XXI ERNA General Meeting

Malaga, Spain

Minutes

The 21th General Meeting of the **European Red Cross and Red Crescent Network on HIV/AIDS, TB, Hepatitisand SubstanceAbuse** hosted by the Spanish Red Cross and took place in Malaga city. 50 participants from 16 National Societies, as well as partners from WHO, IFRC, Villa Maraini, RC/RC Partnership on Substance Abuse took part in the Meeting.

Objective of the General Meeting:
To increase knowledge of the ERNA Annual meeting participants on interventions for key population as well as strengthen collective response of the NSs towards HIV, Hepatitis, TB and drug abuse epidemic in the Region.

DAY 1

OPENING OF ERNA GENERAL MEETING - STATEMENT BY DR. MASSIMO BARRA, ERNA PRESIDENT:

In his welcoming speech, Dr. Massimo Barra stressed the role of the volunteers of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the importance of the immutability of the 7 principles of the Movement. The special role of volunteers is to help the most vulnerable segments of the population, which distinguishes all National Societies in the world from NGOs. The uniqueness of the Movement from the NGOs is a mixture of civil society institutions, a link between citizens and the state. An example is an alliance between the police and the Red Cross when it comes to receiving immigrants. The Red Cross and Red Crescent helps, not condemns. It does not act with political intentions. The auxiliary role of the Movement allows for being close to major institutions and organizations, governments, the UN system. Dr. Barra noted the importance of cooperation, taking into account the competence and participation of other NGOs.
HIV, and other infectious diseases epidemic has decrease in the last 30 years. Substanc abuse problems in our communities are not considered as an health priority for most of our Red Cross/Red Crescent leadership. This is a difficult time that can fuel health and social problems due to the post Covid pandemics, economic crisis, climate change and the terrible conflicts and war. In times of war we promote peace, but we cannot avoid suffering.
The Red Cross have a crucial role in the international arena, but still a lot of work needs to be done to address STIs and substance abuse problems, and ERNA can contribute to provide commitment also in this field that affect especially the most marginalized people of the world.

STATEMENT BY DR. MARIA DEL MAR PAGEO, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SPANISH RED CROSS AND PRESIDENT OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF ANDALUCIA

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has a transparent system, and advanced methods of cooperation. The branch of the Spanish Red Cross in Malaga is a pioneer in the fight against tuberculosis, hepatitis, HIV and drug addiction. Dr. Maria Del Mar Pageo noted that infectious diseases associated with stigma and discrimination have a huge impact on society. Therefore, all members of the International Movement must arm themselves with important tools to provide a comprehensive and decisive response, providing comprehensive care and quality of life to people affected by HIV, while adhering to the principles and taking action in an integrated and interdisciplinary spirit. As noted Dr. Maria Del Mar Pageo According to statistics, there are between 140,000 and 170,000 people with HIV in Spain. HIV/TB/AIDS and affects the most vulnerable segments of the population. The Spanish Red Cross is implementing early detection programs, especially in Central Asia, but the incidence of tuberculosis has been limited due to Covid-19. In recent years, among people aged 25 to 34, the number of sexually transmitted diseases has increased. The principles of non-discrimination contribute to the creation of an enabling environment. Stigma and non-discrimination are challenges facing the world today. The response to these challenges must be holistic, at the head of which it is necessary to put a person. At the end of his welcoming speech, Dr. Maria Del Mar Pageo noted that despite the many challenges, one should not stop and focus on the most vulnerable people, NSs must be effective and efficient.

STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREAS VON WEISSENBERG, HEAD OF THE REGIONAL HEALTH, DISASTER, CLIMATE AND CRISIS - IFRC REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE:

The Head of the Regional Health, Disaster, Climate and Crisis of IFRC Regional Office for Europe - Andreas Von Weissenberg noted that the number of new HIV infections increased by 40%, HIV deaths increased by 30%, TB decreased in some countries, but in In Central Asia, it is sustainable, which requires a lot of resources. The crisis in Ukraine has led to an increase in cases of multidrug-resistant TB due to a lack of medicines and lack of treatment, leading to stigmatisation. Mr. Andreas noted that the role of the International Movement is to provide an opportunity to assist the resistance, and advocacy on behalf of the affected people and their cohabitants. At the end of his speech, Mr. Andreas Von Weissenberg noted that the main task of everyone's care, prevention and support, and meetings should be to confirm commitments and ways to solve these problems.

DR. JULIA DEL AMO, DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF HIV, STI, VIRAL HEPATITIS AND TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH:

The Spanish Ministry of Health is collaborating in the elimination of AIDS and STIs. The goal is to reduce the number of infections, improve the quality of life of people with AIDS, hepatitis and infectious diseases. Relations between the SpRC and the Spanish government are constantly maintained. Under which a Management Group was established in October 2021 to replace the previous plan created in the 1990s.
This is a comprehensive plan. They share common risk factors and responses need to be integrated.
The goal is to restore global health by 2030. This goal should not be separated from treatment. Access to all types of treatment for undocumented persons should be provided. Dr. Julia Del Amo highlighted a multisectoral commitment: non-discrimination and health with AIDS.Exclusion of AIDS as a general indication of access to administrative or other work.There should be an intersectoral management of AIDS care, an intersectoral governing body for TB.Spain has two plans, one for 2020 and 2030. And a comprehensive plan for HIV and STIs by 2030. And on AIDS-related stigma and discrimination for the second half of 2023. WHO European is working to expand European support to end this stigma. . The Spanish government and the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will work hand in hand.

MS. LUCIA CHOCARRO, YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE, SPANISH RED CROSS.

The Youth Department of the SpRC would like young people to be leaders of the international movement, to contribute with their experience and work. Youth RC responds, acts and innovates, strives to improve children and youth. Ms. Lucia Chocarro, gave the example of youth in the fight against AIDS, about sensitising more than 23,000 people, increasing this result through social networks, where the youth are most active (9,000,000 people). Youth also serves the mental health field with slogans and campaigns, and volunteers continue to educate, innovate, learn from each other and build connections.

OVERVIEW OF TUBERCULOSIS, HIV AND DRUG USE IN EUROPE. IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19. PROFESSOR MICHEL KAZATCHKINE, SPECIAL ADVISOR TO THE WHO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE.

Prof. Michel Kazatchkine noted two main challenges affecting society: Covid-19 and the Ukrainian war due to socio-economic consequences. In connection with whatHIV has increased by 30% in the last 10 years: there are 10,000,000 HIV-infected people in the region. Drugs distributed in the USSR, where 1 in 7 infected with HIV and 1 in 3 with tuberculosis. In Lithuania, 1 out of 5 people is infected with HIV and 1 out of 10 with hepatitis C. The problem is also that the region is located on the transport road to Europe. Local production of synthetic drugs and stimulants has increased. Politics is outdated and doesn't know how to protect people. There is a harsh law based on two ideological approaches, some say that the drug problem is external, it comes from outside, while others are the consensus of politicians and believe that punishments should be tougher for weeks and they should be toughened. The punitive approach is harmful, it is contrary to human rights. The second characteristic is the increase in poor access to services, or only for a very small part of the region. Prof. Michel Kazatchkine noted the importance of effective costs. Poor access to evidence-based treatment. National programs have been involved, but there is widespread stigma around drugs, low investment, and the review is based on global foundations and organizations.
Massive restrictions on HIV testing. People unknowingly spreading the disease, leading to increased incidence of drug-resistant TB.Despite the remarkable resilience of health services, there are challenges in access, there are millions of displaced people.With respect to treatment there has been remarkable resilience of NGOs and NGO collaborations, the impact of the war goes beyond Ukraine, a health crisis is expected throughout Eastern Europe and adjacent areas.
The cost of living has increased with inflation, most of the population depends on remittances from migrants. The health care budget has shrunk, which will make it difficult to get medicine and help in the coming times. As a result, there will be an increase in mortality and morbidity. There is an increase in mental illness, a 25% increase in one year due to the increase in drugs, so mental illness should be a priority. Civil society plays a critical role in securing human rights, finding solutions together, and helping these countries build political commitment and make health a priority, because otherwise the most vulnerable will pay the highest price.

ACTIVE OUTREACH, HEALTH IN COMPLEX CONTEXTS. LASHA GOGUADZE, SENIOR IFRC OFFICER.

Mr. LashaGoguadze noted that the Covid-19 pandemic marked the beginning of many years of progress. Today, HIV/TB/Malaria is funded by the Global Fund. There is a list of countries eligible to apply for funding, you need to view the dates for applying for new grants. Mr. Lasha raised the issue of eradicating AIDS. To do this, it is necessary to train volunteers in more detail about HIV / AIDS, about their differences, about a safe environment. Also, the question was about the extent to which the instruments against drug addiction, TB, and

AIDS are used and delivered. The question was raised about the need to improve educational work. Pay more attention to forced displacement, labor migration, TB, especially in Uzbekistan/Poland. UN High Level Meeting on Tuberculosis. Guyana/Thailand. United Nations High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage.

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES

CH. DZHAKIPOV, PRESIDENT OF RED CRESCENT SOCIETY OF KYRGYZSTAN.DEVELOPMENT OF MULTISECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS AMONG KEY ACTORS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS

Mr. ChingizDzhakipov noted that the Red Crescent of the Kyrgyz Republic is working on 33 projects, 10 of which are in the field of healthcare (HIV, TB). Participation in platforms: help in emergency cases. It is a multisectoral society, and this has its advantages and disadvantages. Advantages: There are many sectors, which means that more societies are covered. AIDS partners in government provide more information, better positioning and leadership in the country. Disadvantages: too many partners working in different ways. But in any case, BUT must be active, because otherwise the work does not move forward.

DMITRY SHAUTSOU – SECRETARY GENERAL OF RED CROSS OF BELARUS. PRESENTATION ON VIDEO-CONTROLLED TREATMENT OF TB PATIENTS AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS WITH TUBERCULOSIS IN HOSPITALS.AIDS/TB/AIDS/TB/MALARIA.

Mr. Dmitry Shaustou spoke about the work of the Belarusian National Society, about the ongoing work on HIV, TB. They receive psychological support from social workers and volunteers. He also spoke about the use of an innovative method of treating tuberculosis video monitoring. The main idea is to participate in treatment through constant and close contact. Psychosocial support for positive people by volunteer groups. The Belarusian Red Cross has 7 volunteer groups with a total of 96 people, which cover 146 patients. Their job is to provide financial and psychological support and raise public awareness. These are patients with low adherence to treatment, who have concomitant diseases, hepatitis, diabetes mellitus... These are low-income people, the homeless, released from prison. Method of work: Regional coordinator (doctor, nurses); legal advisor;The goal is to inform the patient, give him advice and accompany him throughout the entire treatment process. In HIV prevention of drug addicts. A basic package of services is provided. 58 people tested positive. Objectives: to implement a portfolio of services among the most vulnerable groups of the population. Provide more opportunities for volunteers to provide psychological and psychosocial support. Strengthen volunteer capacity.

ARMENIA RC ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF TUBERCULOSIS AND COVID-19. KATARINA VARDANYAN, HEAD OF DEPARTMENT, ARMENIAN RC.

In the field of TB, the Armenian Red Cross promotes research activities, support for patients at the outpatient stage of treatment, reducing stigma and raising public awareness. All of them are patients of the healthcare system. Volunteers are present at all meetings with psychologists and social workers. Monitoring adherence to treatment and motivation to continue. Information sessions for patients and family members to involve them in the problems of their loved ones. After treatment is completed, a celebration is held to motivate other patients to do so. Telephone consultations are held with patients and daily with doctors and nurses, food packages are distributed. Low adherence to treatment was interrupted mainly due to migration. Information sessions with

doctors, patients and family members. Also information through social channels, special videos with TB patients. information campaigns are carried out jointly with the Ministry of Health.

RAHIMOV IIHOM, HEAD OF HEALTH DEPARTMENT.ACTIVITIES **OF TAJIKISTAN ON TB DURING COVID-19.**

In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the approach in Tajikistan changed, the reaction was to contain the virus in the territory. A committee has been organized to respond to the virus in order to inform all people across the country. The NS has played a key role in the fight against the coronavirus, the Government asked for help because the NS had direct access to people involved in key processes. Means of prevention. Educational work. Information in the centre. Joint work with the population. All resources were directed to patients with covid-19, as well as to patients with diabetes, etc. Raising public awareness, working with doctors, and families. Focusing on people with HIV, AT, Diabetes. The key group, doctors, suffered greatly (burnout), so psychological assistance was provided to doctors and health workers, and assistance was provided to family members of doctors. In the case of non-communicable diseases, medicines, support, refrigerators, blood pressure monitors were provided. Regarding HIV, a very sensitive topic due to the stigma associated with it, they were given money through an online platform, asking what needs to be covered. The disadvantage of this is that not all people have access to the platform, they do not have the Internet, they do not have a phone, so doctors will be of great help. About 2,800 families received food. We strengthened the farm with sewing machines for up to 19 people, women with tuberculosis, which helped them earn money. Financial assistance to 300 people. Patients with resistant TB received constant care. Vaccination is a key factor for these patients. The phone was used for consultations.

DAY 2

DR. TONKA VARLEVA, BULGARIA RC.HIV AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS.

The philosophy of the Bulgarian Red Cross project is to work with young people to get the right information about sexual care, as they are the main target group for surveillance of sexual transmission, therefore disease prevention activities have been carried out. In this project, a case study was carried out, some young people were asked how best to reach them on this issue, they answered, for example, that information shared on social networks helps, or that information provided by well-known influencers also helps young people people are more interested in this topic.

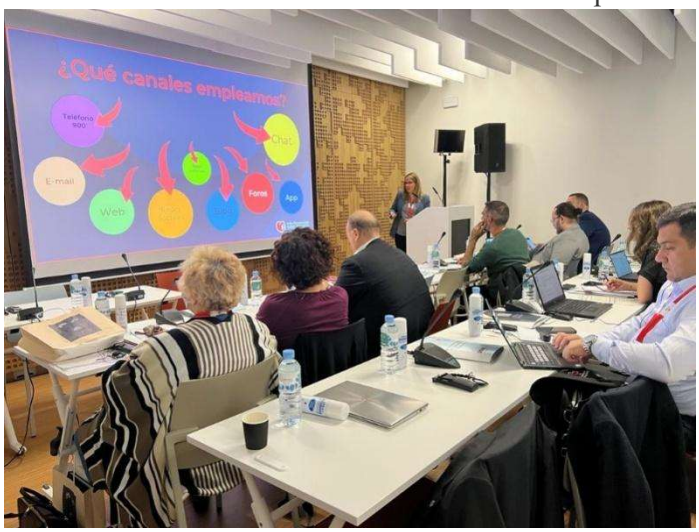
MEET, TEST AND TREAT THE MOST VULNERABLE (VILLA MARAINI FOUNDATION) HIV/HCV EARLY SCREENING STRATEGY: MAURO PATTI

They take a more humanitarian approach and advocate for drug users to have access to public health and harm reduction programs, as well as provide alternative measures in prison. At the Villa Maraini Foundation, harm reduction programs include outreach activities, provision of clean needles and condoms, HIV/HCV counselling, quick testing, and facilitating a network among the Red Cross and Peers. They involve Red Cross volunteers in their activities and also conduct training.

The aim is to investigate the actual prevalence of HIV/HCV among hard to reach populations and to improve access to health services and treatment in order to save lives of those who are more marginalised. The method used is meet-test-treat; in accordance with harm reduction principles, public testing and awareness events are conducted, pre- and post-test counselling is provided, and treatment is provided if positive. The role of RCRC volunteers in approaching the vulnerable population is vital and very effective. The best prevention is to provide free and anonymous quick testing and to build a strong linkage to care for those in need.

INFO PREVENTION CHANEL: HIV, STIS, TB - FÁTIMA CABELLO, SPANISH RED CROSS

Ms. Fatima Cabello spoke about the multi-channel information and prevention service for HIV-AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The service is anonymous, confidential, and free of charge, and is staffed by specialists in HIV and other STIs. It is intended for anyone who has questions or needs more complete and detailed information about HIV/AIDS and other STIs. What does the service solve? HIV, STIs and tuberculosis. What channels are used? Attention on the phone and communication through chat, forums and social networks.



Goals:

- Raise awareness and educate using respectful language to combat discrimination and stigma associated with HIV and AIDS.
- Contribute to the prevention and early detection of infection.
- Provide emotional support to people affected by HIV and AIDS who need it and refer them to specialized psychosocial support groups of the Red Cross territorial network.
- Encourage a responsible attitude to avoid risky behaviour that prevents transmission of the virus, informing about the different modes of transmission.

Advantages:

- It's free
- It is available from Monday to Sunday
- In addition to Spain, it also covers Latin American countries.

- He uses sensitive and inclusive language
- There is a great team of professionals here.

This service continues to grow more and more, since its launch it has already reached many people, and periodically publishes information on all platforms where they are located.

PREVENTION THE KEY ROLE OF FAMILIES, VILLA MARAINI, ANNA MARIA RUGGERINI

Mrs. Anna Maria Ruggerini spoke about Villa Maraini's work with families of drug addicts. On the importance of involving family members in the fight against drug addiction, which facilitates the path of recovery.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF HEPATITIS: MARIA KOURKOULAKOU

Ms. Maria spoke about the activities of the Hellenik National Society in the field of hepatitis. The goal of the hepatitis project was to inform people about hepatitis and hepatitis prevention. And the main challenge for hepatitis C was to reduce the number of deaths.

National Society in the field of HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis prevention: OlesiaNazarova and Jelena Saveljeva, Russian CR

Programs for the prevention of HIV infection and tuberculosis are aimed at raising awareness of the forms of infection and the need for timely treatment. The Russian Red Cross carries out systematic work with the population and provides assistance to socially vulnerable categories of citizens. The implementation of health programs is aimed at raising awareness of the problems of primary and secondary prevention and also prevention of COVID to those who, for example, have already had, but still have after-effects such as breathing.
The program has a mutual support of HIV patients so that each one feels that he/she is not alone, and that what he/she is going through is also experienced by someone else. There is also a professional psychologist who helps the patients, and a group of volunteers who provide some necessary services.
Prevention is a priority for the program. Workshops and trainings are also held
Prevention of HIV infection and tuberculosis:
- Increasing the availability of HIV testing among the population.
- Patient schools and peer support groups for people living with HIV and tuberculosis.

DAY 3

FINANCIAL AND ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE ERNA SECRETARIAT.
Report for 2019-2022, was presented by AidaiBakasheva, and discussed with the present National Societies.

Miscellaneous:

1. Consideration was given to including a long-term partner of the ERNA network, the Villa Maraina Foundation, as a full member of the ERNA network with the right to vote at the ERNA General Meeting. All those present noted the importance of this partner in the development of the network and voted unanimously, with subsequent amendments to the ERNA ToR
2. In connection with the end of the mandate of the President of the ERNA Network - Dr. Massimo Barra was unanimously nominated as Honorary President of the ERNA Network, with subsequent amendments to the ERNA ToR.

ELECTIONS

1. **Elections were held as the ERNA Secretariat. Candidates for the Secretariat for 2023-2025: National Societies of the Republic of Belarus and the Kyrgyz Republic. The voting was by secret ballot. Voted by 16 National Societies and 1 vote by Villa Maraini. 12 votes for the NGO of Kyrgyzstan, 3 for Belarus, 2 abstentions.**
2. **Elections for the position of the President of ERNA were held. By unanimous decision of those present, Mr. Mauro Patti was elected as the new President of the ERNA Network.**
3. **Mr. Uldis Vice-President of ERNA, from the hosting NS of the ERNA Secretariat, Mr. Marat Kachkynbekov was also elected Vice-President of ERNA.**

FUTURE OF THE ERNA NETWORK:

Open discussion among all participants. Ideas on how to improve the effectiveness of the network and strengthen the members' commitment.Since 1997, they meet in Villa Maraini and form the ERNA network, discussing health issues, such as HIV, viral hepatitis, tuberculosis or addictions.In 2015, millions of people were affected, with viral hepatitis, in terms of the disease itself and in the acquisition of treatments, which were not very accessible.For all these reasons, the need to fight for the right to health and social inclusion, as a central focus, is valued.

ERNA'S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP, RESOURCE MOBILIZATION, CAPACITY BUILDING, FUTURE STEPS:

Mauro Patti, the newly elected President of ERNA, begins his presentation by saying that a new ERNA needs to be shaped, especially after everything that has happened with the pandemic, in order to improve the connection of the NSs, the cooperation and the ownership.

The protection of humanity is being sought, with a renewed commitment addressed to the ERNA network from the National Societies of Europe and Central Asia, to reach the most vulnerable with active participation and responsibility to address STIs and substance abuse in our communities.

Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers need to be involved in these activities to be carried out to reach and facilitate the access to treatment to those more in needs, as reported by the Malaga Declaration, that was read and approved unanimously in the Assembly.
All the working groups discussion and outcomes become the basis of the final Statement, that needs to be addressed to ERNA NSs leadership and with the Regional IFRC Director. .

CLOSING OF THE MEETING

Mr. Mauro Patti, ERNA President welcomed and expressed his deep gratitude to the Spanish Red Cross and to its National Coordinator, Tony Bruel for hosting the 21st ERNA General Meeting, considered a successfull meeting and organization. He stressed the importance of the strategic involvement of the Spanish Red Cross in ERNA for its wide experience in addressing STIs and substance abuse problems. Concluded that the 3 days of the meeting were very fruitful and inspiring. Gratitutde were expressed to the big leadership and inspiring role of Dr. Massimo Barra, to the present National Societies, partner organizations, and all participants of the meeting for the active contribution to keep strenghetning the network.