

# PROGRESS TOWARDS HEPATITIS C ERADICATION IN EUROPE: INSIGHTS FROM A CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING OF HARM REDUCTION IN EUROPE

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## Background:

This paper unveils findings from a five-year consecutive survey led by Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network (C-EHRN) across 35 European cities in 32 nations. It evaluates the availability and accessibility of interventions crucial to the HCV continuum of care for people who inject drugs. A depiction of HCV care in 35 European cities in 2023 is provided, with comparisons drawn for 25 cities consistently participating from 2020 to 2023.

## Methods:

In spring 2023, 2022, 2021, and 2020, C-EHRN called upon civil society organizations from European countries to complete a 25-question online survey. The questionnaire encompassed national strategies, continuum-of-care functionality, year-on-year changes, and the impact of harm reduction services. Focal points within C-EHRN, serving as local reference points, represented survey respondents.

## Results:

Data analysis uncovers persistent obstacles impeding the expansion of HCV services across various cities and countries. Challenges include restrictions on Direct-Acting Antivirals (DAAs), financial barriers concerning testing and treatment, and limited progress in streamlining care pathways and community access. Stigmatization and discrimination against people who inject drugs persist within healthcare contexts, with a concerning absence of discrimination monitoring in HCV treatment. Despite enhancements in HCV awareness campaigns and testing services, hurdles persist in non-invasive diagnostics, treatment provision, and support from harm reduction organizations. Positive trends have re-emerged post-pandemic, counteracting the decline in 2020 and 2021, yet many regions still lag behind.

## Conclusion:

Recommendations to improve HCV care among people who inject drugs in Europe include advocating for unhindered DAA access and reimbursement, implementing anti-stigma initiatives and training, ensuring free and accessible HCV testing, expanding treatment sites, establishing post-diagnosis follow-up programs, and addressing the challenges faced by harm reduction organizations. The 2024 data will provide insight into any changes in the developments mentioned above.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement: