

PRESS RELEASE

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**Activists United and Ignited by Urgency for HIV Prevention in Europe****EATG and AVAC call for the rollout of PrEP as a proven HIV prevention strategy and for the continuation of research for HIV vaccines, and rectal and vaginal microbicides, along with better surveillance data**

AVAC<sup>1</sup> and the European AIDS Treatment Group<sup>2</sup> hosted the second European HIV Prevention Summit. Participants consisting of communities of people living with and at risk of HIV discussed the latest scientific and policy developments in the field of HIV prevention and formulated demands for researchers, medicine manufacturers and decision makers. The community urges concerted action and clear financial and political commitment if we want to achieve effective prevention of HIV/AIDS in Europe. Specifically, the Summit urges the accelerated approval and rollout of PrEP in countries across the region, following France's recent example as the first and only in Europe to officially implement and fund PrEP programs for men and women at substantial risk of HIV.

Initiated and organised entirely by the community of people living with and at risk for HIV, the second European HIV Prevention Summit brought together representatives of civil society, the pharmaceutical industry, researchers, academia, and regulators in Brussels between 29 and 31 January. In addition to a thorough examination of PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), a proven mode of protection, the HIV Prevention Summit discussed the latest developments in the research fields of vaccines, rectal and vaginal microbicides and antibodies and their utility in HIV prevention.

The agenda of the European HIV Prevention Summit included detailed reports on and discussions of the different target groups of people at risk of HIV across Europe, including gay men, trans people, sex workers, people who inject drugs, migrants and the African diaspora. Timely information from completed, on-going and planned PrEP implementation studies was presented along with new civil society initiatives to provide PrEP and other prevention tools to those who need it. For a rare moment, stakeholders involved in the field of HIV prevention could gather in a space to exchange scientifically sound and politically meaningful ideas about way of slowing down the HIV epidemic in Europe.

*"The communities of gay men and other men having sex with men (MSM) remain disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic in Europe. The MSM community carries the highest burden of the epidemic in this region, therefore the responses should be proportionate",* pointed out Mr. Luís Mendão, Chair of the EATG. However, the groups at risk of HIV infection are larger, and their specific needs also must be acknowledged and served by appropriate health interventions so that they can adequately protect themselves. Economic modelling data show HIV prevention is efficient and cheaper in the long run than a lifetime of HIV treatment.<sup>3</sup>

*"We urgently need reliable and current surveillance data from relevant agencies of the European Union and the WHO. Only these can provide the evidence about the epidemic needed for mounting appropriate responses in prevention as well",* said Rebekah Webb, AVAC and EATG member. Despite strong efforts and guidelines from the WHO and ECDC, surveillance data from certain countries of the WHO Europe region remain scattered and unreliable<sup>4</sup>. The communities of people living and affected by HIV can help, but political leadership is needed to generate better and more consistent data across the entire HIV treatment continuum to understand where urgent interventions are needed, and what these interventions should be if we want to contribute to the achievement of the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.avac.org>

<sup>2</sup> [www.eatg.org](http://www.eatg.org)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4353265/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/aids/hiv-network/Pages/index.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2014/90-90-90>