

# IUSTI Europe News

May 2022

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## Introduction

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

Dear Members of IUSTI-Europe,

The COVID crisis is not totally overcome when a new catastrophe is challenging Europe and the world: The awful war in Ukraine which damages the lives of so many. IUSTI-Europe strictly condemns this aggression.

The movement of refugees leaves many vulnerable, and historically has inevitably led to an increase in STI's and HIV. Therefore, the topic of the March-webinar was changed and was dedicated to "Refugees, sexual health and HIV: impact of the war in Ukraine". Please find the recording of the webinar together with the previous ones on the webpage [www.iusti-europe.eu](http://www.iusti-europe.eu)  
It is a great pleasure to announce that after the last spring webinar on May 25th it is planned to continue the series of webinars in autumn 2022.

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Keith Radcliffe has informed us earlier this year that after 20 years of extremely successful work he has decided to step down from his position as the Editor-in-chief of the IUSTI-Europe guidelines group. I would like to express my deepest thanks to Keith for establishing the guidelines as one of IUSTI-Europe's columns. We know that the guidelines have had a considerable impact on clinical practice in Europe and feedback indicates that clinicians are very appreciative of them. Data from the journals in which they are published shows that they are consistently among their most read and cited articles. Keith will stay on our Council as Senior Counsellor and we are happy that he agreed to stay on our side with his tremendous knowledge and experience. I am delighted to inform you that Jackie Sherrard has accepted to become the new head of the European STI Guidelines Project. Jackie will do an excellent job and, with the support of the guidelines group, the project will continue to be a very valuable resource for clinicians (and patients) across Europe.

We would like to allow organizers to increase the awareness of STI-related conferences in Europe. Therefore, we have established the "Events" page on the IUSTI-Europe website [www.iusti-europe.eu/web/index.php/events](http://www.iusti-europe.eu/web/index.php/events) . Please share with us the information of congresses you are planning.

Due to the uncertain times it has been decided to hold the 35th IUSTI-Europe Conference in Tbilisi, Georgia from September 29 to October 1, 2022 as a partly hybrid meeting. The scientific programme will be excellent and beautiful Tbilisi is worth to be visited. Please find all relevant information on the congress webpage <https://iusti-europe2022.org/>

Looking forward to meeting you hopefully soon! With warm wishes,

**Dr. Claudia Heller-Vitouch**

Regional Director of IUSTI-Europe



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## Late breaking: Monkey pox

As we finalised the newsletter reports of clusters of monkeypox virus infection are being reported from [UK](#), [Portugal](#) and [USA](#) with further suspected cases reported from [Spain](#). Some of those affected have self-identified as men who have sex with men. Although human case to case transmission is rare historically there are worrying features in these clusters that may imply a change in the pathogenic range of the virus.

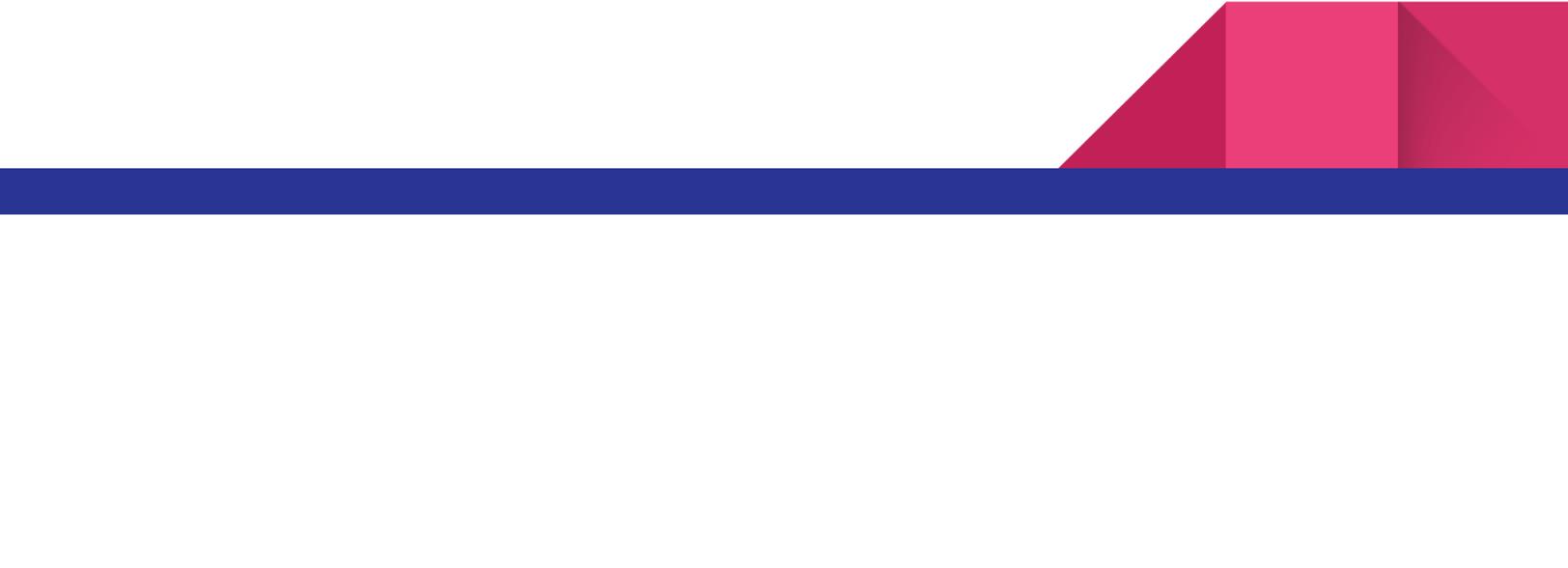
A critical learning point noted in the UK and Portugal reports is that some people have presented with skin lesions and lymphadenopathy *before* developing a febrile flu-like illness.

The situation is extremely rapidly evolving and IUSTI Europe members are urged to familiarize themselves with the features of this disease and seek advice about appropriate infection control measures as affected persons are likely to seek help from sexual health clinics.

ECDC published an alert here [Monkeypox cases reported in UK and Portugal \(europa.eu\)](#) and there is a [factsheet](#) for health professionals. BASHH also has published useful [resources](#)



Image from UKHSA <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/monkeypox-cases-confirmed-in-england-latest-updates>



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# IUSTI Webinars: Autumn 2021 to Spring 2022

by **Dr Derek Freedman and Prof. George-Sorin Tiplica**

Our monthly Wednesday evening webinar series has been a huge success with many hundreds of people registering and attending on-line. We are extremely grateful to all the speakers who have prepared and then submitted such superb talks in advance and made themselves available to take questions. Recordings of webinars are available on the website a few weeks after the event. The last webinar for this series on May 25<sup>th</sup> may be subject to change due to the monkeypox emergency, but is hoped to be a combined session with an update on monkeypox and snapshots of country progress against STIs from around Europe.

## [October 27th 2021 – Coming out of COVID: What have we learnt? How will we face the future?](#)

- Speakers:
  - George Sorin Tiplica: Romania | John McSorley: UK | Usha Hartgill: Norway | Pille Konno: Estonia | Josephe Kobakhidze: Georgia | Arne Vikstrom: Sweden | Sebastien Fouere: France

## [November 24th 2021 – PrEP: The Next Decade](#)

- Speakers:
    - Prof. Sheena McCormack: UK
    - Prof. Jean Michel Molina: France
    - Prof. Deniz Gokengin: Turkey
    - Prof. Fiona Lyons: Ireland
    - Dr. Daniel Richardson: UK
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## January 26th 2022 - Unfolding the secrets of *Treponema pallidum*

- Speakers:
  - Lorenzo Giacani (USA): Deriving an Attenuated *Treponema pallidum* subsp. *pallidum* Strain Through Genetic Engineering
  - Helene Zondag (NL): Molecular typing of *Treponema pallidum* subspecies *pallidum*
  - Raj Patel (UK): PCR – the move away from DFM
  - Stefano Ramoni (IT): Extragenital syphilitic chancres: not to be forgotten
  - Marco Cusini (IT): Therapy of syphilis: penicillin, penicillin and p.

## February 23rd 2022 – Problematic Vaginitis and Balanitis

- Speakers:
  - Lorenzo Giacani (USA): Deriving an Attenuated *Treponema pallidum* subsp. *pallidum* Strain Through Genetic Engineering
  - Helene Zondag (NL): Molecular typing of *Treponema pallidum* subspecies *pallidum*
  - Raj Patel (UK): PCR – the move away from DFM
  - Stefano Ramoni (IT): Extragenital syphilitic chancres: not to be forgotten
  - Marco Cusini (IT): Therapy of syphilis: penicillin, penicillin and p

## March 30<sup>th</sup> 2022 – Refugees, sexual health and HIV: impact of the war in Ukraine

- Speakers:
    - Nicole Seguy, Elena Vovc: Continuation of HIV treatment for Ukrainian refugees
    - A minute's silence for the victims of the Russian invasion
    - Apostolos Veizis (GR) – Challenges in migration and health
    - Valeska Padovese (ML) – My experience with STIs and HIV in refugees
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- Aldo Morrone (IT) – Skin and health problems in refugees
  - Caspar Rokx (NL) – HIV in Ukraine

#### [April 26th 2022 – Stressed patients and stressed doctors](#)

- Speakers
  - John Green – health anxiety
  - Agnes Kocsis - mindfulness

#### [May 25th 2022 – Steps Forward - 2022](#)

- A series of short presentations from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Israel, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Scotland outlining current problems faced in practice and steps taken to advance patient care and clinic services in their region
  - An update on the European monkeypox situation, joint with BASHH UK
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# ANNOUNCING IUSTI EUROPE CONGRESS IN TBILISI

## 29<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2022

**STIs at the crossroads – after COVID-19**



IUSTI Europe, together with Congress President, Dr. Josephe Kobakhidze are delighted to announce the 35th IUSTI=EUROPE Congress, our first face-to-face congress since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will take place in Tbilisi between 29th of September and 1st of October, 2022 in Tbilisi, Georgia, with a hybrid option.

IUSTI-Europe 2022 will continue the tradition of previous Congresses and have a broad Scientific Programme for both practitioners and academics, as well as an active social programme.

The Scientific Programme of the IUSTI-Europe Tbilisi Congress is aimed at the practicing Dermato-Venereologist and Genito-urinary Physicians in Europe and beyond. Dr Arne Vikstrom, Chair of the International Scientific Committee says: *"This will be an interesting and fruitful congress. Plenary lectures will highlight syphilis, non-specific urethritis, immune response to HPV, sexual behaviour and HIV. The symposia will cover genital dermatoses, syphilis, HPV and future perspectives. There will also be Oral Presentations and Posters"*.

The Congress website is now open. To express your interest in attending or joining the Congress virtually visit <https://iusti-europe2022.org> . You will see that the registration fees have been kept at a very modest level, to facilitate widescale participation. The scientific [programme](#) addresses our current issues and challenges, and should not be missed. For those of us who



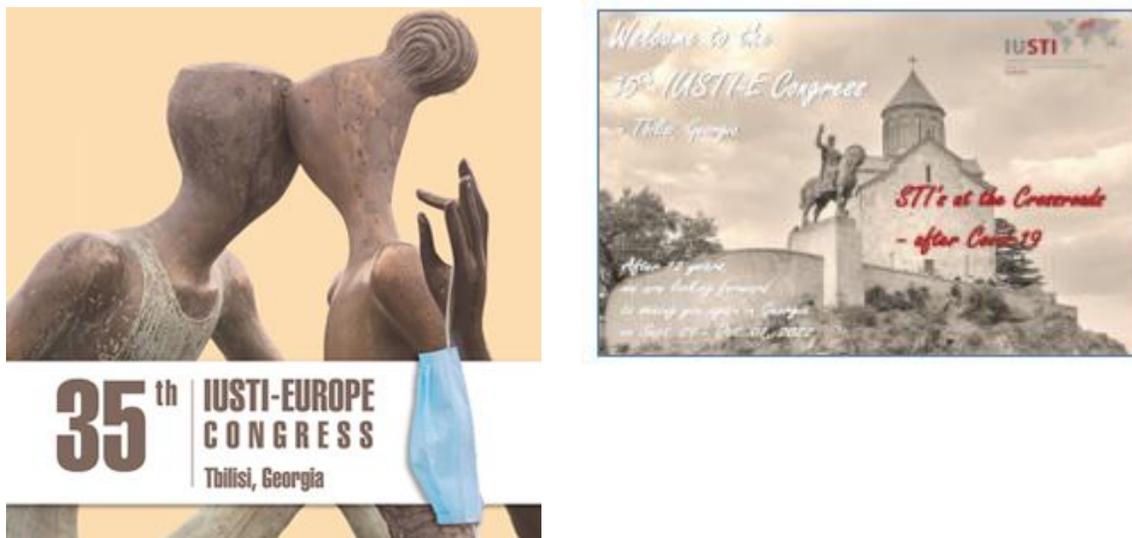
travel to Tbilisi, it will be a new and exciting experience to savour the sights of “The Crossroads to Europe” and to explore further into Georgia.

You can register interest in the conference [here](#).

Key dates: Abstract deadline **18 July** with notifications of acceptance by 1 August

<https://iusti-europe2022.org/abstracts.html>

We are looking forward to seeing you there!



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# IUSTI Europe Guidelines

Dr Jackie Sherrard from Oxford, UK has now taken over as Chair. Dr Sherrard says, *"It is a huge privilege to take on this responsibility for producing evidence-based guidance to support our clinical practice across Europe. We have a great team of editors and writers without whom none of the output would be possible"*. We thank Dr Keith Radcliffe for his enormous contribution, setting up and steering the group over many years.

We are looking for new members of the Editorial Board: if you have interests in evidence-based medicine and feel you have relevant skills please contact Jackie at [jackiesherrard@doctors.org.uk](mailto:jackiesherrard@doctors.org.uk) . The Board meets on Zoom three times a year with virtual work between meetings.

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

Recently published guidelines include:

- [2021 European guideline on management of \*Mycoplasma genitalium\*](#)
- [2022 European guideline on management of vulval conditions](#): In press JEADV
- [2021 European guideline on balanoposthitis](#): In press JEADV

Under review are guidelines on *Mycoplasma genitalium*, chlamydia, balanoposthitis, non-gonococcal urethritis, and partner management.



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# Sexual Health, STI and HIV Updates

by **Tomislav Meštrović, Communications Committee Member**

## **A decline in STI testing and treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic in England**

In the previous newsletter we have highlighted how the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had an immense impact on testing for HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs in general within the WHO European Region – and new, in-depth country level analyses confirm these findings. A study published in the journal [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#) shows how STI testing, but also vaccinations and treatment initiations for STIs, HIV, and viral hepatitis in England have declined and never bounced back to the pre-pandemic levels. More specifically, the shift towards online and outreach services happened rapidly during 2020, which underscores the need to evaluate the effects of these strategies on health inequalities.

## **Markedly decreased azithromycin susceptibility of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in Germany**

[A recent report](#) shows antimicrobial susceptibility trends of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in Germany from January 2014 to May 2021. The proportion of isolates with minimum inhibitory concentrations above the epidemiological cut-off for azithromycin increased substantially – from 1.3% in 2014 to 20.7% in 2021. This means that azithromycin as part of the recommended dual therapy in Germany for non-adherent patients is challenged, and there is a need for continuous resistance monitoring.

## **A model to predict drivers of syphilis transmission among men who have sex with men**

Researchers from Switzerland have proposed [an epidemiological model](#) to account for syphilis infectiousness and risk for transmission by using 'reported non-steady partners' (nsP) as the main proxy for sexual risk. The model suggests that reporting nsP regardless of condom use is



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suitable for risk stratification when modelling syphilis transmission, and the authors note that more frequent screening of men who have sex with men with HIV diagnosis (particularly those with nsP) may aid to curb syphilis transmission.

### **ECDC: A surge in drug-resistant *Shigella sonnei* infections in MSM**

On 23 February 2022, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) issued a [rapid risk assessment of sexual spread of \*Shigella sonnei\*](#) – primarily amongst men who have sex with men in EU/EEA countries and the United Kingdom. Detected isolates were closely genetically related by whole genome sequencing (WGS), or had the same or a very similar resistance profile – showing an extensive-drug resistance pattern.

### **HIV epidemiology in Europe**

ECDC continues with meticulous HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe. The most recent 2021 report, published jointly by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, can be found [here](#).

A recent [Science paper](#) describes a highly virulent variant of human immunodeficiency virus 1 (HIV-1) subtype-B in the Netherlands that arose from de novo mutation. The variant show increased transmissibility pattern and thus far unfamiliar molecular mechanism of virulence. Further studies are needed to elucidate its response to currently used drugs. This discovery highlights the importance of access to frequent testing for at-risk individuals and of adherence to recommendations for immediate treatment initiation for every person living with HIV.



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[A recent study](#) in countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia showed worrying levels of HIV pretreatment drug resistance in Tajikistan and Belarus, where prevalence of such strains exceeded the 10% threshold recommended by the World Health Organization for immediate public health action.

[The ECDC HIV Platform Tool](#) is a new end-user application that uses statistical and mathematical methods to calculate adjusted estimates from HIV surveillance data, considering the issues of missing data and reporting delay and employing modelling techniques. The tool accepts case-based surveillance data for HIV, containing a minimum required set of variables.

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# War in Ukraine and refugee health – including STIs

## ECDC and WHO advice and support

From increasing the spread of infectious diseases to interrupting maternal health care, the humanitarian crisis as a result of Russian invasion of Ukraine will cause catastrophic damage to the health of displaced or otherwise affected individuals. The migration of Ukrainian refugees has elicited a swift international and regional response, but host communities have to be prepared to serve their health needs – which include prevention and treatment efforts against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

In order to improve refugees' knowledge of available health services, intensifying awareness on the location of the network of health services where support is available is of utmost importance. This should especially address the subsidies for primary healthcare services and the availability of medicines and screening campaigns. ECDC highlights that countries hosting displaced populations should ensure that those arriving from Ukraine due to the crisis have access to healthcare services in a similar manner as the local population.

More specifically, in their [technical report](#) they recommend that public health authorities in receiving countries have to increase awareness, so their community healthcare providers can detect and report infectious diseases – including STIs. They emphasize that this should be an integral part of the overall provision of healthcare to the population fleeing the crisis, and syndromic surveillance should be considered for those accommodated in reception centers.

[The World Health Organization](#) highlighted that continuing treatment for people living with HIV is one of the priorities during this crisis. However, as highlighted in the [Editorial published in The Lancet HIV](#), the continuity of HIV services for those refugees who do make it to adjacent countries is a concern, and it is imperative that health systems in these countries are supported – particularly Moldova, one of the poorest countries in Europe.



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Humanitarian organizations need to promote gender equality. Sex- and age-disaggregated data should be collected, analyzed and utilized in planning and implementation of aid projects. It is also crucial to draw attention to women who are forced to engage in paid sex in order to earn an income or women who face exploitation or gender-based violence. Efforts need to be placed on building the capacity of care providers on clinical care for sexual assault survivors, gender-based violence case management and caring for child survivors.

The speed, unity and permissiveness of new EU policies shows how governments can capitalize on political will to provide judicious and timely humanitarian solutions for refugees when they want to. This should also be the impetus to adequately address their health needs.

## STI papers published in 2021 by Ukrainian experts

selected by **Tomislav Meštrović, Communications Committee Member**

We thought it would be good to highlight the important academic work undertaken by colleagues in Ukraine in the field of STI which has now been so badly disrupted by the invasion.

### **More evidence for chlamydial heat shock protein 60 in predicting tubal infertility**

A research group from the Bogomolets National Medical University in Kyiv, Ukraine, has shown how CHSP60 antibody testing represents a more specific evaluation than antibody testing for *C. trachomatis* for predicting chlamydia-associated tubal infertility. More specifically, by using these tests as one of the first steps in the infertility examination may help steer the immediate diagnosis for non-interceptive tubal infertility.

*Berestoviy VO, Sokol IV, Mahmood AA, Ginzburg VG, Govsieiev DO. A Prospective Study to Analyze the Specificity of Chlamydial Heat Shock Protein (Chsp60) Antibodies to Diagnose Tubal Infertility. Wiad Lek. 2021;74(2):184-189. PMID: 33813469.*

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### **Mixed infections with sexually transmitted agents pervasive in infertile women**

Dr. Olena I Krotik from the Shupyk National Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education of The Ministry Of Health of Ukraine in Kyiv has showed how mixed infections are pervasive in infertile women with history of STIs; more specifically, associations of different species of viruses with *Mycoplasma* spp., *Ureaplasma* spp. and *Chlamydia trachomatis* were found in 23 (23.9%) of such individuals. In addition, there was a high prevalence of mixed associations of obligate anaerobes and *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

*Krotik OI. Characteristics of the Vaginal Microbiota, Cervical and Uterine Flora in Women with the Past History of Sexually Transmitted Infections. Wiad Lek. 2021;74(4):896-901. PMID: 34156000.*

### **Refining treatment of co-infections with *M. genitalium*, *U. urealyticum* and *T. vaginalis***

A joint effort by researchers from the Bogomolets National Medical University in Kyev, as well as Danylo Halytsky National Medical University and St. Paraskeva Medical Centre in Lviv, Ukraine, showed how the combination of secnidazole and josamycin can be considered the most effective and well-tolerated for the empirical treatment in patients that have a co-infection with *Mycoplasma genitalium*, *Ureaplasma urealyticum* and *Trichomonas vaginalis*. A complete eradication of these infections in men also improved their semen parameters.

*Yasynetskyi M, Banyra O, Nikitin O, Ventskivska I, Kozlov V, Kvach M, Borzhievskyy A. Mixed Sexually Transmitted Infections in Infertile Couples: Empirical Treatment and Influence on Semen Quality. Recent Adv Antiinfect Drug Discov. 2021;16(3):227-236. doi: 10.2174/2772434416666211129105145. PMID: 34844551.*



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### **Steps to prevent increasing antimicrobial resistance of *N. gonorrhoeae* in Ukraine**

Researchers from the I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University in Ternopil and Bogomolets National Medical University in Kyiv conducted quantitative non-randomized cross-sectional descriptive postal survey to evaluate diagnostic approaches for detecting gonorrhea in sexually transmitted infections (STI) clinics in Ukraine – and showed how increased adherence to evidence-based WHO and nationally adapted management guidelines will be essential for preventing antimicrobial resistance of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in Ukraine.

*Boiko I, Krynytska I, Kohut I, Bezkorovaina H, Stepanenko V. Diagnostics of Gonococcal Infection in Ukraine: Current Challenges in Resource-Constrained Settings. Eurasian J Med. 2021 Oct;53(3):180-184. doi: 10.5152/eurasianjmed.2021.20043. PMID: 35110093.*



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# Spring European Testing Week: 16th to 23rd May 2022



**EuroTEST**

Working together for integrated testing and earlier care

*Addressing Hepatitis, HIV, STIs and TB*

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](#)

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## Final remarks

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

Dear members of IUSTI-Europe,

We sincerely hope that you found this issue of Newsletter useful.

We plan to run some spotlight sessions in the next issues about some of our members. If you would like to be featured or have a story you want to share about your work please contact us.

We are delighted to welcome help with social media accounts from Ana-Maria Drăghici-Ionescu, Raluca Lascu and Iulia Negulet in Romania. They are looking after our Instagram, Facebook and Twitter publicity for the webinars.

With the possibility of travel to the Tblisi meeting we hope we will once again not only be able to reunite and rekindle our current collaborations, but also start new ones.

While many challenges are in front of us, this society and this Newsletter will help you to keep up to date with the literature, inform you on important events, celebrate our successes in the field and provide support to our colleagues from Ukraine. We wish to sincerely thank you!

IUSTI-Europe Newsletter Editors

**Dr. Andy Winter and Prof. Tomislav Meštrović**



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## 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: [justieuropesecretary@gmail.com](mailto:justieuropesecretary@gmail.com)

*Communication* - contact Andy Winter: [justieuropesecretary@gmail.com](mailto:justieuropesecretary@gmail.com)

*Scientific Policy* - contact Derek Freedman: [justieuropesecretary@gmail.com](mailto:justieuropesecretary@gmail.com)

*Education* - contact Angelika Stary and Marco Cusini: [justieuropesecretary@gmail.com](mailto:justieuropesecretary@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 [justieuropesecretary@gmail.com](mailto:justieuropesecretary@gmail.com).

