

IUSTI Europe News

December 2022

Introduction

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

Dear Members of IUSTI-Europe,

Not only the pandemic but also the terrible war in Ukraine have influenced personal, political and academic life in Europe. Nevertheless, IUSTI-Europe tried to fulfil its responsibilities towards its members and to keep active as before. This is only possible with an enthusiastic team. Zoom Meetings of the Officers are held at least every two weeks and in between the work continues. Thank you to all at this point, you are doing an incredibly great job!

It is with great sorrow that we have to inform about the passing of our dear colleague and long-standing IUSTI-Europe Council member Karen Babayan from Armenia. Karen was a very active member of the group and will be missed sadly. Our thoughts are with Karen's family. Please find Karen's obituary here: <https://www.iusti-europe.eu/web/index.php>

The 35th IUSTI-EUROPE Congress that was held in Tbilisi, Georgia between 29th of September and 1st of October, 2022 will go down to history as the first IUSTI-Europe hybrid meeting. A total of 453 doctors, residents and students, and nurses took part in the work of the three days of the Congress (205 registered international participants, 192 Georgians and 56 speakers). Of this number, 39 international participants and 192 Georgians that day or another took part in the Congress in-person. Such attendance greatly exceeded our expectations and speaks of the well-defined success of the IUSTI-E 2022.

Our hosts **Josephe Kobakhidze** and **Oleg Kvlividze** did a great job and can be stated as pioneers for this conference format. Both of them together with the scientific chair Arne Wikström have received the IUSTI-Europe medals of merit during the closing ceremony. IUSTI-Europe is very grateful for the warm hospitality in Georgia and we look back to another milestone in the history of IUSTI-Europe congresses . The Abstract Book of the conference is freely available and can be found [here](#).



After the congress is before the congress: The **36th IUSTI-Europe Congress** will take place in **Malta, October 26-28 2023**. Congress president **Valeska Padovese** and Chair of the Scientific Committee **Henry de Vries** are already working on an exciting (hopefully) face to face conference. Moreover, the Council Members of IUSTI-Europe have made their voting concerning the IUSTI-Europe Congresses in the years to come. We are very privileged to having received so many high-quality bids. It is our utmost pleasure to inform you that the bids below have been approved:

2024	Croatia	Mihael Skerlev	Zagreb or Dubrovnik
2025	Greece	Electra Nicolaidou	Athens
2026	Czech Republic	Jana Hercogova	Prague
2027	Portugal	Carmen Lisboa	Porto

Sincere congratulations to the successful bidders! It is an acknowledgement of their continuous and valuable work in the field of STIs and HIV and a recognition of their support for the activities of IUSTI-Europe over several decades. The IUSTI-Europe officers are looking

forward with confidence to a close and fruitful co-operation with the new Congress presidents.

The IUSTI Europe STI courses organized by **Angelika Stary** and **Marco Cusini** have become an important educational tool for reaching out to young doctors and residents but also advanced STI specialists. At the 23rd IUSTI World Congress in Zimbabwe on invitation of the organizers a pre-conference IUSTI Europe course as a joint meeting with WHO took place on September 4th 2022. The course was very well attended with about 120 participants, who took the chance to attend the onsite course free of charge. The next **IUSTI Europe Advanced Course** was held virtually at the 35th IUSTI Europe Congress 2022 in Tbilisi on September 29 th 2022. Up to 80 participants followed online the interesting pre-recorded talks and the lively discussion. There is still some hope to have a new edition of the Basic Course in Bertinoro in the first half of June 2023. In addition, it has already been agreed to accept the proposal of IUSTI World to hold a IUSTI Course, organized by IUSTI Europe, at the Joint ISSTDR/IUSTI World Congress in Chicago, on July 24th, 2023.

The excellent Autumn series of **IUSTI Europe Webinars** organized by **Derek Freedman** and **George-Sorin Tiplica** is summarised later in this newsletter. Please find the recordings of all webinars and other informative up-to-date content on our webpage www.iusti-europe.eu

IUSTI-Europe looks ahead with great optimism and unbowed energy to the challenges to come!

With warm wishes,

Dr. Claudia Heller-Vitouch

Regional Director of IUSTI-Europe


Strengthening connections

by **George-Sorin Tiplica, Chair of IUSTI-Europe Council**

The focus of our work – Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) – connects us with colleagues from other medical associations. Working on a common ground showed once more how important it is to share information and to disseminate knowledge. IUSTI-Europe place in the field of STIs is recognized by our colleagues. It is the time to strengthen our connections by openly showing our activities and inviting all those interested to join, and also to link with other associations and work for the benefit of our patients. The National Societies are our steady partner. Wherever IUSTI-Europe is organizing a Congress, the National Society is one of the main pillars of the event. The importance of this kind of collaboration was fully demonstrated during our last 35th Congress in Georgia but also it is monthly evident during our Webinars that are produced with the essential support of the [British Association for Sexual Health and HIV](#) (BASHH). We constantly rely on our Council members to liaise with their supporting National Societies.

On the European level the collaboration with the [European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology](#) (EADV) boosted and, during the recent [EADV Congress in Milan](#), IUSTI-Europe delegates supported the increase of the venereological themes on the EADV scientific agenda. To achieve this goal, it is expected to develop closer relations with the [EADV Task Forces](#) of STIs and HPV chaired by Prof. Henry de Vries and Prof. Mihael Skerlev respectively. An EADV / IUSTI Europe Joint Symposium dedicated to the mpox outbreak was organized during our 35th Congress in Tbilisi. Prof. Christopher Bunker, who attended in person, led the team of EADV speakers. On the same actual topic, we were proud to be able to present to our members and to give free access to our colleagues to actual and accurate information from the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) (ECDC). This was possible with the great help of Dr Teymur Noori, Dr. Benjamin Bluemel and Dr. Otilia Mardh.

IUSTI-Europe webinars are increasingly attended by colleagues from all over the world. We explored possible connections with the [International League of Dermatological Societies](#) (ILDS) during the 3rd ILDS World Skin Summit in Peru, October 2022. The President of the ILDS



– Prof. Lars French – expressed interest in developing connections mentioning the example of the [Migrant Health Dermatology Working Group](#) (MHDWG) where Dr. Valeska Padovese is greatly involved (PHOTO 1). Prof. Roy Chan – the President of the [2023 World Congress of Dermatology](#) in Singapore, confirmed good relations with IUSTI-World and pointed at the collaboration with Prof. Angelika Stary in establishing the Scientific program of the event.

Acting together to enhance and strengthen those connections we will be able to make a strong network dedicated to the fight against STIs and HIV.



Discussions during the 3rd ILDS World Skin Summit, Peru (October 2022): George-Sorin Tiplica (IUSTI Europe), Martin Kassir (International Society for Dermatology), Lars French (President, ILDS) and Valeska Padovese (IUSTI Europe)

IUSTI Webinars: Summary

by **Derek Freedman and George-Sorin Tiplica – Webinars Co-Editors**

The IUSTI-Europe Webinars have continued the success of the first series. Dedicated to actual problems seen in the practice of Venereology and HIV/AIDS, these monthly events gathered an average of **785** registered users per event from **59** countries (Europe and beyond). The collaboration with the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) continues, and the Webinars receive accreditation from the Royal College of Physicians – London for CME. This report carries on the activities from our last report in [IUSTI-Eu Newsletter 1/2022](#).

Webinar 12: Monkeypox – Where to now ? was held on **October 26, 2022**


Invited speakers provided up-to-date information on the monkeypox (mpox) outbreak that held the attention of medical and lay news over this summer. The speakers provided the latest epidemiological data from ECDC, a report from the Amsterdam front-line of the fight against mpox, and a summary of the clinical aspects of mpox:

- MPOX – The View from ECDC *Benjamin Bluemel (SE)*
- MPOX – The View from Amsterdam *Henry de Vries (NL)*
- MPOX – The View from the Clinic *Andrew Winter (UK)*.

Webinar 13: Challenging Domestic Abuse was aired on **November 30, 2022**

IUSTI-EU – BASHH collaboration was highlighted by a special two-part webinar of 2022, realized by the involvement of the BASHH Sexual Violence Special Interest Group chaired by Deborah Wardle (Glasgow, UK) to mark the [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#)

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- Tackling Domestic Abuse in Hospital settings *Charlotte Cohen (UK)*
 - Domestic Abuse - Whole Family Approach *Nikki Kelly (UK)*
 - Health care responses to domestic abuse: swimming upstream from primary care to medical education *Gene Feder and Medina Johnson (UK)*
 - My Story *Zoe Dronfield (UK)*
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Webinar 14: Confronting Sexual Violence: 07 December 2022

The same team produced the second session

- Opening up to Abuse *Rachel Caswell (UK)*
- Trauma Informed approaches to Sexual Healthcare *Caroline Bruce (UK)*
- Forensic Medical Response to Sexual Violence *Andrea Holmes (IE)*
- Sexual and Gender-Based Violence seen in Migrants *Valeska Padovese (MT)*.

The recordings of the webinars will be available on the IUSTI-EU web-page at [IUSTI Europe - Webinar Recordings](#).

We look forward to continuing this academic season of monthly Webinars, held on the last Wednesday of every month, after the December Christmas break until the end of May. They are particularly aimed at those in practice, who face the practical problem of bringing the best and most appropriate treatment and advice to our patients. We particularly welcome programme, topic and speaker suggestions. Please let us know what you would like to see presented. Email us with your suggestions df@freedman.ie / romsocderm@yahoo.com

PrEP availability in Central and Eastern European countries

by **Deniz Gökengin, IUSTI National Representative to Türkiye**

IUSTI Europe Council agreed a statement on [HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis – Key Steps for Clinicians](#) at its meeting in September 2022. Here, Prof. Gökengin looks in particular at the challenges facing CEE countries:

In more than a decade since the first evidence for the efficacy of daily oral PrEP, its availability in Europe showed a slow but steady incline. Studies from different parts of the world showed that especially when used concomitantly with other interventions it was highly effective in reducing new HIV diagnoses and in fact achieved the most rapid decrease. According to the UNAIDS fast track targets set in 2014 to reduce new HIV infections and AIDS related deaths to less than 500 000 by 2020, three million people were expected to have started using PrEP by 2020. However, despite all promising results, PrEP has not been approved in many countries, and scale up has been slower than ideal with only approximately one million people on PrEP in the last quarter of 2020 and the target was unmet.

Since the PrEP roll-out in France in 2016 the introduction of PrEP in Europe was much slower compared to other regions and Europe comprised only 7% of global PrEP initiations in the last quarter of 2020. Currently, PrEP is nationally available and reimbursed in 21 countries, generics are available but not reimbursed in 14 and PrEP is not formally implemented in 20, the majority being Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Reports from the European region call the attention to significant regional and between-country variability in the availability of and access to PrEP within a spectrum of low- to high-income countries and even in those with early and successful PrEP roll-out including several EU countries.

PrEP roll-out in the CEE was much slower than in Western Europe. Currently PrEP availability in the region differs from one country to another either as daily or on-demand or both forms and several countries have only one form available. There are large disparities between countries in access to PrEP ranging from <1% to 80%. Currently around 80 centers in the

region are offering PrEP with almost a 1.5-fold increase compared to 2018 and an estimated number of 9000 people on PrEP with a 2-fold increase compared to 2018. The two major barriers to PrEP use were reported to be lack of knowledge of people in need and PrEP not being reimbursed. A study by ECDC reported that while the overall PrEP gap in Europe was around 17%, it varied from 4% to 45% with a much larger gap in non-EU and lower income countries, several of which have large epidemics and rapidly rising new infections.

In conclusion, although there has been great progress in PrEP availability in the European region recently PrEP uptake globally and regionally is still inadequate to have an impact on ending the epidemic. Socioeconomic, political and cultural variations between countries have a significant impact on policies and need to be considered. If we are to have a realistic chance of reaching the UNAIDS goal of a 90% reduction in HIV infections by 2030, a high priority needs to be given to PrEP targets.

Dr. Deniz Gökengin



Ensuring high-quality of HIV care for displaced people from Ukraine as a priority: ECDC report

As the displacement of people from continues, an [ECDC report](#) highlights that it is of utmost importance that countries across Europe receiving these displaced people are prepared to ensure high standards of HIV prevention, treatment and care. The Council of the European Union has adopted a Temporary Protection Directive which offers an appropriate response to the present situation by providing immediate protection and rights, including rights to medical assistance. Partners at [European AIDS clinical Society \(EACS\)](#), together with the [Euroguidelines in Central and Eastern Europe \(ECEE\) network group](#), the WHO Collaborating Centre at the Centre of Excellence for Health Immunity and Infections (CHIP) and the Public Health Centre, MOH, Ukraine were tasked by the WHO Regional Office for Europe to produce a standardised protocol for the clinical management and medical data sharing for displaced people living with HIV from Ukraine. The main steps are as follows (adapted from [ECDC](#)):

1. Developing and deploying national plans to provide **free and easily accessible HIV care** including the provision of antiretroviral therapy, therapy for co-infections, prevention of opportunistic infections and opiate agonist therapy, where needed, for Ukrainian people.
2. Providing a network of **designated and accessible clinics** to provide HIV testing and antiretroviral therapy, and testing and care for viral hepatitis, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections, taking into account language, culture and mental health needs.
3. Ensuring **secure electronic transfer** of medical information between Ukraine and receiving countries, and within and between countries.
4. Holding stocks of antiretroviral therapy to be able to provide at least **90 days of therapy for displaced people** in case of onward transit to other EU countries, preferably using the same regimen as the one prescribed in Ukraine.
5. Taking the opportunity to provide easy access to **HIV and other blood-borne virus testing** for displaced people, as a part of general health screening and for those in hospitals.

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6. Providing **documentation** confirming **HIV status** and details of tests carried out and antiretroviral therapy dispensed for those transiting onwards within or out of country.

The management of syphilis in Ukraine: unveiling the new guidelines

by **Dr. Gleb Bodarenko, IUSTI National Representative to Ukraine**

A scientific conference “*Innovative developments in dermatology and venereology, their implementation in medical institutions of Ukraine*” was held in Ukraine (November 17-18, 2022, online format).

A new Ukrainian clinical guideline for the management of syphilis was presented. This document is a Ukrainian adaptation of the European guideline on the management of syphilis, 2020 and the UK national guidelines on the management of syphilis, 2015. New for Ukraine is the transition to primary screening for syphilis with the use of treponemal tests; previously, the main screening diagnostic method was non-treponemal tests.

Epidemiological situation in Ukraine is as follows: early syphilis - 65.2% among other forms of syphilis (52% - early latent syphilis, 13% - syphilis with clinical manifestations), late syphilis - 14.4%, unspecified forms - 20.3%. Therefore, the use of non-treponemal tests for screening is unacceptable.

The main drug for the treatment of syphilis in the world is BBP, but in recent years in Ukraine (as well as in the world) there have been interruptions in its supply. The clinical guideline suggests reserve treatments for syphilis with benzylpenicillin and a combined preparation containing 1200000 BPG and 300000 penicillin procaine.

Dr. Gleb Bondarenko



Sexual Health, STI and HIV Research Updates

by Tomislav Meštrović, Communications Committee Member

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on STI incidence in Finland

In previous newsletters we have repeatedly highlighted how the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had an immense impact on STI testing practices and behaviours. Now a handful of new studies emerging from European countries aim to appraise its impact on the incidence of STIs. [A study from Finland](#) observed a decrease in cases of Chlamydia trachomatis at the start of the pandemic, but the number of diagnoses started to increase again by the end of the first pandemic year. Interestingly, the number of cases diagnosed with gonorrhoea increased during the pandemic in 2020 to 2021.

Determinants of syphilis in men who have sex with men (MSM) in Europe

[A recent study published in The Lancet Regional Health – Europe](#) appraised social and behavioural determinants of syphilis by using specific modelling approaches based on repeated cross-sectional surveys from 2010 and 2017 among 278,256 men who have sex with men in 31 European countries. The study has found that syphilis cases are concentrated in three particular MSM population groups: HIV-diagnosed, PrEP users, and sex workers. The authors conclude that behavioural and interventional changes, particularly more non-steady male partners, the practice of condomless anal intercourse and recency of STI-screening, are major contributing factors for increasing syphilis diagnoses among MSM in Europe.

Improved quality of life for an HCV-infected population in Ukraine

[A 2022 study in BMC Infectious Diseases](#) analysed the impact of direct-acting antiviral treatment of hepatitis C on the quality of life of adults in Ukraine. Among 850 HCV-infected adult individuals, a major positive effect on the mental and physical well-being, self-perception, and productivity was observed for those who complete 12-week HCV treatment regimen with sofosbuvir/ledipasvir.



ECDC: A monkeypox outbreak situation update


Since the start of the monkeypox (MPX) outbreak and as of 25 October 2022, 20 675 confirmed cases of MPX have been reported from 29 EU/EEA countries. In total, 51 cases have been reported from three Western Balkan countries and Türkiye. The highest cumulative notification rates have been reported in Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg.

ECDC: Gonococcal antimicrobial susceptibility surveillance

The surveillance of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* antimicrobial susceptibility in the European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA) is essential for detecting emerging and increasing antimicrobial resistance. Since 2009, this surveillance has been co-ordinated by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The quality-assured data produced can be used to inform treatment guidelines. The continuation of quality- assured antimicrobial susceptibility surveillance activities, along with the development of alternative gonococcal regimens, is essential to ensure gonorrhoea remains a treatable infection. You can find the summary of results for 2020 [here](#).

BSACI guideline for the set-up of penicillin allergy de-labelling services

The Standards of Care Committee of the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) and a committee of experts and key stakeholders have developed a specific guideline for the evaluation and testing of patients with an unsubstantiated label of penicillin allergy. The recommendations include a checklist to identify patients at low risk of allergy and a framework for the conduct of drug provocation testing by non-allergists. You can find the guidelines [here](#).



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 constant monitoring of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis programmes in the EU/EEA is also under way, and a [recent document](#) intends to assist users in making informed decisions on the implementation of measurable indicators adapted to their local contexts. Also, please check the latest [Sexual health and HIV Policy EURO bulletin](#) from NAM aidsmap.

A recent paper in [HIV Medicine](#) shows how in just two years, and in spite of the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, significant advances concerning the availability of antiretroviral therapy and the implementation of other strategies have occurred in Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Southeastern Europe. Such changes facilitate the harmonization of those strategies with the European AIDS Clinical Society guidelines. Continuous effort is needed to overcome various obstacles (administrative, financial, national guideline restrictions) in some countries.

HIV screening of the general population in primary care is an effective strategy for achieving timely diagnosis and preventing new infections, shows [a new study in the journal Medicine](#) that was a part of the The Valencia Viral Screening (CRIVALVIR) project.

A national [audit of the management of HIV-2](#) in adults in the United Kingdom showed that individuals living with this virus were managed according to national guidance – with key areas for improvement including the choice of ART, drug resistance testing and the management of virological failure.

IUSTI Europe Guidelines

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

The guidelines group is chaired by Dr Jackie Sherrard, UK and meets quarterly. Under review are guidelines on chlamydia, balanoposthitis, non-gonococcal urethritis and partner management.

Guidelines published in 2022 (*Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*, JEADV).

- [2021 European guideline on the management of *Mycoplasma genitalium* infections](#)
- [2021 European guideline for the management of vulval conditions](#)

The guidelines group is always looking for members with skills in guideline development, critical appraisal of literature and writing to contribute, both at the level of the Guidelines Editorial group and to help with individual guidelines as lead or co-author.

Please contact Dr Sherrard if you are interested at jackiesherrard@doctors.org.uk



Future events



The **Joint International Society for Sexually Transmitted Diseases (ISSTD) / IUSTI World STI & HIV 2023 World Congress** will be held on **July 24-27, 2023** in **Chicago, USA**.

Abstracts are now open with a submission deadline of **January 15, 2023**

Scholarships are available for early-career scientists with limited access to study leave funds, and for community representatives.

More information can be found at <https://stihiv2023.org/>

36th IUSTI-Europe Congress
Malta,
October 26th-28th, 2023
Grand Hotel Excelsior, Valletta

Reaching out to the Hard to Reach

President: Dr Valeska Padovese

Scientific Chair: Prof Henry De Vries



Final remarks

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

We are grateful for continuous support and help with social media accounts from Ana-Maria Drăghici-Ionescu, Raluca Lascu and Iulia Negulet in Romania. They are an indispensable asset for our Instagram, Facebook and Twitter account, as well as for much needed publicity for the webinars and other dissemination efforts.

At the brink of 2023, we will continue to use this Newsletter highlight the work of our members and the importance of collaboration. If you wish to feature your work or contribute an article please contact us at iustieuropesecretary@gmail.com

We wish you all the best for the upcoming holidays!

IUSTI-Europe Newsletter Editors

Dr. Andy Winter and Prof. Tomislav Meštrović



Get involved in IUSTI Europe

Join the [IUSTI Europe LinkedIn](#) group

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

Communication - contact Andy Winter: iustieuropesecretary@gmail.com

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

Guidelines: contact Jackie Sherrard jackiesherrard@doctors.org.uk

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

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

Membership

IUSTI Europe membership has to be renewed **every calendar year** so will be due on **1 Jan 2023**. 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 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.

