disc of Love Association	Nela Ivanova		
Yongyuy ul, P. G. N. C. "Prokhorovskiy"	Prokhorovskiy		
Prokhorovskiy, T. G. N. C.	Prokhorovskiy		
Disc of Love Association	Heikko Miskaov		
Center for human policy	Yuliy Georgiev		
Roma-Rom Foundation	Tatyana Kitzilova		
Донгачис Улус	за сграда Анна Мусева		
TBEC	Paul SUMMERFIELD		
Сара Улус	Розалия Мисеку		

Summary of the responses to the pre-workshop questionnaire

- Responses received from **nine civil society organisations** (12 participants) across Bulgaria: two from Sofia, one from each city - Vidin, Pazardjik, Plovdiv, Yambol, Pernik, Lom and Burgas.
- Every NGO except one has experience in TB service delivery to vulnerable groups.
- The **key vulnerable groups in Bulgaria** are:
 - Roma community;
 - Drug users, alcohol addicts, homeless people;
 - Children at risk of TB;
 - HIV/ TB patients;
 - TB/diabetes patients;
- The **key “areas” for TB in Bulgaria** range from big municipal districts to small towns and concentrated TB infections in the communities.
- **When asked if TB is considered a priority for the organisation, the majority responded that the TB is not considered the main priority for the NGO, but given time and funding; every NGOs would include it in their outreach work as the issue is relevant for the communities and vulnerable groups.**
- Every NGO reiterated their interest in TB advocacy and necessity for increased efforts (TB advocacy, capacity building and TB services provision). Half of the participants would be more interested in advocacy than in direct services provision.
- Key TB themes/areas relevant to the NGOs were:
 - TB advocacy;
 - TB funding for NGOs;
 - TB services, case management;
 - TB outreach and work with vulnerable groups;
- The participants were willing to contribute to the workshop via:
 - Exchange of experience, advocacy and coordination;
 - Funding proposals and participation in working groups for TB;
 - Independent position from service provision;



TBEC WORKSHOP

14-15 February 2019, Sofia

(Hotel Silver, Boulevard "Simeonovsko Shose 6, 1700 zh.g. Zoopark, Sofia)

AIMS

- To increase knowledge of each other and their organisations among TB-interested civil society organisations (CSOs).
- To develop national and local strategies for TB advocacy in the face of the Global Fund (GF) withdrawal.
- To build and strengthen coordination among TB-interested CSOs for advocacy and operational engagement in activities linked to the National TB Programme.

PROGRAMME

14 February 2018 (10:00 – 17:15)

INTRODUCTION (10:00 – 11:00)

- Welcome from organisers
- Workshop activities and agenda. Logistics.
- Introduction of participants – warm-up exercise

WHO WE ARE (11:00-12:00)

- Feedback from the pre-workshop questionnaire
- Learning aims (Paul)
- Exploration of each other's organisations TB and advocacy experience

WHERE WE ARE (12:00-13:00)

- Reflections on what the problems facing TB CSOs are
- Q&A with KPMG

LUNCH (13:00 – 14:00)

WHAT WE WANT - PART 1 (14:00-15:30)

- Clarification of what CSOs want to ask for - getting the "asks" clear
- Group work and exercises

COFFEE BREAK (15:30-15:45)

E-DETECT session (15:45-17:15)

- Dr Dan Gainaru,
 - 20-30 minutes presentation on E-DETECT;

- 10 min project video, with BG subtitles;
- Romanian example
- Q&A

DINNER at 19:00 (Hotel Silver)

15 February 2018 (09:30 – 16:30)

WHERE WE ARE (09:30-11:00)

- Overview and update on current progress or lack thereof post-GF arrangements such as government policy, tendering processes, inter-CSO collaboration (NTP office)

COFFEE BREAK (11:00 – 11:15)

WHAT WE WANT - PART 2 (11:15- 13:00)

- Mapping of actual and potential allies
- Development of advocacy strategy
- Group work and exercises

LUNCH (13:00-14:00)

WHAT WE WANT – PART 3 (14:00-15:00)

- Outline key decision makers – at the national and local level and plan whom to approach, when and how
- Develop a work plan
- Coordination mechanisms
- Identification of funding required and reflection on where it might come from

HOW TO DO IT (15:00-16:00)

- Internal communication - guiding points
 - Set Google listserve and Whatsapp group;
- External communication - guiding points
 - Social media - Facebook/MailChimp;

COFFEE BREAK (16:00-16:30)

CLOSURE (15:45-16:30)

- Next steps for TBEC/BG CSOs
- Evaluation forms

DEPARTURE

What could we do better? What could we change in the future?

- Before the meeting, we should create a structure and questions to the representatives of the Ministry of Health;
- Previous feedback has not been taken into account by the Ministry of Health;
- Attract more participants
- Try to define common goals and interests that are above the personal interests of the organization;
- The event was good, but the desperation was part of the workshop. I don't think something anything will change;
- Everything was well organized. We needed more participants for a more useful discussion;

Please, share how do you plan to use the information in your everyday work?

- Provide information from the workshop to the other colleagues in the organizations.
- I will use the opportunity to advocate on the local level towards regional health inspectorates and municipalities;
- Additional efforts for fundraising;
- Participate in the Google group, keep in touch with colleagues, and possibly get in touch with E-DETECT;
- I will actively participate in the newly created network;
- I will try to actively engage in the discussions on the Google listserve;
- I will participate in the forum and will support colleagues with everything possible;
- I would sustain contacts in the network for development of the program;

Other comments

- Good atmosphere;
- Good organization;
- Very nice that we created a listserve;
- We need more efforts for communication and coordination;