Joint Action on Integration of Testing and Linkage to Care for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STIs & TB in Europe “Link2Care”

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Partners and current status

- Joint Action (HP-JA-2016), 3rd Health Programme and 2016 Work Programme
- 33 nominated partners from 18 EU countries
- Participation from Public Health institutions (20), Hospitals (Infectious disease and research departments) (5), NGOs (7) and Universities (1)
- First draft submitted November 2016
- Quality assurance meeting and review Dec 2016
- Currently working on second submission
- Tentative launch May 2017
- 36 Months (2017-2020)
- Overall budget 2,4 mill Euro (80% EU)
Link2Care - Objective

Overall objective:

• To adapt and implement sustainable activities (tools and practices) that will comprehensively assist in preventing transmission and/or optimising the ability to diagnose early infection with HIV, viral hepatitis, TB and/or STIs and ensure linkage to care across Europe.

• Link2Care builds on a number of previous and current EU-funded projects in which different Link2Care partners are also active (Quality Action, OptTEST, EuroHIVEdat, HA-REACT, HEPCARE)
Relevance

• Focus on the continuum of care on increasing testing awareness and increasing linkage to care especially focusing on key populations.

• Contributes to the objectives of the Public Health Program 2014-20 and supporting the Commission communication on ‘Combatting HIV/AIDS in the EU and neighboring countries’.

• Link2Care supports collaboration between health care institutions, policy institutions and civil society organizations in support to health policy planning development and sustainability.

• Focus on member states in Europe with high rates of HIV, viral hepatitis, TB or STIs and/or low access to care – addressing the relevant gaps depending on the needs and setting in the participating countries.
# Work Packages

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<tr>
<th>WP</th>
<th>Horizontal Work Packages</th>
<th>LP/Co-LP</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>LP: CHIP (Denmark)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Dissemination</td>
<td>LP: CERTH (Greece)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>LP: IPMN (Romania) &lt;br&gt;Co-LP: PHE (UK)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Policy development and sustainability</td>
<td>LP: ARCIGAY (Italy) &lt;br&gt;Co-LP: NIHD (Estonia)</td>
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<th>WP</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Testing and linkage to care</td>
<td>LP: CHIP (Denmark) &lt;br&gt;Co-LP: PHE (UK)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Monitoring of HIV, STIs and viral hepatitis testing and linkage to care</td>
<td>LP: CEEISCAT (Spain) &lt;br&gt;Co-LP: NIJZ (Slovenia)</td>
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<td>Improving effectiveness of combination prevention</td>
<td>LP: UCD (Ireland) &lt;br&gt;Co-LP: LILA MILANO (Italy)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Capacity building</td>
<td>LP: FVM (Italy) &lt;br&gt;Co-LP: NAC (Poland)</td>
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Four disease areas – need to combine efforts

• Continued challenges with controlling and preventing further transmission of HIV, Hepatitis, TB and STIs
  – High prevalence of co-infection due to overlaps in key populations and mode of transmission
  – Challenges ensuring that people are diagnosed early and enter the care system

• Link2Care will focus on how effective tools for diagnosis and linkage to care in one disease area can be used in other.
Mapping and adapting tools

Existing Tools

- HIV
- Hepatitis
- Tuberculosis
- Sexually Transmitted Infections
- HIV/STIs
- HIV/Hepatitis

Peer Review
- Strengths
- Weaknesses

Innovations/Adaptations

Tools across all infections

HIV
Hepatitis
STIs
TB
Meetings and Pilot Activities

**EU Presidencies during the Joint Action**

- Malta (Jan – Jun)
- Estonia (Jul – Dec)
- Bulgaria (Jan – Jun)
- Austria (Jul – Dec)
- Romania (Jan – Jun)
- Finland (Jul – Dec)
- Croatia (Jan – Jun)
- Germany (Jul – Dec)

**Meetings and Workshops**

- **Jun 2017 (M2):** Steering committee Face-to-Face meeting
  - Workplan adaptation
- **Sep 2017 (M5):** Partnership Forum Annual Meeting / Kick off in Estonia
  - WP6 Workshop
  - Steering Committee
  - WP8 survey preparation
- **Nov 2017 (M7):** European Testing Week
- **Sep 2018 (M17):** Steering committee Face-to-Face meeting
  - Conference preparation
- **Xxx 2018 (Mx):** WP8 Regional Workshop in Poland
  - Topics: Partner notification and QoL
  - Testing health care testing
  - WP6 pilot discussion
- **Xxx 2019 (Mx):** WP8 Regional Workshop in Italy
  - Topics: Home testing and lay provider testing
  - Combination prevention
- **Feb-Apr 2019 (Mx):** Partnership Forum/Annual meeting and Conference in Romania
- **Sept 2019 (Mx):** WP8 Regional Workshop in Romania
  - Topics: integrated approaches and monitoring (WP6)
- **Jan/Feb 2020 (Mx):** Partnership Forum meeting / Closing
  - Final reporting preparation

**WP4: Provider initiated testing: medical specialty guideline review**
(Serbia, Romania, and Lithuania)

- Monitoring quality of life to support uptake of best practice and policy recommendations (Serbia, Romania, and Spain)
- Integration of testing data into national systems, incl. CBVCT and home/self-testing (Slovakia and Estonia)
- Novel prevention strategies including partner notification in national policies (Romania, Greece and Bulgaria)

**WP5:** Indicator condition guided HIV testing and testing for hepatitis in health care settings (Serbia, Romania, Lithuania and Spain)

- Integrated tools for STI and HIV testing and linkage to care among MSM (Slovakia, Croatia and Slovenia)
- Testing for TB in migrant populations and linkage to care (Greece and Italy)
- Linkage to care among PWID (Lithuania and Poland)

**WP6:** Pilot on recommendation of integration of CBVCT testing data into national systems (Serbia, Spain, Slovakia, Greece, Poland, Estonia and Slovenia)

- ETW indicators/impact (Serbia, Poland and Estonia)

**WP7: New prevention technologies adaptation and testing (Lithuania, Italy, Croatia)**

- Piloting of guidance on Partner notification (Romania, Greece, Slovenia)
Link2Care Pilot Countries

- Green Triangle: Integration of testing data into national health systems and home/self-testing
- Blue Star: At-risk populations and ETW
- Red Diamond: Provider initiated and IC guided testing
- Orange Circle: QoL and Partner notification
Link to other EU initiatives

• Ambition is to get in dialogue and collaborate with other relevant (EU) projects working with HIV, Hepatitis, TB and STIs testing and linkage to care

• Important to involve countries that are not partners in the Joint Action and stakeholders other than the partners. The partners involved are often only representing one constituency (mostly public health institutes)

• Not to duplicate, but ensure synergies and sustainability – engagement with many collaborating and external partner