

Access to HIV Treatment in Central and South East Europe

A Regional Meeting of Activists

24-26 October 2014, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

Organized in consultation with the Network of Low HIV Prevalence Countries in Central and South East Europe (NeLP)

A Guide for Applicants

Introduction

Stronger Together, the Association for Support of People Living with HIV, based in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, is organizing a regional meeting of activists from organizations of people living with HIV or working for the benefit of PLHIV.

This guide contains information about the meeting, its objectives, and the topics to be discussed, as well as information on the participants' recruitment process. The aim of the guide is to assist those who are interested to apply for participation in the meeting. We strongly recommend all applicants to read this guide before filling out and submitting the application form.

Information about the organizer

Stronger Together is a community-based and membership-based organization of people living with HIV and their close supporters in Macedonia. It is the only organization working specifically for the rights of people with HIV in the country. It has a broad and very diverse membership representing the country's numerous cultural and social differences; it includes people of several different ethnicities, different gender and age, sexual orientation, social background and cultural identities. *Stronger Together* works for strengthening of people living with HIV as equal members of society, for the protection of their dignity and respecting of their health and human rights. In particular, it works for ensuring continuous access to contemporary antiretroviral therapy and integral treatment of the HIV infection, and of conditions associated or not associated with HIV, in accordance with the most recent scientific developments.

Funding for this regional meeting comes from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria through the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Macedonia as the Principal Recipient of the current Global Fund HIV grant in the country. Administrative support is also provided by the NGO HERA – Health Education and Research Association.

NeLP is the emerging regional network of community HIV advocates in Albania, Austria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, established in late 2011.

About the meeting

Focus and topic of the regional meeting

The general focus of the meeting will be the issue of **access to HIV treatment**. The meeting will make an effort to tackle this issue by increasing the understanding about the situation in the region of Central and South East Europe (CSEE) and by identifying appropriate advocacy strategies.

Objectives

Specific objectives of the meeting are:

- To create better understanding of the issues related to access to HIV treatment in the region of Central and South East Europe

- To exchange experiences of community actions in the CSEE region that aimed to ensure continuous access to quality treatment and monitoring tests for people living with HIV
- To identify possible joint advocacy initiatives in tackling the complex issue of access to treatment in Central and South East Europe
- To contribute towards a change in the perception of HIV in Central and South East Europe
- To contribute towards increased public attention to HIV in low prevalence settings

Topics

The following items are tentative topics for the meeting's sessions. However, they will be further refined and specified.

- Overview of access to treatment and quality of care – what is available and what is lacking in the region in terms of treatment and monitoring tests
- Country profiles: mapping and figures for the region and creating a living document that activists can use to make a case for future activities. This mapping should answer some of the following questions: How many people are known to be living with HIV? What proportion of people is enrolled in care? How many have access to ARV treatment? When is treatment initiated? Are there national guidelines in place in individual countries? What treatment options are available and what treatment options are used?
- Mechanisms for provision of ARVs and monitoring tests. Possibilities for regional collaboration in providing treatment and care
- Pricing strategies: What are the pricing models and tendencies? Registration and importation of generics, etc.
- Sharing advocacy experiences: Presenting successful examples of treatment advocacy
- Discussing joint initiatives

Participation

Applicants from Albania, Austria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey are eligible to apply for the regional meeting. They are expected to clearly state their **personal motivation** (in the application form), along with their **background and previous, current or prospective involvement in treatment advocacy or activism** (in the application form and the CV). Stronger Together and NeLP strongly encourage people living with HIV to apply for this meeting. Whereas disclosing one's HIV status is not asked in the application form, applicants may choose to disclose it under strict confidentiality. In such cases this information will remain completely confidential and it will be kept only until the end of the selection process.

Participants will be asked to be prepared for the meeting. Along with the agenda, selected participants will receive additional guidance on the format of the sessions or any particular information regarding access to HIV treatment in their countries that they will be asked to present at the meeting.

Meeting date and venue

The meeting will take place on **24-26 October** 2014 in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. International participants will be expected to arrive on Friday 24th and leave on Monday 27th October. Please ensure that you can attend the meeting in full. The meeting venue will be hotel *Porta*, located by the Vardar River within a residential neighborhood known as *Aerodrom*. The hotel is about 20 minutes walking distance from the city center.

Travel and expenses

Travel to Skopje (including cheapest airport transfers), accommodation and food will be paid in full for meeting participants. Per diems will not be provided. Please note that if you make any individual arrangements, we won't be able to reimburse those. Selected participants will be contacted for the travel arrangements immediately after receiving a letter of acceptance. If conditions allow, Stronger Together might be able to provide for participation of additional members at their own partial or total expense.

Application Deadline

Please complete your application and send it by e-mail to Simona Atanasova, at zaedno.posilni@hera.org.mk, no later than **Monday, 18 August, 5 pm CET**. Please do not forget to attach your CV. Applicants should expect to be informed about the selection results within one week.

Application form

Please make sure you answer every question with as much detail as possible. The selection of the participants will be based on the following criteria:

- Motivation to contribute to improving access to treatment at the local and/or regional level;
- Experience in advocacy especially related to access issues and potential to contribute to the quality of discussion;
- Relevance of the meeting to the current or prospective engagement of participants in improving access to treatment;
- Level of English language proficiency.

Despite the above general criteria, an effort will be made to achieve reasonable balance between more experienced activists and people who might become more involved in access to treatment advocacy in future. Applicants need not be professionally involved in advocacy or be working for an NGO as full-time employees, but need to be related to the local or international community of PLHIV through some organization.

The information below is intended to assist you in filling out the application form.

Personal information

The questions in this section are not taken into consideration during the review process. The personal data provided in this section will be processed according to the Law on the Protection of Personal Data of the Republic of Macedonia and will be kept confidentially as long as they are needed **ONLY** for the purpose of invitation of participants, managing their travel to and from Skopje and the participation in the meeting.

Professional information

This section will introduce your professional background and affiliation. Please feel free to fill out N/A on all questions that are not relevant to your professional background.

Qualification assessment information

The working language of the meeting will be English. Participants need to be able to communicate effectively in English. In rating your language skills, please use the following criteria:

- *Native/advanced* – you have language proficiency equivalent to that of an educated native speaker. You are fluent in all of its features, including breadth of vocabulary and idiom on all levels and as normally required for professional needs.
- *Good* – you can speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. You rarely have to grope for a word and unsubstantial errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.
- *Intermediate* – your language skills satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. You can handle with confidence most basic social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, work, family, and autobiographical information, but you do not have thorough or confident control of the grammar and/or vocabulary.
- *Basic* – you can understand basic daily questions and speech, which allows for guides, such as slower speech or repetition, to aid understanding.
- *None* – you do not understand the language at all.

The topic of the meeting is access to HIV treatment and treatment advocacy, so we expect participants to be knowledgeable regarding these and related topics. Please rate your current knowledge on:

- Availability of and access to HIV treatment and care in your country

Motivation statement

This section of the application will be given special attention in the selection process. Please provide a summary of why you would like to participate in this particular meeting having in mind the focus on treatment advocacy. In addition, please explain how this meeting will benefit your current or future work in the field of HIV/AIDS.

Curriculum Vitae

Please attach your most recent CV/resume in a free format. The CV should reflect your engagement in HIV activism, and especially in treatment advocacy or other advocacy.

Further information

If you require any further information, please contact Simona Atanasova, at zaedno.posilni@hera.org.mk, or +389 (0) 76 350 340.