

IUSTI Europe News

October 2021

Introduction

by **Claudia Heller-Vitouch, Regional Director of IUSTI-Europe**

Dear members of IUSTI-Europe,

It is my great pleasure and honour to announce that IUSTI world has appointed me the new **Regional Director** of IUSTI-Europe. Many thanks to Airi Poder who held this position for the last eight years and contributed a lot to the success of the organisation. I will try to fulfil the position with all my strength and to help shape the further development of IUSTI. I look very much forward to do this in close co-operation with Prof. George Sorin Tiplica who has been elected the **new Chair** of IUSTI-Europe by the IUSTI-Europe Council.

The IUSTI-Europe Newsletter has become a very important instrument to inform our members not only about relevant housekeeping details but also about news out of the scientific STI-field. Many thanks to Dr. Andy Winter, chair of the communications committee, who is responsible for content and distribution. It is a great pleasure to announce that Dr. Tomislav Mestrovic who has supported Andy Winter in the past agreed to further contribute as a **co-opted member of the Communications Committee**. Moreover, we plan to broaden IUSTI-Europe's appearance on Social Media. The Communications Committee will work on this task together with young colleagues in the field and you are cordially invited to contribute.

The **STI-world conference** held virtually in Amsterdam this July has been a tremendous success – again sincere congratulations to the organizers and especially to Henry de Vries. Henry agreed to further contribute with his experience and enormous expertise to the work of IUSTI-Europe and will be chair of the committee for scientific policy together with Derek Freedman.

Besides our three columns consisting of the IUSTI-Europe Conferences, the STI-Courses and the Guidelines, IUSTI-Europe has established a very successful new format: The IUSTI-Europe Webinars. Under the lead of Derek Freedman and George Sorin Tiplica the webinars will continue this autumn.

The next **IUSTI-Europe conference** with the motto “*STIs on the crossroads-after COVID-19*” is planned to be held in Tbilisi, Georgia from September 29 to October 1, 2022. The conference presidents Josephe Kobakhidze and Oleg Kvlividze as well as the chairs of the scientific committee Arne Wikström, Magnus Unemo and Valeska Podovese are already planning an unforgettable event.

In order to enhance the visibility of IUSTI-Europe we have established a [new webpage](http://www.iusti-europe.eu) www.iusti-europe.eu and we cordially invite you to visit it from time to time as we will fill it with interesting content and keep it updated with all relevant information about IUSTI-Europe. So despite the difficulties arising from the COVID-19 pandemic IUSTI-Europe looks ahead with optimism and is prepared to make the very best out of the situation.

With warm wishes,

Dr. Claudia Heller-Vitouch

Regional Director of IUSTI-Europe



IUSTI-Europe webinars: ready for a new edition?

by **Derek Freedman and George-Sorin Tiplica, IUSTI-Europe Webinar Editors**

We are all facing difficult times and the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic changed our lives. In such challenging conditions we became more united and willing to stay connected. The internet started to be our playground and we are now communicating easily with colleagues from all European countries and beyond. **IUSTI-Europe webinars** proved to be successful, with more than 1000 colleagues from 62 countries interested to participate. It is our intention to continue with a new series of monthly webinars on the last Wednesday of the month.

We will start on [Wed 27 October](#) with a webinar dealing with our current situation: *“Coming out of COVID-19: What have we learnt - How will we face the future”*. It will be an excellent opportunity to discuss with colleagues from around Europe about these challenging times, the problems we face, and solutions we develop to help our patients. Can we do something better? Are we prepared for more difficult confrontations? Do our clinics and practices address the needs of our patients and society? Is IUSTI-Europe able to help us bridge the challenges, when most of the authorities erect walls?

We will continue in [November](#) with a webinar dedicated to the *“World AIDS Day”* designated by WHO on 1st of December. Living well with HIV is now possible due to the effective treatment, and we learned how to drastically diminish the transmission of the virus with the introduction of PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis). We hope that the proposed topics will be of interest and the opinion-leaders invited to present will enrich our knowledge. We also welcome and need your suggestions for Topics and Speakers, so please do not hesitate to contact with your ideas. There’s a short survey [here](#) to do this. We look forward to your participation and interest.

IUSTI-Europe Webinar Editors

Dr. Derek Freedman and Prof. George-Sorin Tiplica



Spring Webinars 2021 Summary


by **Tomislav Meštrović, Communications Committee Member**

As COVID-19 continued to dominate much of our thinking, we had to respond both on professional and personal levels, while also running services for sexually transmitted infections. As a result, IUSTI Europe's inaugural spring webinars were held on March 31st, April 28th, May 26th and June 30th (i.e., last Wednesdays of the month), and their content is delineated below. This was organized by Dr. Derek Freedman and Prof. George Sorin Tiplica, together with other contributors Dr. Claudia Heller-Vitouch, Dr. Andrew Winter, Dr. Eija Hiltunen-Back and Dr. Airi Pöder. Before the new series of webinars kicks off, we invite you to enjoy the recordings.

[March 31st Webinar - COVID-19 IMPACT ON STI'S AND SERVICES IN EUROPE](#)

- Introduction of IUSTI-Europe webinars: Airi Pöder
- Impact of COVID-19 on STI testing in Europe: Daniel Simoes, Andrew Winter
- COVID-19 in Europe: STI Epidemiology and Services
 - Italy: Marco Cusini
 - Sweden: Arne Wikstrom
 - Greece: Electra Nicolaidou
 - Russia: Mikhail Gomberg
 - Spain: Marti Vall-Mayans
 - UK: John McSorley
- Panel discussion
- COVID-19 Dermatological Manifestations - Genital and Systemic: Nicolas Dupin


[April 28th Webinar - CHRONIC VIRAL STI'S - HOW TO EASE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDEN](#)

- Questions you would hope the patient did not ask – Raj Patel
 - Restoration – John Green & Agnes Kocsis
 - Psycho-Social Burden of Chronic Viral Infections in MSM – Henry de Vries
 - 'Soiled' by Warts – Claudia Heller-Vitouch
 - Challenging Warts – Mihael Skerlev
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[May 26th Webinar - 2021 CDC STI GUIDELINES](#)

- Kimberly Workowski discussed the formulation of the CDC Guidelines and the updated Guidelines on Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, MG, Syphilis, PID and Trichomonas.
- The IUSTI-Europe Guideline Editors join for Panel Discussion on these Topics.

[June 30th Webinar - GONORRHOEA AND M. GENITALIUM TREATMENT CHALLENGES](#)

- View from the Clinic – Dr. Andrew Winter
 - Optimising antibiotic efficacy and usage – Prof. Magnus Unemo
 - *M. genitalium*: when to test, when to treat – Prof. Catriona Bradshaw
 - Multi-Drug Resistant *M. genitalium* – Dr. Jørgen Skov Jensen
 - Why do some drugs become Orphans? How to save them? – Dr. Rudolf Widmann
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Sexual Health, STI and HIV Updates

by **Tomislav Meštrović, Communications Committee Member**

A decline in STI testing in WHO EURO Region during the first wave of the COVID-19

We are all aware how the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had a sizable impact on testing for HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs in general within the WHO European Region. A study published in [Eurosurveillance](#) shows how 95% of respondents from 34 countries reported testing less than half the expected number of people during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, but bounced back when measures became less strict in a majority of countries. Hence, investing in integrated testing responses through dialogue with stakeholders involved at all levels is needed to speed up recovery of testing provision after lockdowns in the European Region, particularly considering key populations that are at a higher risk of acquiring more than one infectious disease.

The silent epidemic of lymphogranuloma venereum in Spain

[A recent report](#) from Spain shows that COVID-19 restrictions (including lockdown) have had no impact on reducing the transmission of lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV) strain. In fact, it seems that a shift in *Chlamydia trachomatis* epidemiology has shifted towards a higher proportion of L genotypes in comparison to non-L genotypes in positive samples. These results emphasize the importance of surveillance of STIs during the pandemic, in particular among vulnerable populations.

A model to predict individualised treatment for gonorrhoea

Researchers from the United Kingdom (UK) have proposed [a model](#) for predicting individualised treatment for gonorrhoea in order to reduce the utilization of last-line treatment with an antimicrobial ceftriaxone. The study also estimates the number of doses of last-line treatment ceftriaxone saved if this model would be introduced into quotidian clinical practice.

The launch of a new portal EpiPulse

On 22 June 2021, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) launched the [European surveillance portal for infectious diseases \(EpiPulse\)](#), which is an online portal for European public health authorities and global partners to collect, analyse, share, and discuss indicator- and event-based surveillance data on infectious diseases and associated health issues – including global epidemic intelligence, whole-genome sequencing, and health determinants. This also includes a sundry of sexually transmitted infections that may threaten public health in the EU/EEA region.

HIV epidemiology in Europe

ECDC continues with meticulous HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe. The most recent 2020 report, published jointly by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, can be found [here](#).

Men who have sex with men (MSM) and who are unaware of their HIV status contribute substantially to onward HIV transmission, and are more likely to progress to severe illness. [A recent study from the Netherlands](#) aimed to assess determinants of individuals that never test for HIV among MSM, and demonstrated how testing interventions should be tailored to residential area and education level, and should be inclusive of bisexuality.

[A recent study on MSM](#) conducted in five EU countries (Denmark, Germany, Greece, Portugal and Spain) reveals preference towards HIV self-testing above other testing options. This was especially pertinent for individuals who were not open about their sexual behaviours with men, and in certain countries it was also linked to older age, as well as to subgroups such as high-risk and undertested MSM.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) calls for the elimination of cervical cancer as a salient public health issue, but [a recent study](#) highlights unacceptably low coverage of cervical cancer screening in women living with HIV in Estonia. Hence, there is a need for dedicated cervical cancer screening efforts for women living with HIV, taking into account the high cancer risk and rate in the study population.

ANNOUNCING VIRTUAL 2021 IUSTI CONFERENCE 10-11th December 2021

Postponed 21st IUSTI World with Asia-Pacific Region Congress will be held VIRTUALLY on December 10-11, 2021. Please join us for this exciting scientific conference. Jointly sponsored by IUSTI-World and IUSTI-Asia Pacific Region, the Conference will provide state-of-the-art presentations on sexually transmitted infection research, clinical care, and prevention - including HIV. Five Scientific Tracks are contributing to the conference program in areas of Epidemiology, Basic Science, Behavioral Science, Clinical Science, and Policy and Implementation. The conference features high-quality keynote speeches, plenary lectures, symposia, and debates on cutting-edge topics in the field of sexually transmitted infections.

The whole event will be delivered free-of-charge to all current, paid-up Full Members of IUSTI in any region of the world. Therefore, we invite you to plan to attend and experience stimulating science and exciting research presentations.



[Virtual 2021 IUSTI Conference: Homepage](#)

November European Testing Week: 22nd to 29th November 2021



IUSTI Europe is pleased to support EuroTEST's European Testing Week initiative #EuroTestWeek. More information available at [Testing Week](#) @EuroTestWeek or hashtag #EuroTestWeek

All materials to support testing week are available [here](#)

IUSTI Europe Guidelines

All current and draft guidelines are published here [Treatment Guidelines \(Europe\)](#)

The guidelines group is chaired by Dr Keith Radcliffe. Under review are guidelines on *Mycoplasma genitalium*, chlamydia, balanoposthitis, non-gonococcal urethritis, vulval conditions and partner management.

Guidelines published since the last newsletter in April 2021:

- [2021 European guideline on HIV testing in genito-urinary medicine settings](#)
- [2021 European Guideline on the management of proctitis, proctocolitis and enteritis caused by sexually transmissible pathogens](#)

No guidelines are currently out for consultation, but we will keep you posted!

Get involved in IUSTI Europe

Join the [IUSTI Europe LinkedIn](#) group

There are a number of committees which always welcome enthusiastic members.

International development - contact Mihael Skerlev: iustieuropesecretary@gmail.com

Communication - contact Andy Winter: iustieuropesecretary@gmail.com

Scientific Policy - contact Derek Freedman: iustieuropesecretary@gmail.com


Education - contact Angelika Stary and Marco Cusini: iustieuropesecretary@gmail.com

Membership

IUSTI Europe membership has to be renewed **every calendar year**. It costs £40 for which you get discounted registrations to IUSTI World meetings, a 40% discount for the International Journal of STD & AIDS, and regular updates from IUSTI Europe and the STI Global Update. The membership site has moved address following the IUSTI World site update and can be found [here](#).

GDPR

IUSTI Europe controls your personal data in line with the new GDPR requirements in Europe. Your personal data are held on the main IUSTI World membership database which is held in Australia. If you wish to amend your communication preferences or change your contact details please contact the membership secretary iustieuropesecretary@gmail.com.



Final remarks

by **Andy Winter & Tomislav Meštrović, The Communications Committee**

Dear members of IUSTI-Europe,

We would like to thank you for taking the time going through this Newsletter. After a very inspirational *Introduction* from our Regional Director of IUSTI-Europe, Dr. Claudia Heller-Vitouch, I believe our discussion on the new edition of IUSTI-Europe Webinars will be of interest to us all. Consequently, we invite you to actively participate in suggesting topics you would like to hear more about in the future editions of these webinars. Our sincere thanks goes to organizers and contributors of the webinars.

And although there are many advantages of virtual conferences (such as 'on demand' availability of presentations and additional professional development opportunities), we also hope that the planned conference in Tbilisi (Georgia) will be held as a live event, which will enable us once again to meet each other live and discuss the most pressing issues in the field of sexually transmitted infections. In the meantime, all of us should encourage experts and colleagues in our field to join IUSTI-Europe by highlighting our strong bonds that kept us together at all times - even during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As the Newsletter is concerned, please look at it as our sincere effort to give a perspective on our organization, but also as a medium where we can constantly emphasize relevant discoveries in the STI field. In the future, we also plan to highlight our esteemed members, and make better use of social networks in order to promote the goals of IUSTI-Europe. Together we can tackle all future challenges, and this Newsletter will be the platform to recognize our success in the field and acknowledge all our colleagues for their great work.

IUSTI-Europe Newsletter Editors

Dr. Andy Winter and Prof. Tomislav Meštrović

