

NEWSLETTER

2024 -25



**European Red Cross and Red Crescent
Network on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis,
Hepatitis and Substance Abuse**



ERNA

erna.secretariat@gmail.com
erna.redcrossredcrescent.com
FB: @ernanetwork

MISSION OF THE NETWORK:



- To encourage participation and to help strengthen RCRC National Societies' operational capacity to combat HIV/AIDS, TB, Hepatitis, substance abuse and social vulnerabilities by gradually developing activities at the community level, particularly in the areas of prevention, care, treatment, harm reduction, psychosocial support, reduction of stigma and discrimination and other community activities targeted at the most vulnerable people.
- To help NS's advocate for a dignified life of people affected by HIV, Viral Hepatitis, TB and/or drug disorders in order to be treated with compassion and in facilitating the access to treatment and recovery

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

- To strengthen and promote the exchange of experiences, information and best practices among member NSs, with other stakeholders and NSs from other regions.
- To promote the setting up of (innovative) new initiatives and to reproduce them in other NSs by adapting them to the need of local beneficiaries.
- To promote and facilitate concerted collaborative actions in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, TB and other communicable diseases with UN agencies, EU, non-governmental organizations, Global Fund (to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria), other international and national organizations and with existing Federation's Networks.
- To involve PLWHA and other vulnerable groups in ERNA work at all levels
- To give technical support and assistance to member NSs (upon expressed need) in areas where a gap in knowledge and skill exists with motivation and trainings organization, or by enlarging their operational capabilities.

Dear colleagues and partners,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the dedication and perseverance of our Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, volunteers, and staff who continue to protect health and dignity in the face of growing challenges in our Region.



Across Europe and Central Asia, communities affected by HIV, viral Hepatitis, Tuberculosis, and substance use disorders continue to suffer from neglect, stigma, and systemic barriers. Yet our Red Cross and Red Crescent teams remain a vital humanitarian presence, often reaching those whom no one else can.

Since the ERNA General Meeting in Málaga in 2022, our network has continued to demonstrate the power of coordinated community action through prevention campaigns, harm reduction initiatives, testing, and advocacy for inclusive, compassionate, and evidence-based responses. However, one of our greatest challenges today lies in advocacy: how can ERNA and its members more effectively influence policy and practice within our own National Societies, across the IFRC, and externally with governments, specialized NGOs, and communities? How can we better leverage our unique presence and the power of our emblem to ensure equitable access to health and social services?

We must position ERNA as a strategic group for our RCRC community and externally as a strategic partner, one that bridges humanitarian service with public health systems and supports those working daily with affected communities to alleviate suffering and uphold human dignity side by side!

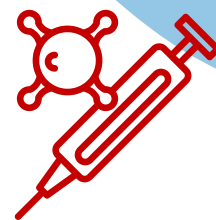
Looking ahead, the XXII ERNA General Meeting in 2025 will be a decisive moment to renew our collective vision and action. Together, we will shape the new ERNA Strategy, aimed at strengthening community-based health responses, enhancing regional coordination, and reaffirming our auxiliary role in public health and social inclusion also on the matters of HIV, Viral Hepatitis, TB and substance abuse. This meeting will also provide an interactive space to explore how our work intersects with broader humanitarian priorities such as mental health, migration, homelessness, and other emerging health and social risks.

ERNA remains, above all, among the most popular and active networks within the Movement. A regional RCRC platform for solidarity and expertise, with a specific focus on those health issues that are too often overlooked, due many emergencies, limited resources, or the persistent stigma surrounding them. Overcoming internal and external obstacles is both our moral and strategic duty. By uniting our experiences and voices, we can continue to inspire our leadership, influence national and local policies, build stronger partnerships, and ensure that those most at risk are no longer left behind.

I look forward to continuing our joint efforts toward the General Meeting 2025.

Mauro Patti

President of ERNA



KEY GLOBAL FIGURES

Indicator	Estimate (end of 2024)
People living with HIV (PLHIV)	~ 40.8 million (range 37.0–45.6 million)
New HIV infections (annual)	~ 1.3 million (range 1.0–1.7 million)
AIDS-related deaths (annual)	~ 630,000 (range 490,000–820,000)
People receiving ART (antiretroviral therapy)	~ 31.6 million — about 77% of all PLHIV
People aware of their HIV status	~ 87%
People with suppressed viral load	~ 73% of all PLHIV

(SOURCES: WHO HIV DATA, UNAIDS FACT SHEET)

DEMOGRAPHICS & KEY INSIGHTS

~1.4 MILLION CHILDREN (0–14 YEARS) ARE LIVING WITH HIV. WOMEN AND GIRLS REPRESENT ABOUT 53% OF ALL PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV GLOBALLY. SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA REMAINS THE MOST AFFECTED REGION, ACCOUNTING FOR NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF ALL PLHIV.

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

THE GLOBAL TARGET FOR 2025 IS TO REDUCE NEW INFECTIONS TO BELOW 370,000 PER YEAR, BUT CURRENT NUMBERS REMAIN MUCH HIGHER.

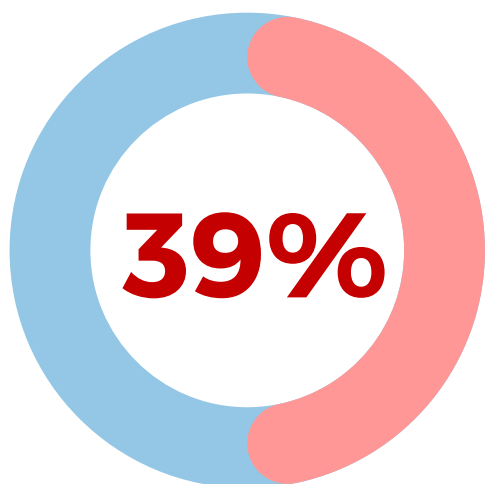
WHILE THE MAJORITY KNOW THEIR HIV STATUS AND ARE ON TREATMENT, MILLIONS STILL DO NOT KNOW THEY ARE LIVING WITH HIV OR LACK ACCESS TO ART.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS REMAIN THE MOST UNDERSERVED GROUPS, WITH SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER TREATMENT COVERAGE AND HIGHER VULNERABILITY IN LOW-RESOURCE SETTINGS.

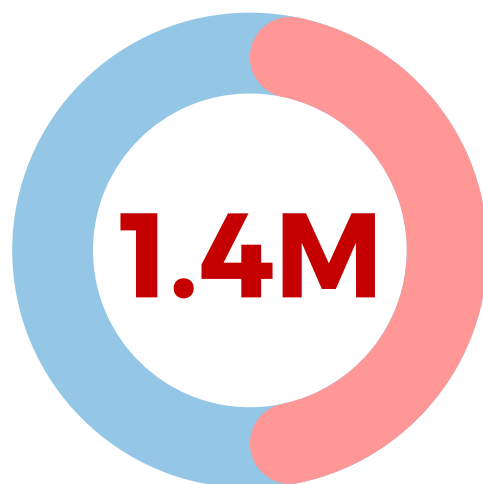
GLOBAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS (AS OF 2024)

11.000.000M

LIVING WITH HEPATITIS C



LIVING WITH HIV



YOUTH HIV: GLOBAL DATA

Age group

Adolescents 10-19 years old

Young people 15-24 years old

New infections among youth
(15-24)

Impact / risk

Key Facts

Approx 1.57 million [range ~1.2-2.0 million] adolescents aged 10-19 are living with HIV globally in 2024. ([UNICEF DATA](#))

Of the 3.2 million [~2.2-4.1 million] people in this age range living with HIV, about 59% (~1.9 million) are receiving antiretroviral therapy in 2024. ([UNICEF DATA](#))

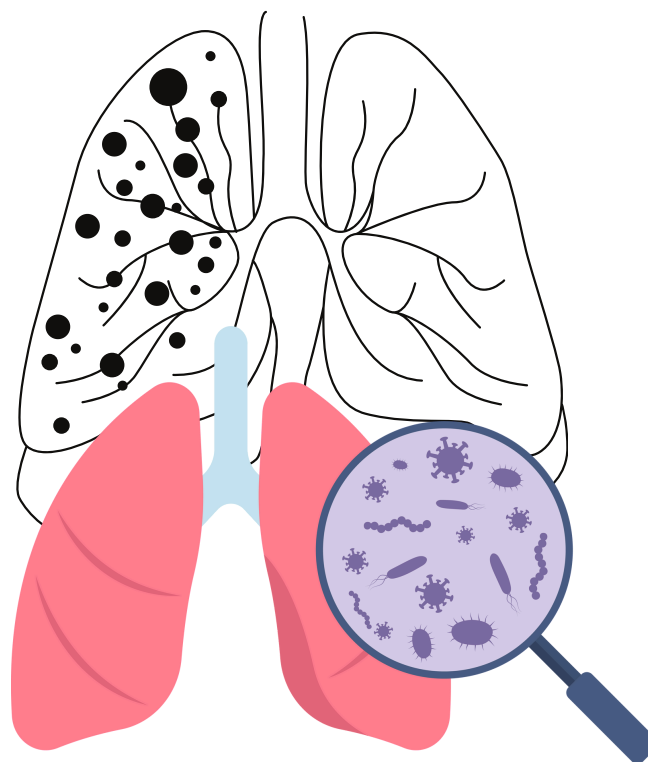
In 2024 alone, ~ 370,000 [~250,000-490,000] young people aged 15-24 acquired HIV. Of those, ~145,000 [37,000-270,000] were adolescents 15-19 years old. ([UNICEF DATA](#))

Adolescent girls and young women (15-24) are disproportionately affected. ([PMNCH](#))

TB IN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA: KEY DATA AND TRENDS

INCIDENCE / NEW & RELAPSE CASES

- AS OF 2023-2024, THE WHO EUROPEAN REGION (WHICH COVERS EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA) REPORTED OVER 172,000 PEOPLE WITH NEW AND RELAPSE TB.
- IN THE EU/EEA (29 COUNTRIES) FOR 2023: 38,993 CASES, A NOTIFICATION RATE OF 8.6 PER 100,000 POPULATION.
- AMONG CHILDREN UNDER 15: IN 2023 MORE THAN 7,500 TB CASES IN THE REGION, REPRESENTING A ~10% INCREASE COMPARED TO 2022.
- INCIDENCE RATE IN “EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA (EXCLUDING HIGH INCOME)” IS SHOWN IN WORLD BANK DATA BUT SPECIFIC NUMBERS VARY BY COUNTRY.

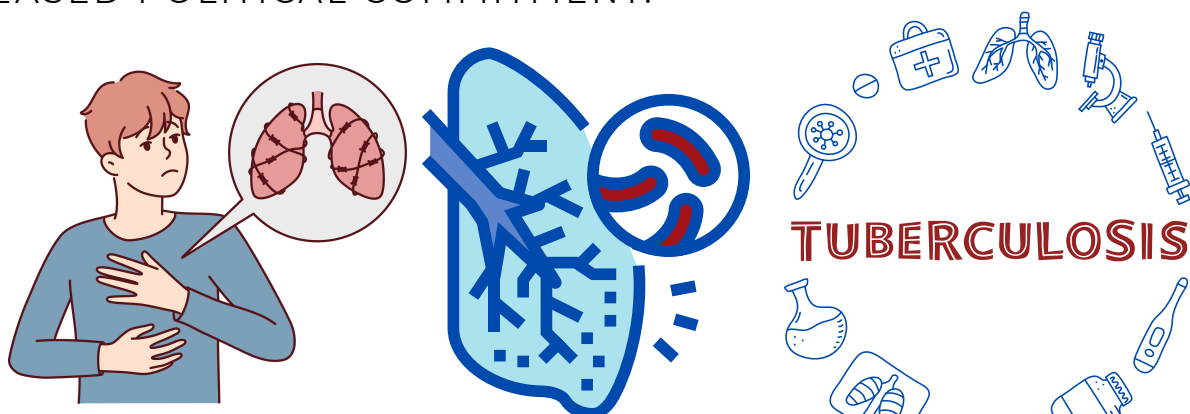


TRENDS & REGIONAL INSIGHTS

- **PROGRESS IS UNEVEN:** WHILE MANY WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ARE MAKING GOOD HEADWAY TOWARDS ELIMINATION, SEVERAL COUNTRIES IN EASTERN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA REMAIN HIGH-BURDEN FOR TB AND ESPECIALLY FOR DRUG-RESISTANT TB.
- THE REGION'S BURDEN IS STABLE OR EVEN INCREASING IN SOME COHORTS (E.G., CHILDREN UNDER 15). THE INCREASE IN CHILD TB CASES IS A “WAKE-UP CALL”.
- **IN CENTRAL ASIA:** FOUR OF THE FIVE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES RANK AMONG THE TOP 30 HIGH-BURDEN DR-TB COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE.

MAJOR REGIONAL CHALLENGES

- **HIGH PROPORTION OF DRUG-RESISTANT TB:** PARTICULARLY IN EECA, MDR/XDR TB REMAINS A MAJOR BARRIER.
- **GAP IN TREATMENT OUTCOMES:** SUCCESS RATES ARE WELL BELOW THE GLOBAL TARGET OF 90% – THE REGION-WIDE ~67-77% FOR FIRST-LINE TB AND ~56-60% FOR MDR-TB HIGHLIGHT THE PROBLEM.
- **UNDER-DETECTION AND REPORTING:** THE RESURGENCE IN CHILD CASES AND THE LARGE SHARE OF DR-TB SUGGEST GAPS IN SCREENING, DIAGNOSIS AND FOLLOW-UP.
- **RESOURCE & HEALTH SYSTEM CONSTRAINTS:** SOME COUNTRIES (ESPECIALLY CENTRAL ASIA / EECA) FACE LIMITED ACCESS TO NEWER DIAGNOSTICS, SHORTER AND MORE EFFECTIVE DR-TB REGIMENS, AND WEAKER HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE.
- **MIGRATION, CROSS-BORDER ISSUES & CONFLICT:** THESE FACTORS COMPLICATE TB CONTROL, ESPECIALLY IN EASTERN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA. THE WHO EUROPE OFFICE HAS CALLED FOR INCREASED POLITICAL COMMITMENT.



QUICK BULLET SUMMARY

- 172 000+ NEW/RELAPSE TB CASES IN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA IN 2023.
- EU/EEA: **38,993** CASES IN 2023 → 8.6 PER 100,000 NOTIFICATION RATE.
- CHILDREN (<15): **>7,500** CASES IN 2023 (+10% VS 2022) → ALARMING TREND.
- TREATMENT SUCCESS: **~68%** IN EU/EEA, **~77%** ELSEWHERE IN REGION; MDR-TB SUCCESS **~60%** REGION-WIDE.
- **24%** OF GLOBAL MDR/RR-TB BURDEN LIES IN EECA; STILL VERY HIGH IN CENTRAL ASIA.
- KEY CHALLENGES: DRUG RESISTANCE, SUB-OPTIMAL OUTCOMES, DETECTION GAPS, AND RESOURCE/HEALTH SYSTEM FRAGILITY.
- IT'S URGENT TO INCREASE POLITICAL COMMITMENT.



Albanian Red Cross



- During World AIDS Day 2024, ARC branches across the country organized informational stands in public places (squares, markets, health centers), distributed brochures and condoms, and held mobile sensitization events in remote municipalities.
- Youth volunteers conducted peer education sessions in high schools and universities focusing on HIV prevention, stigma reduction, and referrals to voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) centers.
- ARC also liaised with the Ministry of Health and local NGOs to promote rapid HIV testing campaigns in regional health facilities, providing volunteers to assist with logistics and mobilization

COVERAGE: REACHING THOUSANDS ACROSS MUNICIPALITIES IN 2024.



ÖSTERREICHISCHES
ROTES KREUZ

AUSTRIAN RED CROSS

Aus Liebe zum Menschen.

Austrian Red Cross (ÖRK)

- In 2024, ÖRK continued to embed HIV, sexual health, and stigma topics within its volunteer training curricula and youth engagement programs.
 - During European Testing Week 2024, several Red Cross district offices hosted free or subsidized rapid HIV / STI testing in coordination with local AIDS associations (e.g. AIDS-Hilfe).
 - ÖRK youth branches held awareness workshops and public info sessions in schools and community centers, combining interactive formats (quizzes, testimonials, Q&A) to engage adolescents.
-





Azerbaijan Red Crescent

EVENT DEDICATED TO WORLD TB DAY

A conference dedicated to World Tuberculosis Day (March 24) was held at the Research Institute of Pulmonary Diseases of the Ministry of Health of Azerbaijan. The event aimed to raise awareness and strengthen collaboration between government and non-governmental organizations in combating tuberculosis.

On March 30, with the support of the Global Fund, the conference brought together key stakeholders to discuss early detection of tuberculosis, modern diagnostic and treatment methods, and global best practices in preventing the spread of the disease. Participants also reviewed national legislation and the current TB situation in Azerbaijan.

Video messages from Lucica Ditiu, Executive Director of the Stop TB Partnership, and Ogtay Gozalov, WHO Tuberculosis Specialist, were presented to the attendees. The role of the NGO Coalition of Azerbaijan to Fight TB, of which the Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society (AzRCS) is an active member, was particularly highlighted. The outcomes of joint initiatives implemented within this cooperation framework were also shared.

In his address, Mr. G. Askerzade, President of the AzRCS, emphasized the valuable experience and expertise of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the AzRCS in TB prevention and control efforts.

Volunteer Engagement Activities

As part of the World TB Day campaign, AzRCS volunteers conducted educational sessions to raise awareness about tuberculosis, its transmission routes, and to address issues of discrimination and stigma faced by people affected by TB.





Bulgarian Red Cross

NATIONAL ANTI-AIDS CAMPAIGN IN 2024 IN BULGARIA

The Ministry of Health, in partnership with the National Center for Public Health and Analysis, the regional health inspectorates and the Bulgarian Red Cross, annually implements a National ANTI-AIDS Campaign. It takes place in four stages: the beginning is on December 1 - World AIDS Day; the second stage is February 14 - Valentine's Day; the third stage is on the third Sunday of May, when we commemorate the Day of empathy with those affected by HIV/AIDS, the last stage is the Summer ANTI-AIDS Campaign in August. The goal of the Campaign, which has been implemented since 1992 and is coordinated by the Ministry of Health, is to keep society's attention on the AIDS problem and to raise awareness about the methods of transmission and prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. The Bulgarian Red Cross and the Bulgarian Red Cross Youth have been partners of the Ministry of Health in the implementation of the Campaign since its inception in 1992. Over the years, a number of initiatives have been implemented to mark the various stages - lectures; presentations; demonstrations; discussions; games; quizzes; competitions; promotion of voluntary and anonymous HIV counseling and testing (including with mobile medical units and in the field), together with the regional health inspectorates; distribution of health-educational materials; screening of films, etc.



- The celebration of February 14 - Valentine's Day - is a traditional activity of the Bulgarian Red Cross Youth, as part of the National ANTI-AIDS Campaign, through which volunteers once again engaged the attention of their peers by promoting safe sexual behavior. The campaign was held in 2024 under the motto "Responsibility is sexy. Use a condom.". In connection with the implementation of the activities, a video was made with the participation of Alexander Sano - a famous Bulgarian artist, which was distributed through the media and social networks, and postcards and posters were also printed. The goal was to raise awareness among young people and people at risk about the methods of transmission and protection from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. The activities of the 19 medical offices for free and anonymous HIV counseling and testing at the regional health inspectorates operating in the country were also promoted. In these offices, pre-test and post-test consultations and tests are carried out by trained medical specialists throughout the year.



- HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaigns in 2024
- In 2024, Bulgaria marked the International Day of Empathy with People Affected by HIV/AIDS under the motto "We Remember! We Accept! We Support!". Initiated in 1983 and observed in Bulgaria since 1992, the campaign aims to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and promote access to HIV treatment and care. On May 19, candlelight vigils were held in all 28 regional cities, with tea lights arranged in the shape of a red ribbon. Bulgarian Red Cross Youth volunteers actively participated in these events.
- The Summer ANTI-AIDS Campaign (August 5–12) promoted HIV prevention, safe sexual behavior, and free anonymous testing under the slogan "Safe Vacation." Popular influencer Emil Conrad served as the campaign's ambassador.
- For World AIDS Day (December 1), the campaign ran under the motto "Pass on – knowledge, not the virus." The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with partners including the Bulgarian Red Cross Youth, organized nationwide activities emphasizing prevention, testing, and free access to modern antiretroviral therapy.
- In 2024, 1,362 volunteers were trained on HIV prevention, addictions, and healthy lifestyles, reaching 132,746 people through 243 health campaigns.
- As of November 15, 2024, a total of 4,540 people have been registered with HIV infection in Bulgaria.





Georgian Red Cross

Georgia Red Cross Society: Combating HIV/AIDS and Promoting Public Health Awareness

In 2024, the Georgia Red Cross Society (GRCS) continued its long-standing efforts to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and combat related stigma under the partnership with the Italian Red Cross. While awaiting approval for the next phase of the project (submitted in January 2024), GRCS has sustained its awareness activities on a voluntary basis.



A dedicated network of trained volunteer trainers and peer educators continues to deliver key information on the prevention, transmission, diagnosis, and treatment of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), hepatitis B and C, and sexually transmitted infections. The team also raises awareness about the risks of drug use, reaching out to both high-risk groups and the general public nationwide.

Despite the challenging circumstances caused by political tensions and restrictions on public gatherings in Georgia since March 2024, GRCS successfully adapted its approach by conducting remote sessions and small in-person meetings with beneficiaries, staff, and volunteers—including displaced persons from Ukraine.

In total, around 7,000 people were directly reached through educational sessions:

- 300 people who inject drugs (PWIDs)
- 100 people living with HIV/AIDS (including Ukrainian migrants)
- 400 GRCS staff and volunteers
- 6,000 members of the general public, primarily youth

Through national awareness campaigns marking World TB Day, the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, and World AIDS Day, an estimated 22,000 people were reached indirectly.

The GRCS remains committed to promoting health, reducing stigma, and strengthening community resilience through inclusive and accessible public health education.



Hellenic Red Cross

Hellenic Red Cross: Mobile Health Team Supporting Vulnerable Populations in Greece

In 2024, the Mobile Health Team (MHT) of the Hellenic Red Cross (HRC) continued to provide vital primary health care services to vulnerable population groups — including migrants, refugees, unaccompanied minors, displaced persons, Roma communities, and vulnerable host populations — across Athens and other regions of Greece.

Throughout the year, MHT offered comprehensive medical and nursing services such as:

- Health screenings and vaccination campaigns for unaccompanied minors
- Medical, nursing, and gynecological consultations
- Management of non-communicable and communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS and TB
- Mental Health First Aid and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) management
- Health education, hygiene promotion, and outreach activities in urban and island areas



In collaboration with 22 accommodation structures for unaccompanied minors in Athens, the MHT carried out targeted interventions focusing on TB and HIV/AIDS prevention:

- Tuberculosis screening: 189 Mantoux skin tests administered
- HIV/HCV/HBsAg/Syphilis screening: 50 rapid combo tests conducted

To complement the medical activities, the team delivered 74 health education sessions for 547 unaccompanied minors, covering:

- Sexual and reproductive health
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Immunization and community awareness

In addition, during World Health Day, the MHT held an awareness campaign at Syntagma Square, engaging 106 participants with information materials on communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Through these continuous efforts, the Hellenic Red Cross demonstrates its steadfast commitment to health promotion, disease prevention, and inclusive humanitarian response — ensuring access to healthcare and education for all.



Croce Rossa Italiana

Italian Red Cross

Italian Red Cross: Expanding LoveRED Points for HIV Prevention and Early Detection

In 2024, the Italian Red Cross (Croce Rossa Italiana, ItRC) continued its national LoveRED Point initiative, a cornerstone program dedicated to HIV prevention, early testing, and awareness. The initiative supports the Red Cross' strategic objective of reaching an increasing number of vulnerable people through accessible and community-based services.

LoveRED Point Network

Launched in 2023, the LoveRED project established a nationwide network of 76 community points focused on HIV prevention, education, and counselling.

Each LoveRED Point provides:

- Information sessions on HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Individual and group counselling on testing and prevention
- Referrals for free and confidential HIV testing
- Distribution of educational materials and condoms

The initiative aims to reduce stigma, promote responsible health behaviors, and facilitate early diagnosis, particularly among young people and vulnerable populations.

Achievements in 2024

During the reporting period (1 December 2023 – 30 November 2024), LoveRED Points across Italy reached 769 beneficiaries.

Monitoring data shows that almost 50% of participants who received HIV counselling (368 people) expressed a willingness to undergo HIV testing, demonstrating strong engagement and growing awareness of personal health.

These activities are carried out by trained volunteers and local Red Cross branches in collaboration with public health services, local authorities, and youth organizations.

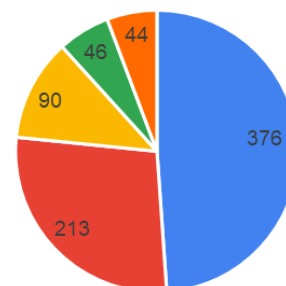
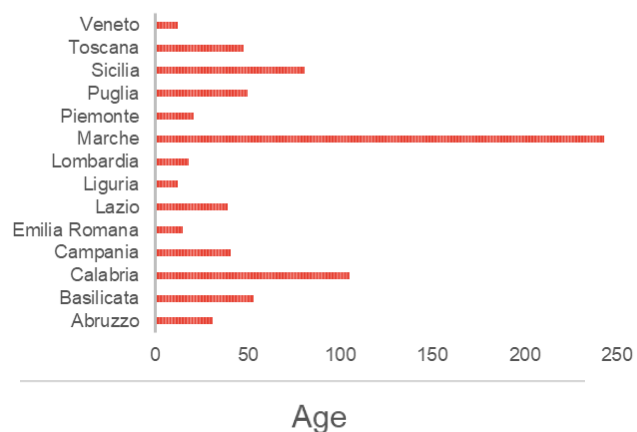
A Volunteer-Driven Approach to Prevention

LoveRED emphasizes peer-to-peer education and youth participation, ensuring that prevention messages are accessible, inclusive, and community-oriented.

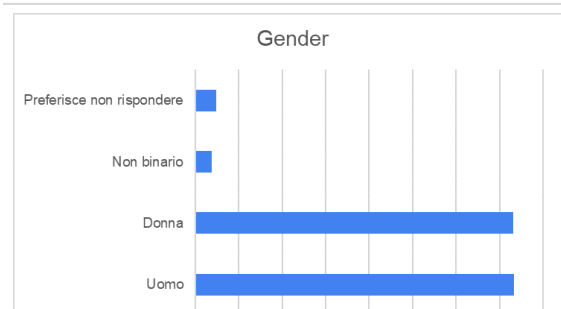
Volunteers are trained to lead interactive workshops, outreach sessions, and awareness campaigns—helping normalize conversations about sexual health and testing.

Through the expansion of LoveRED Points and continuous volunteer engagement, the Italian Red Cross reaffirms its role as a national leader in HIV prevention and community health promotion—supporting the ERNA network's shared mission of health, dignity, and zero discrimination.

BENEFICIARI RAGGIUNTI



■ 18 - 24 ■ 25 - 29 ■ 30 - 39 ■ 40 - 49 ■ ≥ 50



Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan: Strengthening TB Care and Mental Health Support

In 2024, the Red Crescent Society of the Kyrgyz Republic (RCSK), with the support of USAID, continued implementing the project “Support for TB Patients”, aimed at improving treatment adherence, reducing stigma, and expanding psychosocial support for people affected by tuberculosis (TB) across Naryn, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken regions.



Comprehensive TB Support and Case Management

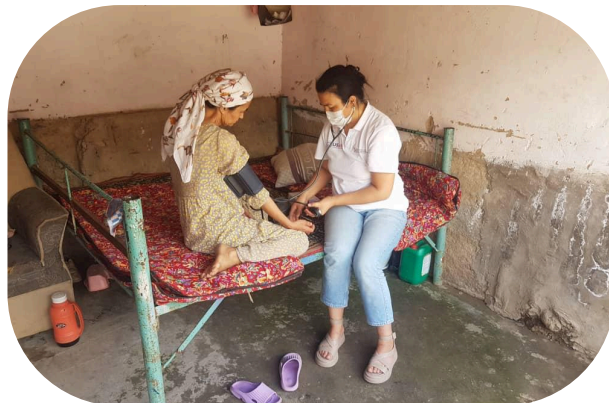
Throughout 2024, RCSK provided social and medical support to 390 TB patients, including those who had interrupted, refused, or were at risk of discontinuing treatment. Special attention was given to children — 96 received supervision and care, with 64 successfully completing treatment. Each patient received personalized case management, medication delivery, psychosocial counseling, and social support.

Through collaboration with local health authorities, 640 contacts of TB patients were screened, resulting in 21 new TB cases detected. Outreach sessions (379 total) were conducted to reduce stigma among communities and healthcare workers, and 113 patients completed the “Zhenil Dem AI” (“Breathe Easy”) educational program.

Research on Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs

A large-scale study, conducted between July and September 2024, assessed the mental health and psychosocial needs of TB patients. The survey involved 456 participants, including patients, healthcare providers, and family members.

The results revealed that nearly 40% of patients experience anxiety or depression, primarily due to long treatment duration, social isolation, and stigma. Over 70% reported self-stigma, including fear of rejection or shame. Most patients expressed a strong need for emotional support, clear information about treatment, and access to professional psychological counseling.



Capacity Building and Advocacy

To enhance sustainability, RCSK conducted 861 mentoring visits to primary healthcare organizations and trained 201 local officials on socially responsive budgeting. As a result, 406 TB patients received financial assistance from local governments totaling 1 million KGS. The project also launched a video campaign on stigma and discrimination against women with TB and published 12 monthly newsletters to share updates and best practices.



Sharing Lessons and Results

In August and September 2024, RCSK held a “Lessons Learned Workshop” and a final USAID project conference in Bishkek, bringing together over 100 participants from government, healthcare, and partner organizations. These events highlighted five years of achievements, identified successful approaches, and developed recommendations to strengthen future TB programs in Kyrgyzstan.



Latvian Red Cross

Latvian Red Cross: Promoting Health and Fighting Infectious Diseases Nationwide

In **2024**, the Latvian Red Cross (LRC) continued its strong commitment to public health promotion, focusing on the prevention of tuberculosis (TB), hepatitis, and HIV/AIDS through accessible testing, education, and community outreach.

Expanding Access to Testing and Health Consultations

Throughout the year, the LRC operated 10 Health Rooms across the country, providing essential health services to the population.

- 1,684 visits were recorded, with residents receiving consultations, health checks, and rapid tests for HIV, hepatitis, and syphilis.
- At HIV Prevention Points, 3,130 tests were performed for 803 unique visitors during 855 total visits.

These centers continue to serve as safe, stigma-free spaces where individuals can seek confidential advice and access prevention services.

World AIDS Day: Youth Engagement and Awareness

On December 1 (World AIDS Day), LRC youth volunteers across regions led creative and compassionate awareness activities.

In Balvi, young volunteers held a candlelit memorial event on the First Advent evening, creating a symbolic tribute to people affected by HIV/AIDS. They also distributed educational brochures and set up an information box to promote awareness among local youth.

In Rēzekne, the local branch organized a public outreach event at the “Maxima” store, featuring an interactive quiz, educational displays, and a talk with nurse Olga Elenska, an HIV/AIDS specialist. Participants tested their knowledge, won small prizes, and received accurate information about HIV prevention and care.



Commitment to Health and Solidarity

Through these initiatives, the Latvian Red Cross continues to foster awareness, empathy, and responsibility in communities nationwide.

By empowering youth, partnering with local institutions, and prioritizing health education, LRC demonstrates that only together can we truly make a lasting impact in the fight against infectious diseases.



World Tuberculosis Day: Free Lung Screenings in Riga

To mark World Tuberculosis Day (March 24), the LRC organized a public health screening event in Riga. Residents were invited to undergo free chest X-ray examinations and sputum testing to promote early detection of TB.

A total of 23 people were screened at the Latvian RC Health Room on Sarlotes Street 1B.

The activity was organized in partnership with Health Center 4, the Latvian Tuberculosis Association, Riga East University Hospital, and the Riga City Council Welfare Department.

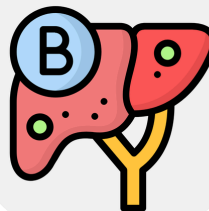
HIV



851

tests conducted
5 tests
predominantly
positive

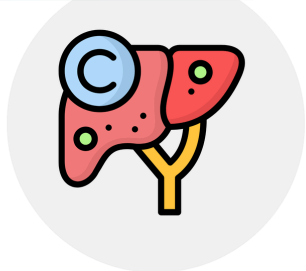
Hepatitis B



787

tests conducted
3 tests
predominantly
positive

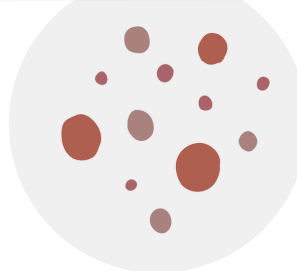
Hepatitis C



845

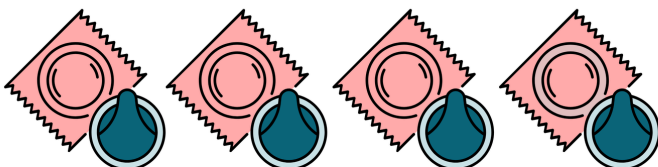
tests conducted
14 tests
predominantly
positive

Syphilis



647

tests conducted
9 tests
predominantly
positive



1000+

condoms distributed



Luxembourg Red Cross: Expanding Access to HIV Testing, Prevention, and Care

In 2024, the Luxembourg Red Cross (LRC) strengthened its long-term commitment to public health and HIV prevention through its HIV Berodung service and wide network of outreach and testing activities.

European Testing Weeks – May & November 2024

As part of the European Testing Week campaign, the LRC organized free, anonymous walk-in testing events for HIV, hepatitis C, and syphilis at multiple sites including universities, civic centers, and the Red Cross headquarters in Luxembourg City. These were carried out in partnership with national laboratories, NGOs, and public health institutions. Participants received immediate results, pre- and post-test counselling, and referrals to follow-up care.

HIV Berodung: Comprehensive Prevention and Support

Since its creation in 1988, the HIV Berodung service has been a cornerstone of Luxembourg's HIV response. In 2024 it continued offering:

- Confidential counselling and psychosocial support
- Free rapid and laboratory testing (no prescription needed)
- Referrals to medical care and follow-up services
- Education sessions in schools, universities, and youth centres

The mobile DIMPS unit brought testing and information directly to communities, nightlife venues, and festivals, reaching young people and at-risk groups with condoms, leaflets, and care referrals.

World AIDS Day 2024 – “Right to Health for All”

On 1 December 2024, LRC's nationwide campaign emphasized equal access to health, anti-stigma messages, and solidarity with marginalized populations including migrants, youth, and key groups. Public events, awareness stands, and media outreach underlined that everyone deserves protection, care, and respect.

Impact and Collaboration

Working alongside the Luxembourg Ministry of Health and the National Health Laboratory, LRC contributed to expanding national testing coverage and awareness.

According to national data, **53 new HIV cases** were reported in 2023—continuing a downward trend—while the majority of people living with HIV in Luxembourg remain successfully on treatment and virally suppressed. Through continuous partnership, outreach, and community engagement, the Luxembourg Red Cross reaffirms that early testing, empathy, and education save lives—and that only together can stigma be overcome.





Russian Red Cross

Russian Red Cross: Health Support and Community Care in Challenging Conditions

In 2024, the Russian Red Cross (RRC) continued its mission to support vulnerable populations and strengthen national responses to tuberculosis (TB), HIV/AIDS, and related health challenges amid complex social and political circumstances.

Health and Social Support Programs

Through its regional branches, the RRC implemented programs aimed at improving adherence to TB and HIV treatment, supporting people living with HIV (PLWH), and reducing stigma.

Activities included:

- Home visits and psychosocial counselling for PLWH and TB patients;
- Training sessions for caregivers and family members on communication and adherence support;
- Outreach work in prisons and detention facilities to assist HIV-positive detainees with treatment continuity and reintegration after release.

These programs are implemented in collaboration with local healthcare authorities and community partners.



Community Health and Awareness

Since the early 2000s, RRC has engaged in HIV prevention campaigns across several regions, emphasizing early testing, safe behavior, and anti-stigma messaging. Local branches conduct educational workshops for youth, migrants, and high-risk groups, distributing informational materials and hygiene kits.

Despite a challenging environment for civil society, the Red Cross remains one of the few organizations with nationwide reach providing trusted health education and humanitarian assistance.

Public Health Context

Russia continues to face one of the largest HIV epidemics in Eastern Europe, with nearly 52,000 new infections in 2024. Late diagnosis and stigma remain significant barriers to care. National data indicate that while most people on treatment achieve viral suppression, prevention and early testing require continued investment. The RRC's health and social initiatives align with its broader mission — to provide humanitarian assistance, promote health, and protect human dignity — even in times of uncertainty and restriction.



Core Services & Campaigns in 2024

InfoPrevención Service

- CRE operates Servicio InfoPrevención VIH / ITS / TBC, a multichannel, anonymous, free and confidential counselling and information service for HIV, STIs, tuberculosis, and related health issues.

- The service responds to public inquiries about testing locations, symptoms, transmission, treatment, and risk reduction.

- As of late 2024, CRE reported having addressed over 19,000 consultations via InfoPrevención, and provided health information or improved behavior skills with more than 11,800 individuals.

- InfoPrevención also serves affected persons and their families — more than 650 people in 2024.

World AIDS Day 2024 Campaign

- For 1 December 2024, CRE and its youth branches (Cruz Roja Juventud) conducted a joint campaign focusing on countering misinformation, promoting early testing, and affirming zero discrimination toward people living with HIV.

- The emphasis was placed on sexual health education, stigma reduction, and making visible the right to health and equality.

- CRE and Cruz Roja Juventud also launched the “Jóvenes e ITS” campaign, with podcasts, short videos, and social media content, plus street activities and school visits to reach young people.

European Testing Week & Mobile / Pop-up Testing

- During European Testing Week 2024, CRE deployed pop-up testing sites, mobile units, and worked in partnership with local health systems and municipalities to broaden access to HIV and STI testing.

- These services helped bring testing closer to communities in public spaces, universities, vulnerable neighborhoods, and nightlife settings.

- While I did not find exact numbers for all testing done in 2024, CRE’s network and InfoPrevención services support these testing initiatives.



Volunteer-led Outreach & Community Engagement

- CRE's volunteer networks across Spain carried out street outreach, awareness talks, condom distribution, educational events in vulnerable neighborhoods, migrant communities, universities, and nightlife venues.
- In summer 2024, CRE and Cruz Roja Juventud conducted the “Me cuido, te cuido” campaign, promoting safer sexual behaviour, encouraging diagnostic testing after exposure, and distributing condoms and information kits. zonacreo.com
- CRE also emphasizes risk reduction in settings where substance use may intersect with sexual risk.

Impact, Trends & Context

- According to CRE, 92.5% of people living with HIV in Spain know their status, 96.6% receive antiretroviral treatment, and **90.4% of them maintain an undetectable viral load (“undetectable = untransmittable / U=U”) in recent statistics.
- Late diagnosis remains a challenge: about 48.6% of new HIV diagnoses are made at late stages. www2.cruzroja.es
- The rise in STI rates (gonorrhea, chlamydia, etc.) is a growing concern; CRE emphasizes that VIH, viral hepatitis, and STIs collectively cause millions of deaths annually and remain a public health burden.
- CRE highlights the need to counter misinformation and stigma, especially among youth, and educates on scientifically accurate information about HIV, testing, transmission, and treatment.





Tajikistan Red Crescent

In 2024, the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) continued implementing the “Healthy Communities” project in partnership with the Finnish Red Cross, focusing on health promotion, disease prevention, and community resilience in four districts of the Rasht Valley — Rasht, Tajikabad, Lyakhsh, and Sangvor.



World AIDS Day – December 24, 2024

For World AIDS Day, RCST carried out a series of awareness activities across the same four districts, reaching an even broader audience — approximately 3,468 people, including 2,368 students and 1,100 community members.

These activities included:

- Educational sessions about HIV transmission, prevention, and treatment
- Discussions about stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV
- Demonstrations on the availability of mobile HIV testing for local communities

The events encouraged open dialogue about sexual health, testing, and prevention, empowering both youth and adults to make informed choices.

World Tuberculosis Day – March 24, 2024

To mark World TB Day, RCST organized large-scale information campaigns in 37 schools and 10 villages across the target districts.

In collaboration with district HIV and TB centers, Healthy Lifestyle Centers (HLCs), and education departments, RCST volunteers led interactive sessions to raise awareness on:

- TB symptoms, prevention, and early diagnosis
- The importance of seeking timely medical care
- Reducing stigma and discrimination against people affected by TB

Over 660 participants (including 340 students and 320 community members) took part in the events, which featured quizzes, drawing contests on TB awareness themes, and recognition of winning participants.

Partnership and Impact

The campaigns were organized jointly with local health authorities, district TB and HIV centers, Healthy Lifestyle Centers, and education departments under local Hukumats.

By combining school-based education with community outreach, the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan successfully strengthened awareness and reduced stigma related to TB and HIV in some of the country's most remote regions.

Through the “Healthy Communities” project, RCST continues to promote the values of prevention, inclusion, and early care, ensuring that vulnerable communities are informed, supported, and connected to essential health services.





Turkish Red Crescent

Turkish Red Crescent: Strengthening Health, Awareness, and Resilience through Community Action

Throughout 2024, the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) implemented a wide range of national and international initiatives focusing on infectious disease prevention, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and substance addiction awareness.

These activities—carried out in partnership with local authorities, ministries, and international Red Cross and Red Crescent societies—demonstrate TRC's continuing commitment to community health, education, and preparedness.

Community-Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA) Training for Youth Volunteers

Location: Şırnak, Türkiye

The CBHFA program trained Red Crescent youth volunteers to promote hygiene, prevent communicable diseases (HIV/AIDS, TB), and lead community awareness efforts. Through interactive sessions and group activities, volunteers learned to mobilize their communities and respond effectively to health risks.



Pre-Deployment Health and Hygiene Training for Military Personnel

Location: Ankara, Türkiye

Conducted at the Partnership for Peace Training Center (PfP) in collaboration with BIOEM Command and NATO member states, this training prepared 24 military officers for deployment by strengthening their knowledge of HIV/AIDS, TB, and field hygiene standards.



International Trainings on Epidemic Preparedness (Djibouti & Ethiopia)

Locations: Djibouti

With the support of Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and local Red Cross partners, TRC organized capacity-building sessions for community leaders in both countries.

The trainings focused on preventing infectious diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, through education and culturally appropriate community outreach.

More than 50 local leaders were empowered to deliver health awareness and promote early care-seeking behavior.



Addiction, Suicide Prevention and Skill Enhancement Training, Ankara

Following the February 2023 earthquake, TRC, in collaboration with Green Crescent (YEŞİLAY) and the German Red Cross, delivered training for psychosocial support specialists. The sessions enhanced staff capacity to recognize and respond to addiction-related issues in post-disaster settings, combining mental health theory with applied case studies.

Community Awareness on Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS

Adiyaman, Hatay, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, Osmaniye

Within the eCBHFA project (supported by the Japanese Red Cross), TRC conducted 47 awareness sessions, reaching over 2,000 community members in earthquake-affected provinces.

The events emphasized prevention, early detection, and anti-stigma messaging, helping residents understand and manage health risks in challenging living conditions.

Addiction Awareness and Community Engagement Events

As part of the MHPSS program (with German and Korean Red Cross support), TRC teams organized school-based debates, group sessions, and symbolic tree-planting activities involving 120 high school students.

The aim was to promote dialogue, self-awareness, and healthy decision-making among young people.

Addiction Awareness and Psychoeducation Trainings (Ongoing)

Psychoeducation sessions across container settlements, schools, and communities reached 1,761 participants, helping reduce addiction risks and build psychosocial resilience in post-earthquake areas.

The initiative, carried out with YEŞİLAY, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education, remains an integral part of TRC's MHPSS response.

Impact and Outlook

Across all these activities, the Turkish Red Crescent reached thousands of people in Türkiye, Ethiopia, and Djibouti with vital information, psychosocial support, and capacity-building opportunities.

By combining community-based health approaches, youth engagement, and international cooperation, TRC continues to play a key regional role in promoting health, resilience, and humanitarian values under the ERNA network.



The Villa Maraini Foundation



Villa Maraini Foundation, is the Italian Red Cross National Agency on Drug Addiction, established in 1976 is a comprehensive and integrated drug treatment and harm reduction center, funded by Massimo Barra. Offering 12 different programmes tailored to the individual needs of each person, it provides 24/7 health and psychosocial support to people who use drugs, aiming to prevent HIV, Hepatitis, and other STI, reduce overdose-related deaths, and promote rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Villa Maraini also serves as the Training Centre of the IFRC on substance abuse and humanitarian drug policy, having supported and trained more than 70 National Societies

In recognition of its long-standing contribution and its support to ERNA Villa Maraini became an official ERNA member following the decision of the General Assembly held in Malaga in 2022.

Thanks to a MoU between the Italian Red Cross and Villa Maraini further strengthened the Foundation's operational sustainability and expanded its outreach capacity to support the most marginalized people with drug use disorders living on the streets of Rome. More than 200 Italian Red Cross volunteers are directly involved in Villa Maraini's activities, or supported in their local branches in the outreach, testing, first aid, and peer education activities every year. Among the VM programmes, the ones that have a direct relations in ERNA core mission are the following:

Street and Mobile Outreach Services

The Street Unit, operating for over 30 years, remains the cornerstone of Villa Maraini's field work — reaching people who use drugs in high-risk urban areas, preventing infections, and intervening in overdose cases. Over the past three decades, more than 3,000 lives have been saved.

In 2024:

- 53,505 total street contacts and 1,271 individuals assisted (426 new users).
- 12 overdose reversals and 135 naloxone doses distributed.
- 88,987 sterile syringes distributed and 72,730 safely collected.
- 58 rapid HIV/HCV tests conducted during outreach.
- 4,750 psychological consultations and 10,120 information sessions on drug use, HIV, Hepatitis, and STI prevention.

The **Mobile Outreach Unit**, active **7 days a week**, travelled an average of **100 km daily**, responded to **98** public alerts for syringe collection, conducted **260 rapid HIV/HCV tests**, and provided **4,500** essential goods to vulnerable individuals.



Aims to reach the most vulnerable on the streets, bringing help even to those who think they don't need it, spreading the 24/7 Medical Clinic

Villa Maraini operates Rome's only 24-hour medical clinic for people with substance use disorders, authorized to provide emergency methadone and pharmacological treatment. In 2024:

- 2,145 clients treated (333 women, 1,812 men).
- 100,188 methadone doses and 19,856 other treatments administered.
- Main substances of abuse: Heroin (90%), Cocaine (6%), Alcohol (2%).

humanitarian policy of harm reduction, in places of drug consumption, so that active drug users avoid HIV, hepatitis, or other STI's and by intervening in case of Overdose: over **3,000** people saved in the last 30 years.

HIV, Hepatitis, and STI Unit

The HIV/HCV/STI Unit provides continuous prevention, counselling, and testing both onsite and through outreach programmes. In 2024

- 491 people tested (202 onsite, 289 in outreach).
- 11 preliminary HIV-positive and 28 HCV-positive cases linked to care through a fast-track protocol established in 2024 with the National Institute for Infectious Diseases "L. Spallanzani".
- Over 50 volunteers contributed to peer-to-peer prevention and education.

The unit actively contributes to national and international initiatives such as the EU4Health "BOOST" Project, the Gilead Community Award, and training programmes for Red Cross volunteers and health workers to help achieve the 95-95-95 targets.

International RCRC Partnership on Substance Abuse

Through the Red Cross Red Crescent Partnership on Substance Abuse (Villa Maraini– Italian RC –IFRC), the Foundation continues to promote humanitarian drug policies and harm reduction worldwide. Just to mention few activities in 2024, VM:

U.S. State Department Visit

Brian Morales, Head of the U.S. State Department's International Narcotics Bureau, visited Villa Maraini to learn about its unique humanitarian and harm reduction model, recognizing it as a "one-of-a-kind" operational approach.

67th UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) Vienna

The Partnership participated with three contributions:

- 1.Side event: "Humanitarian Practices and Alignment with the Rome Consensus 2.0," presenting a comparative international study on drug policies.
- 2.Side event: "Deflection in the African Continent," highlighting prevention and alternatives to incarceration in Africa.
- 3.Bilateral meetings: with the governmental and diplomatic delegations of: Mexico, Kenya, Cote D'Ivoire, Colombia.
- 4.Plenary speech on behalf of the IFRC, called on governments to ensure universal access to care and adopt humanitarian drug policies, delivered by Massimo Barra.



Synthetic Drugs Task Force – London

An advocacy meeting at the House of Lords gathered experts, NGOs, and UK parliamentarians to address the growing challenge of synthetic drugs.

Participants: Massimo Barra and Mauro Patti.

UN International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking , Vienna

At UNODC headquarters, Mauro Patti talked in plenary to emphasized the importance of scientific evidence and the holistic, humanitarian, and non-dogmatic approach of Villa Maraini in ensuring continuity of care for people who use drugs.

International Training Course , Mexico City

Villa Maraini, represented by Mauro Patti and Philippe Garcia, conducted a training course for health, social, and psychology professionals at UNAM University, focusing on ethics, harm reduction, humanitarian drug policy, opioid crisis management, and Open Science research.

Following the course's success, the Mexican Ministry of Health and Social Security Institute initiated talks for joint training and cooperation protocols with the Rome Consensus team.

European Harm Reduction Conference (EHRC 2024), Warsaw

Nadia Gasbarrini and Mauro Patti presented Villa Maraini's street-based HIV/HCV/STI prevention and rapid testing model, and the partnership with law enforcement supporting treatment and deflection initiatives in prisons, police stations, and hospitals — aligned with the Rome Consensus 2.0 humanitarian approach.

Villa Maraini remains a global model of humanitarian care for people who use drugs — integrating health, dignity, and human rights with evidence-based and person-centered interventions, fully aligned with Red Cross principles.



ERNA MEMBERS

ALBANIAN RED CROSS



ARMENIAN RED CROSS



AZERBAIJAN RED CRESCENT



BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA RED CROSS



BRITISH RED CROSS



BULGARIAN RED CROSS



CROATIAN RED CROSS



CZECH RED CROSS



DANISH RED CROSS



ESTONIAN RED CROSS



FINNISH RED CROSS



FRENCH RED CROSS



UZBEKISTAN RED CRESCENT



GEORGIAN RED CROSS



HELLENIC RED CROSS



HUNGARIAN RED CROSS



IRISH RED CROSS



ITALIAN RED CROSS



Croce Rossa Italiana



LATVIAN RED CROSS



LUXEMBOURG RED CROSS



RED CROSS OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA



MOLDOVA RED CROSS



MONACO RED CROSS



MONTENEGRO RED CROSS



NORWEGIAN RED CROSS



AUSTRIAN RED CROSS



POLISH RED CROSS



PORTUGAL RED CROSS



ROMANIAN RED CROSS



RUSSIAN RED CROSS



SERBIAN RED CROSS



SLOVENIAN RED CROSS



SPANISH RED CROSS



SWISS RED CROSS



TAJIKISTAN RED CRESCENT



TURKISH RED CRESCENT



TURKMENISTAN RED CRESCENT



UKRAINE RED CROSS



VILLA MARAINI FOUNDATION



NEWSLETTER

2024-25



ERNA Board Members 2022-2025:

President: Mauro Patti (Italian Red Cross / Villa Maraini Foundation)

Vice President: Uldis Likops (Latvian Red Cross)

Vice President, Secretariat: Marat Kachkynbekov (Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan)

Secretary: Atai Ibraev (Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan)

Honorary President: Massimo Barra (Italian Red Cross, Villa Maraini Foundation)

ERNA expresses its sincerest gratitude to major donors and supporters:



Croce Rossa Italiana



Croce Rossa Italiana



croix-rouge
luxembourgeoise



For any other information contact ERNA Secretariat:

erna.secretariat@gmail.com
<https://www.facebook.com/ernanetwork>
<https://erna.redcrossredcrescent.com/>