

The COBATEST network: Opportunities and challenges of a European network of community-based voluntary counselling and testing services for HIV.

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Background:

The COBATEST network is a European network of Community-Based Voluntary Counselling and Testing (CBVCT) centres established in the framework of the HIV-COBATEST project and currently comprised of 40 CBVCTs from 18 European countries. For Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of CBVCT activities basic indicators developed in HIV-COBATEST project are used. The CBVCT centres, members of the network, share common instruments for data collection and data entry. Alternatively, they can send disaggregated data according data file specifications or aggregated data with the M&E indicators calculated.

Strengths:

HIV testing data collected through the COBATEST network can be a source of strategic HIV-related evidence for the need to strengthen community-based service delivery models as an integral part of HIV interventions. Also such data might lead to a deeper understanding of the context of the epidemic, and can be used for advocacy and for the empowerment of the different stakeholders. Public health institutions have to take into account the community and to work closely with them.

Limitations:

Several important limitations have been detected regarding the usefulness of data collected in the network:

1. Quality of the data submitted;
2. Representativeness of the data collected;
3. Integration of data collected into national surveillance systems.

Actions for improvement:

Several actions are being considered in order to overcome these limitations: 1) a project for validation and analysis of the quality of HIV testing data collected in the COBATEST network will be implemented with ECDC; 2) a specific Logo and Website will be developed and the common tools will be improved, in order to increase the visibility of the network and to reach new CBVCT services to be included in the network (Grant from Gilead); 3) a new Joint Action is planned, which is going to address the integration of HIV testing data collected at CBVCT level into national surveillance systems.

Table 1. Limitations and actions for improvement

Limitations	Actions for improvement
1. Quality of information submitted to the network	<p>1. Validation and analysis of HIV testing data in the community setting (with ECDC)</p> <p>To perform a data quality assessment of the data collected by the COBATEST network based on five dimensions of the data quality: data consistency, content and completeness, data utility and data collection processes.</p>
2. Representativeness of the data	<p>2. Enlarge the already existing network: (Core funding from Gilead)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of community in the governance and management of the network • Development of a specific Website and Logo • Improvement of the tool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – specific annexes for each CBVCT – Adaptation for Tablets and Phones
3. Data integration with National Surveillance Systems	<p>3. New joint Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WP6: Monitoring and Evaluation of HIV, STIs and viral hepatitis testing and linkage to care <p>– Consensus recommendations for integration of health care and CBVCT settings testing and linkage to care data into national surveillance and M&E systems</p>

COBATEST network: AIDS Fondet* (Denmark), Fondazione LILA Milano* (Italy), Demetra* (Lithuania), Algarabía (Spain)*, AVACOS*, PRAKSIS*, CAS Gibraltar*, OMSIDA* (Spain), StopSida* (Spain), Àmbit Prevenció* (Spain), Gais Positiu* (Spain), SAPS-Creu Roja* (Spain), Centre Jove d'Anticoncepció i Sexualitat* (CJAS) (Spain), Creu Roja Tarragona* (Spain), Actuavallès* (Spain), ACASC* (Spain), Associació Antisida de Lleida* (Spain), Assexora Tgn* (Spain), ACCAS* (Spain), Baltic HIV Association* (Latvia), ACAS Girona* (Spain), Asociación SILOE* (Spain), Associació Lambda* (Spain), Centro Social Polivalente Mujer Gades* (Spain), IEMEKAIE* (Spain), Gay-alliance (Ukraine), Asociación Concordia* (Spain); Cruz Roja Córdoba (Spain); Asociación ADHARA (Spain); Proyecto Hombre (Spain); Concordia Marbella (Spain); AIDS-Hilfe NRW e.V (Germany); ARAS-Asociata Romana Anti-SIDA (Romania); Checkpoint LX (Portugal); Association AIDES (France); Legebitra (Slovenia); Czech AIDS Help Societ (Czech Republic); Association "Prevent"(Serbia); Positive Voice (Greece); Aids Hilfe Wien (Austria); CBVCT network Poland; LASS (UK), Le Kioske (France); Anonymous AIDS Association (Hungary); ISKORAK(Croatia).
CBVCTs marked with an asterisk are those which contributed with data for this analysis.