



**CHASE THE VIRUS, NOT PEOPLE!
EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA COMMUNITIES CAMPAIGN
Overview and key accomplishments
2018-2021**

KEY ACHIEVEMENT

In 2018, the first time ever in the history of the fight with HIV, all regional networks representing key populations communities of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region had joined forces in one “Chase the virus, not people!” campaign, united by same aim and goals, one unified slogan and ready to stand and speak out loud together, defending the rights of each community, of all and everyone, attracting the attention of governments, international organizations, multilaterals, donors and public at large to stigma, discrimination and criminalization which communities in the region have been facing since HIV epidemic start.

In the course of campaign implementation, it accumulated efforts of more than a thousand EECA civil society and community activists and volunteers, delivered its messages to over two million direct recipients and recruited a variety of partners and organizations outside of public health sphere to the army of campaign supporters.

In three years that have passed since campaign’s launch at AIDS2018 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, the campaign organizers consider its key goal achieved, which is reflected in prioritizing removing human rights barriers and aiming to decriminalize key affected populations and PLHIV in all key global and regional HIV/AIDS strategies.

First of all it is reflected in [Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026](#) adopted by PCB UNAIDS in March 2021. The strongest ever strategy aims to support effective HIV response based on human rights, gender equality, principle of non-discrimination and effort to support key populations. In particular it introduces a new "10-10-10" strategy, whereby less than 10% of countries have punitive legal and policy environments that lead to the denial or limitation of access to services; less than 10% of people living with HIV and key populations experience stigma and discrimination; and less than 10% of women, girls, people living with HIV and key populations experience gender-based inequalities and all forms of gender-based violence.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria strategy [„Fighting Pandemics and Building a Healthier and More Equitable World \(2023-2028\)“](#) adopted by the GF Board in November, 2021 stating „The Strategy reiterates and reinforces the imperative to maximize health equity, gender equality and human rights by deepening the integration of these dimensions into our HTM interventions, including through expanding the use of data to identify and respond to inequities, scaling up comprehensive programs to remove human rights and gender-related barriers, and leveraging the Global Fund’s voice to challenge harmful laws, policies and practices“.

The adoption of these Strategies has become possible due to advocacy efforts of many partners and actors across the globe, including civil society and community leaders from EECA, the voice of whom has been heard not in the last turn due to Chase the virus, not people! campaign.



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) remains the region where both new HIV cases and AIDS-related deaths continues to rise dramatically. To attract worldwide attention to the barriers that key communities and people living with HIV in the region face to access HIV prevention, treatment and care against the backdrop of the catastrophic situation with the HIV/AIDS epidemic in EECA, the regional communities' networks have joined forces in the campaign "Chase the virus, not people!" to represent interests of key populations affected by HIV: people living with HIV, women living with HIV, youth and teenagers, affected by HIV, people who use drugs, sex workers, men who have sex with men, trans people. The campaign emphasizes the common needs of all key population groups and focuses on overcoming the discrimination, stigmatization and criminalization of key populations as a key condition for an effective response to the HIV epidemic in EECA countries.

Aim of the campaign:

To strengthen partnerships between regional key populations networks, organizations and activists to draw everyone's attention **to the problems of key populations** in relation to **the catastrophic HIV/AIDS epidemic in the EECA region**, in particular **the impact of stigma, discrimination and criminalization on effective response measures to HIV/AIDS epidemic and mortality reduction**.

Objectives of the campaign:

1. To demonstrate on national, regional and international levels and discuss the impact of repressive, discriminatory and criminalizing legislation and practices of their application, as well as stigma against key populations and PLWH in EECA on the effectiveness of the response to HIV/AIDS epidemic and people's lives and to get support in overcoming legal barriers in EECA region.
2. To examine the consequences of excluding key populations' communities from planning, implementation and evaluation of HIV/AIDS programs to effectively respond to the epidemic and to get support on involvement of key populations and PLWH in decision-making processes.
3. To demonstrate negative consequences of reducing international support and barriers for transition of EECA countries to national funding, and to seek national, regional and global assistance in mobilizing resources to stabilize HIV/AIDS epidemic in EECA.

Campaign targets EECA key populations communities, EECA government officials and political leaders, UN agencies and international organizations, donors, practitioners, academia and expert community.

Organizers:

East Europe and Central Asia Union of People Living with HIV (ECUO)
ECOM - The Eurasian Coalition for Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity
EECA Sex Workers' Alliance
Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA)
Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD)
Eurasian Union of Adolescents and Youth "Teenergizer"
Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS (EWNA)
Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN)
AFEW International



CAMPAIGN'S LAUNCH AT AIDS2018

- By the beginning of AIDS2018 [the campaign is supported by more than 100 organizations](#).
- Over 500 EECA civil society representatives took part in AIDS2018 and the campaign's activities.
- EECA communities campaign had its own pavilion ACTIVEAST in the Global Village:
 - [50 sessions and events](#) (panel discussions, open microphones, meetings with decision-makers, interactive sessions, workshops, movies demonstrations, games, dances, etc.) with participation and engagement of EECA communities representatives in each one,
 - 1500 participants,
 - 12000 visitors,
 - community dialogue with the participation of **Peter Sands**, Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, **Professor Michel Kazatchkine**, Special Advisor to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) for Eastern Europe and Central Asia,
 - sessions with participation of UNAIDS, WHO, Red Cross, UN Migration Agency, OSF, Robert Carr Foundation, GNP+, HRI, IDPC, INPUD and EECA government officials.
- **Over 200 EECA communities activists took part in the March**, conducted on July 23, 2018 in the streets of Amsterdam, under the slogan of #chasethevirusnotpeople campaign. The EECA column and the campaign at the March was supported by **Vera Brezhneva**, famous Russian singer and **UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador for EECA region**.
- Speakers representing EECA at the opening of AIDS2018, plenary sessions and the March – **Maria Godlevskaya, Yana Panfilova, Elena Stryzhak, Anna Sarang** – voiced the campaign's aim and called the AIDS2018 audience to join its appeal.
- [The press-conference](#), conducted by the campaign organizers on the day of the AIDS2018 opening, July 23, 2018, gathered representatives of all key populations communities, who addressed the questions from 40 journalists from all across the globe.
- The campaign **was mentioned in national, regional and international media over 2000 times**.
- Every big gathering of AIDS2018 – **the Global Village opening, AIDS2018 opening, closing, plenary sessions, the Positive Flame ceremony, action against criminalization of drug use in Philippines** – was accompanied by **#chasethevirusnotpeople actions**, attracting the attention of AIDS2018 participants to the problems of EECA communities.
- The campaign had over 13,500 contacts through its pages in social networks in [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#).
- On the results of the campaign launch at AIDS2018 [the video](#) was created by Rights Reporter Foundation and DUNews.

CAMPAIGN IN 2019

- The campaign had over 1,113,500 contacts through its pages in social networks in [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and its website <http://chasevirus.org>.
- **March 1, 2019 Zero Discrimination Day**, was celebrated by campaign participants all across the region through on-line and off-line activities on the regional and national levels to attract the attention of everyone to the issues of stigma and discrimination. Over 1,000 posts in social media from 15 countries of the region attracted everyone's attention to problems of stigma and



discrimination of key populations in EECA, and stayed tuned on the national, regional and international radar of key populations advocacy.

- The campaign was presented and promoted at all big international and regional events during 2019, including **Harm Reduction International** (May, 2019, Porto, Portugal), **Hep C Community Summit** (September, 2019, Lisbon, Portugal). The promotion and presentation of the campaign at big regional and international events supported the level of publicity and attention to EECA affected communities' problems.
- Campaign activists **joined forces with partners from different spheres** including academia, government, experts in raising stigma and discrimination and equal participation of community in national dialogues high on the agenda of such dialogues. Example – **signing of Paris Declaration by Chisinau, Moldova in 2019 under the slogan of Chase the virus, not people campaign**, where all partners including officials, donors, multilaterals, civil society and community organizations were united welcoming the declaration signing and addressing one of the key barrier in arranging effective response measures to HIV epidemic in the region and in Moldova particular – stigma, discrimination and criminalization of key communities.
- Campaign **reacted on urgent needs of communities and independent activists** who were under threat of stigma, discrimination and criminalization and whose situations demanded immediate reaction and support of the campaign. The example is the [case of Ekaterina Parfenyuk](#), HIV positive woman with a small child, representing the community of people who use drugs in Belarus Country Coordinating Mechanism who asked a clarification question on possible interruption of national supplies of TB and OST drugs to Belarus and was sued by the Global Fund PR, state body. Campaign organizers considered unacceptable for the state body to resolve discussion in the court, supported Ekaterina through open letters to the Global Fund including Secretariat and Office of Inspector general, Belarus state bodies and all interested parties. As a result, the procedure and stocks of supplies of all HIV and TB related drugs from now on are made public in Belarus.
- **Gender issues** stay high on the campaign's agenda since its beginning. One of the campaign organizers – Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS, addressing the problems of HIV-positive women – is supporting ongoing brunch of the campaign under the slogan **"HIV is not a crime"**. The campaign aims to draw attention to the situation with the criminalization of HIV transmission in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region. The campaign holds discussions with activists and human rights defenders who enhance their professional level, and moreover, take efforts to change public opinion on the topic of criminalization. The campaign has produced the [report](#) and collected [cases](#) on HIV transmission criminalization affecting mostly women.
- In the course of campaign implementation in 2019, **9 organizations from EECA countries received small grants** from EHRA and ECOM for national campaigns developments, which eventually made over 5,000 on-line and off-line contacts, each with specific goal and objectives, targeting needs of specific communities but united in action with all affected communities and external stakeholders.
- On April 2-4, 2019, ECOM and campaign team conducted **the training for MSM and trans* people from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Macedonia on the adaptation of the campaign to (1) MSM and trans people community needs, and (2) to national context of each country**. The training equipped 5 countries' communities of MSM and trans* people with instruments of the campaign development to advocate for the needs of MSM and trans* people community in the context of their countries and was followed by target campaigns **"Chase stigma, not people!"** aimed at protection of rights of MSM and trans* people in the region, supported by ECOM small grants.



- During 2019 EHRA in the course of its regional Rober Carr Fund's grant implementation issued **4 small grants to support the campaign on the national level**. As a result, [national campaigns in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Russia](#) were conducted making over 5,000 on-line and off-line contacts, each with specific goal and objectives, targeting needs of specific communities but united in action with all affected communities and external stakeholders.

CAMPAIGN IN 2020-2021

- The campaign had over 1,542,320 contacts through its pages in social networks in [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and its website <http://chasevirus.org>; campaign promo products (T-shirts and stickers) were produced to be further used to visually support campaign actions all across the region.
- Maintenance work on <http://chasevirus.org> was conducted:
 - National campaigns page was adjusted for further use and possibility to add more national partners and campaign grantees in both [English](#) and [Russian](#);
 - "Chase stigma, not people!" subcampaign page was created both in [English](#) and [Russian](#) with sections on 2020 International Transgender Day of Visibility and 2019 national campaigns;
 - "HIV is not a crime page" was updated with subcampaign latest events and news.
- Campaign activists joined forces on March 31, 2020 – **the International Transgender Day of Visibility**, when campaign co-organizer ECOM and the Trans* People Working Group on HIV and Sexual Health in EECA drew the attention to the life of representatives of the trans* community in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
 - March 31 is the day when trans* people are urged to speak openly about themselves and their lives, to share their problems and victories. In [four videos](#) prepared for this day, representatives from different countries of the region talk about themselves, their goals, what they are proud of, and what they want to achieve.
- **Gender issues** stay high on the campaign's agenda. EWNA, campaign co-organizer, addressing the problems of HIV-positive women, is supporting ongoing brunch of the campaign under the slogan "[HIV is not a crime](#)". The campaign aims to draw attention to the situation with the criminalization of HIV transmission in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region. The campaign holds discussions with activists and human rights defenders who enhance their professional level, and moreover, take efforts to change public opinion on the topic of criminalization. In 2020 within "HIV is not a crime" subcampaign:
 - experience of EWNA in conduction of community-based research on HIV criminalization, Belarus and Tajikistan experience of communities of women living with HIV, fighting for their rights was included in "[Promotion Justice in regard to HIV](#)" publication by HIV Justice Worldwide;
 - regional analysis and discussion were conducted on the topic "[Can HIV criminalization protect women from infection?](#)";
 - an [open contest for journalists and activists "HIV is not a crime"](#) was announced for the best publication against the criminalization of HIV transmission (the results were announced in November 2020);
 - EWNA and national partners activists took part in [series of webinars](#) on decriminalization of HIV transmission and other human rights issues in the EECA region.
- Campaign continued to **react on urgent needs of communities and independent activists** who were under threat of stigma, discrimination and criminalization and whose situations demanded



immediate reaction and support of the campaign. The example in 2020 is the case of Natasha Golub from Belarus. In 2019 social services from Belarus took from Natasha Golub her son Arthur because of her participation in the state program of opioid substitution therapy. Thanks to the support of colleagues, Arthur was able to return. More details on Natasha’s story can be found in the [interview](#) that Natasha gave to EHRA. Natasha has a disability and finding a job is very difficult, in addition, serious heart problems and bronchitis have been found. If Natasha stopped working in three jobs, she and Arthur would not have had money to pay the rent of the apartment, and they would have stayed in the street. The campaign organized fundraising to help Natasha.

- From November 24 to December 7, 2020, a regional informational campaign was carried out with ECOM support in 6 countries of the EECA region (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Ukraine, and Estonia) with the participation of 10 organizations and initiative groups. The organizations participating in the campaign held discussion meetings, community consultation events, and a photo exhibition, and also prepared materials and videos or told the stories of people and community representatives. As part of the campaign, an online marathon was held on 1 December during which the staff of ECOM’s Secretariat contacted the participants of the regional campaign.
- In October 2020 EHRA developed [5-minutes video on campaign deliverables and lessons learnt](#) to be presented to Robert Carr Fund for civil society networks as a co-funder of campaign activities and grants. The video was presented in October 2020 at RCF Collective Impact Reflection Workshop.
- In early 2020 EHRA announced an [open call for applications](#) to conduct national campaigns in EECA countries. Out of 11 applications 4 winners were chosen by contest commission, consisting from campaign co-organizers representatives EHRA, ECOM and EWNA. [4 national NGOs and community groups from Armenia, Estonia, Montenegro and Kazakhstan](#) received small grants for national campaigns implementation. Due to COVID-19 pandemic some of grantees plans for campaign activities were postponed or shifted to later terms in 2020, and in Armenia due to national law conflict were postponed till 2021. In the course of national campaigns implementation grantees delivered campaign messages to over 10,000 people in respective countries, addressing stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV in Estonia and key populations in Armenia and Montenegro, and barriers in access to healthcare for people who use drugs in Kazakhstan.

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

EHRA is supporting campaign’s web <http://chasevirus.org> and its social media pages in [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#).

Zero Discrimination Day page <http://chasevirus.org/zero-discrimination/>

National campaigns 2019-2020 (small grants within the RCF project) <https://chasevirus.org/national-campaigns/>

EWNA’s ‘HIV is not a crime’ page <http://chasevirus.org/hiv-is-not-a-crime/>

ECOM’s ‘Chase stigma, not people’ page <https://chasevirus.org/chase-stigma-not-people/>

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