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Youth volunteers of the Belgorod branch of the Russian Red Cross, which is very active in public information and fundraising campaigns for the TB programme.

ERNA: growing together in the fight against HIV, AIDS and TB

Forewords

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HIV and Tuberculosis represent long-lasting health and societal issues not only here in the Europe Zone, but in the entire world. National Societies in Europe and Central Asia have put increasing efforts into addressing the humanitarian impact of these two diseases, by promoting awareness among the most vulnerable groups, advocating for universal access to prevention, treatment, and care services, fighting against stigma and discrimination and working for a change in mind-sets at community level.

The European Red Cross Red Crescent Network on HIV, AIDS and Tuberculosis (ERNA) and the individual National Societies that compose it represent an incomparable pool of knowledge, resources and good practices in the field of HIV and TB in Europe and Central Asia, and

- since its birth in 1998 - ERNA has been playing a crucial role in bringing National Societies together in tackling these diseases.

In a context where several of the Europe Zone countries appear unlikely to achieve the MDG for HIV and other diseases by 2015, ERNA member National Societies – and those that have not joined yet - have the chance to take an even stronger lead in the development of new and effective approaches to the fight against these HIV and TB, and to the stigma and discrimination that they generate.

Anitta Underlin
Director of Europe Zone



Temirtau/Kazakhstan - Tuberculosis/HIV co-infection programme - Olga, 46 with partner Valera, 36 - both beneficiaries

In recent years, both epidemics have continued to spread within most at risk and highly stigmatised groups, such as drug users, men who have sex with men, transgendered people, commercial sex workers and migrants. In many countries, such groups live at the margins or outside the public health system and often find themselves unable to access state-run health services, or are too afraid to ask for help for fear of discrimination and prefer to remain in the shadows.

Both the principles of Humanity and Impartiality emphasize the obligation of National Societies to provide assistance to all people in a situation of vulnerability and on the basis of need alone, without any discrimination. Thanks to our auxiliary role to

our respective public authorities, and the confidence we enjoy among the people we serve, we, as Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, help bridge the gap between public health services and communities.

In such scenario, a unique role is played by volunteers, who, by coming from and living in the affected communities, know best their needs and challenges, and facilitate that vital access to care. This represents an unmissable opportunity for National Societies to invest in a stronger inclusion of representative of vulnerable groups as volunteers, as well as in decision making processes.

Fabio Patrino
President of ERNA

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What is ERNA?

What is ERNA?

ERNA is the European Red Cross Red Crescent Network on HIV, AIDS and Tuberculosis, born to promote the collective efforts of the Red Cross Red Crescent in the Europe Zone to tackle HIV, AIDS, TB and related problems. Established in 1998 in Rome, ERNA is currently composed of 40 Red Cross Red Crescent Societies from Europe and Central Asia.

Why was ERNA created?

HIV and Tuberculosis (TB) represent the most important public health issues in the Europe Zone. In recent years, we have seen a growing number of people affected by these infections, with Eastern Europe having been marked by the highest HIV incidence in the world. Today, sadly, out of the 27 countries with the highest level of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis in the world, 15 are in the European region.

The most marginalized and stigmatized groups, such as drug users, men who have sex with men, transgendered people, commercial sex workers and migrants, are the ones who suffer the most from these two infections. They often face difficulties in accessing prevention services, diagnostics, treatment and care, as health care systems in a number of countries lack sufficient operational capacity in this field.

In its 15 years as IFRC network, ERNA has brought together the efforts of a growing number of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies in Europe and Central Asia to strengthen the common response to these serious threats to the population health.

What is ERNA doing today?

ERNA's main mission is to scale up National Societies' activities to bring prevention, treatment, care and support for HIV and TB to those who are left out of the formal health system, and encourage them to use their unique auxiliary status to engage decision-makers to push HIV and TB health services to the top of their agenda.

It promotes the exchange of experiences, information and lessons learned among member National Societies and with other partners, so as to facilitate the replication of good practices in different contexts and their adaptation to local needs.

The Network also provides technical, organizational and methodological support in the areas of education and operational capacity in response to HIV, AIDS, and TB.

ERNA arranges a General Meeting (AGM) on a yearly basis, which is hosted by a member National Society. The meeting provides a platform for participants to exchange new initiatives, good practices and recent experiences, plan their annual activities, as well as establish contacts with external stakeholders (UN agencies, people living with HIV and TB survivor representatives).

Facts and figures

- The estimated number of people living with HIV in Europe was 2,340,000 in 2010. Since 2001, there has been a 250% increase in the number of people living with HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- It is estimated that every year AIDS claims the lives of 1.8 million people and TB kills 1.4 million people at global level.
- Today, 15 out of the 27 countries with the highest level of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis in the world are in the European region. The poor treatment of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis is now generating 'extensively drug-resistant' strains that do not respond to most second-line tuberculosis drugs, and are virtually untreatable.
- If TB is left unchecked, and if we fail to take pertinent action, by 2014 more than 50 million people will develop active TB, more than 10 million lives will be lost to this preventable and curable disease – including 4 million women and children, millions of children will be orphaned unnecessarily, more than 2 million cases of multidrug-resistant TB will emerge.

What is ERNA doing today?

ERNA members

Albanian Red Cross - Armenian Red Cross Society - Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan - Belarus Red Cross Society - The Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina - British Red Cross - Bulgarian Red Cross - Croatian Red Cross - Czech Red Cross - Danish Red Cross - Estonia Red Cross - Finnish Red Cross - French Red Cross - Red Cross Society of Georgia - German Red Cross - Hungarian Red Cross - Italian Red Cross - Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan - Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan - Latvian Red Cross - Lithuanian Red Cross Society - The Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Red Cross Society of the Republic of Moldova - Red Cross of Monaco - Red Cross of Montenegro - Norwegian Red Cross - Polish Red Cross - Romanian Red Cross - The Russian Red Cross Society - The Red Cross of Serbia - Slovak Red Cross - Slovenian Red Cross - Spanish Red Cross - Swedish Red Cross - Swiss Red Cross - Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan - Turkish Red Crescent Society - Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan - Ukrainian Red Cross Society - Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan

In order to better focus its action, ERNA invites representatives of the Red Cross Red Crescent Youth and people living with HIV to take part in the organizational committee meetings (the Board).

Humanitarian Diplomacy was adopted as a key strategy by the participants of 2011 ERNA General Meeting in Slovenia. This strategy, to be implemented in partnership with WHO, will be crucial to engage Governments to remove legal, social and economical barriers to medical care and treatment access for PLHIV and TB patients.

ERNA trainings help Red Cross Red Crescent Societies to strengthen their organizational development and operational capabilities for HIV and TB. Training courses in Project Planning have been held to facilitate the submission of project proposals by National Societies to external donors.

The training programme in harm reduction

Since 2004, thanks for the facilitation of the Network, the commitment of the IFRC Health Department, the support of the Italian Red Cross and the technical expertise and model of the Villa Maraini Foundation, the IFRC/Italian Red Cross/Villa Maraini have jointly run a Training Programme on Harm Reduction. The 23rd edition was held between 3 to 6 December 2012 in Riga for the staff members of the Latvian and Lithuanian Red Cross.

«The Training and Research Partnership on Substance Abuse»

On 30 May 2012, in response to the growing levels of drug use and related problems on a global level, the IFRC, the Italian Red Cross and the Villa Maraini Foundation signed an agreement concerning “The Red Cross Red Crescent Training and Research Partnership on Substance Abuse” in order to join efforts, maximise the expertise brought by the Villa Maraini

Foundation and expand the comprehensive approaches to drug abuse, and fight against stigma and social exclusion.

By leveraging the knowledge and experience of Villa Maraini, the agreement aims at ensuring the provision of training, capacity building of National Societies in harm reduction activities, and carrying out research on harm reduction.

The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held in Rome on 27-28 November.

ERNA's partners

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) - International HIV/AIDS Alliance (Alliance) - Global Network of People living with HIV (GNP+) - World Health Organization (WHO), Regional Office for Europe - The Stop TB Partnership - The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) - The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) - International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA) - AIDS Action Europe (AAE) - The Asian Red Cross and Red Crescent HIV network (ART) - Red Cross Red Crescent European Youth Network

The evaluation of ERNA

The Network remains committed to improving the quality of its work, sharing its multiple successes and lessons learned. When carrying out the **first evaluation of ERNA** in 2011, the Evaluation team looked at the efficiency and the effectiveness of the network, as well as the impact, mentioning that the impact was difficult to assess because of many variables. Following the recommendations presented by the team, ERNA committed to a number of changes, including to reducing the costs of Board meetings by the usage of e-technologies, to strengthening dialogue with PLHIV organisations and other stakeholders, and to developing a longer-term Plan of Action.

Case studies

HIV, AIDS and TB prevention programme of the Latvian Red Cross

Latvia is one of those EU countries where HIV infection rates are high: from 1 January 1987 to 1 July 2012, a total of 5356 people were reported to have been infected with HIV. 1133 of these have developed AIDS and 911 have died.

In Latvia, transmission through injecting drug use – though declining – remains the prevailing route for HIV spread, whereas heterosexual transmission registered a slight increase.

The activities of the **Latvian Red Cross (LRC)** in the field of HIV and AIDS focus on the organisation of initiatives around the International AIDS Memorial Day in cooperation with different NGOs, which include the distribution of information materials, postcards with photographs of celebrities who have died from AIDS, condoms, as well as red ribbons, which represent a symbol of understanding, sympathy and moral support to those who are infected with HIV and AIDS.

Concerning Harm Reduction, the LRC conducts exchange of syringes, condom distribution, rapid testing for HIV, Hepatitis B, STI and TB, and basic health check – including measuring blood pressure glucose and cholesterol level.



On 20 May 2012, on the occasion of the International AIDS Memorial Day, volunteers of the Latvian Red Cross set up a Red Ribbon-shaped floral carpet with candles. At the end of the day volunteers laid a flower wreath in the Riga city canal to memorialize those who have died of AIDS.

Harm Reduction: HIV and AIDS and injecting drug use in Ukraine

The **Ukrainian Red Cross**, with the support of and technical expertise of the **French, Italian and American Red Cross Societies** has been conducting a harm reduction project in Ukraine since 2006.

Ukraine is the European country most severely hit by HIV, AIDS and drug use. Almost 37% of all HIV infections occur within the drug user community. The existing health structures are insufficient to respond to a growing HIV epidemic and ensure effective care strategy for people who use drugs.

Home-based care (HBC) implemented by trained Red Cross nurses has become the most demanded component of the harm reduction project and has proven to be an effective tool for bridging the existing gap between the public health sector and the specific needs for health care of HIV positive people who use drugs. Besides the nursing care of co-infections at home, it offers psycho-social support to HIV-positive people who use drugs and their family members.

In 2011, more than 200 beneficiaries received 1500 HBC visits of Red Cross nurses on a monthly basis.



Provision of medical support for HIV positive drug user on home based care (Kiev City/Ukraine)

Case studies



Pupils at St Augustine's High School in Edinburgh were paid a visit by the Grassroots Theatre Company from Zimbabwe to educate the pupils using dance, drama and music to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS. At St Augustine's school, eleven pupils have taken part in a peer education project over the last eight weeks learning what HIV and AIDS stand for and what impact HIV has on people in Scotland and across the globe.

British Red Cross: anti-stigma at the heart of HIV and AIDS education for young people

Humanitarian education explores issues and values that enable young people to understand, cope with and respond to crisis. Health is a core theme within humanitarian education and many of our health based education sessions focus on HIV and AIDS.

When tackling HIV and AIDS as a humanitarian education topic, the **British Red Cross** focuses on anti-stigma. Past campaigns have concentrated on the way in which stigma affects young people's willingness to seek help and support and how important the support from just one close friend or relative can make a massive difference in their life.

The British Red Cross runs direct delivery sessions to schools as well as peer education programmes. This involves 40 minutes classroom sessions and assemblies on HIV and AIDS with a strong focus on the reduction of prejudices and discrimination and the facts. Our British Red Cross offices also run awareness raising sessions and displays for staff and volunteers.

Around World AIDS Day we encourage groups of young people across the UK to come up with creative ideas to raise awareness and fight discrimination and stigma. We have university groups responding to our Call to Action on HIV. This has involved a range of activities such as lecture hijacks where students give a short talk or show a DVD clip at the beginning of a large lecture, a dress in red band night, an HIV themed flash mob, film nights, and cake and condom stalls on campus.



The Christmas gifts of the RRC to children in the child's home at the women penal colony #12.

Russian Red Cross actions in the prisons: focus on women and children

Tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS prevention among imprisoned persons and provision of assistance to former prisoners affected by TB represent key activities of HIV- and TB-related programmes of the **Russian Red Cross (RRC)**.

These activities are being implemented based on the Agreement on Cooperation signed with the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation and target mostly imprisoned adolescents, women and children. Prevention work of the Khabarovsk branch of the RRC with convicted women, and psycho-social support of children in the nursery of the interregional penal colony #12 are among the best examples of successful cooperation between the RRC and the penitentiary institution. Having used funds raised during the period of six months among the local community, the regional branch has procured a playground and non-food support (diapers, clothes, toys, etc.) for the nursery for over RUB 95,000. The RRC branch psychologist, social worker and 15 volunteers have been visiting this institution entertaining the children there. The income gained through the organization of charity workshops is being spent on purchasing hygiene items for mothers and their children, toys and sweets.

Case studies

This work has been acknowledged by the management of the local department of Federal Penitentiary Service, which has officially expressed its gratitude to the head of the RRC regional branch in Khabarovsk for the help provided.

Irish Red Cross: encouraging young people to be HIV peer educators in their community

As part of the roll-out of the Irish Red Cross Youth's IFRC "Youth on the move" award-winning HIV Awareness Programme, the first course to take place in the southern part of Ireland has been launched by the Mallow Red Cross, in



(From left to right) HIV Awareness Trainers Craig Jackson, Kevin Brennan, David Hayes, Denis Justice and Theresa Healy

Youth Officer for the Mallow branch said that the interest in the course was very strong: "We are running the HIV awareness course because we are all very passionate about the subject and think that it is important for everyone to be aware of safer sex precautions and the implications of not engaging in safer sex." The course is adaptable and allows for the trainers to take the cultural and personal sensitivities of individuals into account, in order to reach as many people as possible while respecting the diversity of our membership.

For more information on the HIV Awareness Programme, email youth@redcross.ie.



A Russian Red Cross nurse and her patient, who suffers from HIV and TB co-infection

Cork. The course will be run as a one day workshop in three sessions covering HIV info and facts; STIs, personal protection and safer sex practices; and stigma and attitudes towards people living with HIV. The course is open to all members but has a particular focus on reaching youth members aged 17 - 25 who are a particularly vulnerable group, educating them and encouraging them to become peer educators in their community. It is expected that on this occasion there will be up to 40 participants. Trainer, Craig Jackson, who is the

A child's heart cry

Childhood is the time of discoveries and cognition of the world and since a very tender age children are keen on drawing.

Our prior experience working with kids shows that adults should teach children how to self-express, how to perceive the outside world through the prism of their individuality and just after that should teach them to draw well.

Ibragimova Laila is a primary school pupil. She has long been drawing, and within the last three years she has been attending a child activity centre. Many of her earlier works, being exhibited now at the child activity centre,



Ibragimova Laila with some of her works

Case studies

talk about her vision of the past, of current events and her expectations for the future, the future that belongs to the children. The audience cannot remain unaffected; her works evoke different emotions – from gladness to grief – and set thinking.

One of Laila's exhibited drawings has been the prize-taker at the children drawing competition dedicated to World AIDS Day, organized by the **Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society**. Laila's prize-winning drawing has struck many, both for the child's vivid imagination and realistic representation and by the writing "Stop AIDS! We want to live!", which on children's behalf appeals to parents and reminds them that due to parents' reckless actions or unawareness, children may be infected by HIV.



Youth volunteers of the Lithuanian Red Cross doing prevention in the streets

HIV and AIDS prevention and care among injecting drug users in Visaginas

In the period between March 2010 and November 2012, the **Lithuanian Red Cross** branch in Visaginas implemented a low-threshold programme aimed at promoting HIV and AIDS prevention among people who inject drugs (IDU) in the municipality.

Low-threshold programmes are programmes that make minimal demands on the patient, offering services without attempting to control their intake of drugs, and providing counselling only if requested.

Here, patients were voluntarily tested, consulted and informed; they were provided with support and HIV and AIDS commodities, such as sterile syringes and disinfectants. In addition to consulting, information on target group members – such as socio-demographic data, data on psychoactive substance abuse and data on risky behaviours – was gathered during the project in order to assess the peculiarities of drug use, IDUs' knowledge on HIV and AIDS, overdose and other issues, their risky behaviours, as well as their accessibility to health care, social services and legal counseling.

Through the implementation of the project, more than 350 clients visited the centre, 74 visitors were offered rehabilitation services, and 26 of them were still continuing the treatment in rehabilitation centres at the end of the project. Furthermore, 130 individual consultations and 16 group works were conducted.

The Red Cross Society of Georgia hosts the XVI ERNA General Meeting

From 15 to 18 September 2012, the XVI ERNA General Meeting took place near Tbilisi, Georgia, hosted by the Red Cross Society of Georgia. The meeting saw the participation of 67 participants from 26 National Societies of Europe and Central Asia, plus the Red Cross Societies of Cambodia, Thailand, Japan and United States, as well as other key partners of ERNA. In light of the recent approval of the new Youth and Volunteering Policies on the occasion of the last IFRC General Assembly in 2011, the conference focused on the theme of "Volunteering, HIV and Tuberculosis".

At the end of the four days of meeting, participants produced a final declaration that will guide the action of the 40 ERNA member Societies during the coming two years. In line with the plan of action for the period 2012-2013, the declaration summarizes the will of all participating National Societies to ensure the inclusion of volunteers and vulnerable people

The XVI ERNA General Meeting

in decision processes and in all phases of HIV- and TB-related programming; to promote the capacities of youth and volunteers based on their needs and their role as agents of change in the fight against stigma and discrimination; and to strengthen the role of ERNA in building and maintaining strategic partnerships.

The fundamental document regulating ERNA's activities – the ERNA Terms of Reference – was supplemented and amended. In accordance with ERNA Terms of reference, the elections to the ERNA Board took place. The newly elected ERNA Board members are the following:

- President - Fabio Patruno (Italian Red Cross);
- Vice-President – Sinisa Zovko (Croatian Red Cross);
- EYCC representative at ERNA Board – Heather Fitzke (British Red Cross).

Red Cross Red Crescent regional measures

Regional response to HIV and TB strongly relies on ERNA with its 40 member National Societies. ERNA has become a powerful mechanism for mobilizing the Red Cross Red Crescent response to HIV and tuberculosis. National Societies are assisted to ensure peer and external support to further develop their national tuberculosis and HIV and AIDS policies, and to enhance the quality of their plans and proposals. National Societies in the region have agreed on a common approach to HIV, AIDS and TB, which is based on the comparative strength of the Red Cross Red Crescent at community level, in order to ensure more information on the diseases, more funding for TB and HIV research, more people to be tested, more people to be treated, and more resources for broader community-based engagement and better welfare for the poor at all times.

More information and contacts

More information on the Network, as well as case studies on National Societies' activities and background documents can be found on the newly-established ERNA website at www.erna.by.

ERNA is also on Facebook, with an open [group](#) where anyone interested can join and interact.

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