



Foreword

Margot Wallström

Vice President of the European Commission

The Heads of State and Government of six Western European countries met 50 years ago on the Capitoline Hill in Rome to put their names to the founding act of the European Communities, widely known as the Treaty of Rome. 2007 has been a time to celebrate past European achievements; however, as with any anniversary, it is also a time for reflection as much as a time for celebration.

In this context, I would classify the mandate for the IGC agreed at the European Council on 21st June this year as a new success. A Europe of 27 Member States has been able to agree to put the train back on the tracks. We have agreed a mandate that will enable the EU to do more to tackle today's global challenges, through new provisions in areas such as energy policy, public health and civil protection, climate change, research and development. The Reform Treaty will improve Europe's ability to combat terrorism, to tackle crime and human trafficking, and to manage migratory flows.

The Reform Treaty will also be the foundation for modern and more accountable institutions in an enlarged Union, and I am very pleased to see that the innovations of the draft constitutional Treaty on democratic participation, including the Citizens' Initiative, have also been safeguarded.

What we hear from citizens is that they demand a new momentum for European integration, built around the challenges of today: making globalisation sustainable and equitable, protecting the environment, defending social rights and fighting poverty. What is encouraging is that, far

from rejecting Europe, most citizens are asking for more European action in many areas of policy, from sustainable development to energy policy, from peacekeeping to development co-operation.

The IGC mandate provides the necessary tools to go in this direction. For 50 years, the EU gave the opportunity to Europeans to live in peace and to recover prosperity. It is now time for the Union to prove to its citizens that it can address the new challenges of our times, and I am pleased that climate change and energy security are included. These are areas where the need for us to act as one is particularly pressing. I was also particularly pleased that the Council acknowledged the importance of communication with citizens; the EU can never be a project only for the 'elite'. Communication is essential for democracy and the Reform Treaty must be firmly anchored in real two-way dialogue with citizens.

Margot Wallström

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Managing Editor

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Editor

Jonathan Miles
jmiles@publicservice.co.uk

Sub Editor

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PSCA International Ltd

Ebenezer House
Ryecroft
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire ST5 2UB
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1782 620088

Fax: +44 (0)1782 625533

mailbox@publicservice.co.uk
www.publicservice.co.uk

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Confronting the epidemic

Lithuanian AIDS Centre is a governmental organisation established in 1989 and subordinated to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. The Centre includes the following divisions: Laboratory, Outpatient Division (including Anonymous Testing and Treatment Site, Women's Health Site, Low Threshold Service Site), Public Education Division and Drug Users Social Rehabilitation Community (including a drop-in centre for girls at risk). The fields of activity at the Centre are: care and treatment of people with HIV and AIDS, epidemiological surveillance of HIV/AIDS/STI and data evaluation, AIDS advocacy, policy and strategy. The Centre's laboratory meets all criteria of a state-of-the-art facility for the testing and monitoring of HIV and other communicable disease agents, and supervises health institutions all over Lithuania involved in virusological and serological laboratory testing of HIV.

The AIDS Centre has been very active from the very first days of its operation; it has reached an important level of public and mass media visibility, and has stimulated high public awareness of the HIV/AIDS related problems. Lithuania has one of the lowest HIV/AIDS rate in the region. Experts have attributed such a low HIV infection level in the course of the epidemic to the policy-makers' early recognition of the need to work multisectorally and closely with the high-risk groups, devising pragmatic-based strategies.

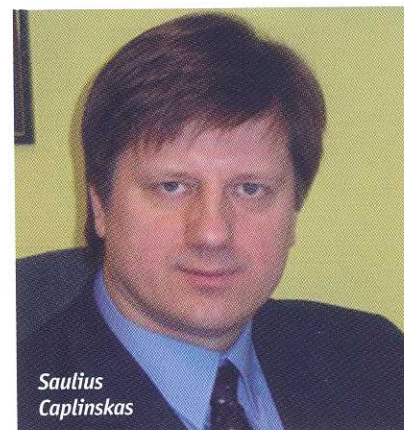
With an active advocacy and lobbying of the AIDS Centre, changes in laws and regulations, such as infectious disease control, homosexuality and testing policy, have been adopted since 1991, increasing the opportunities for preventive activities and making testing more efficient. Approaches to STD control, highlighting early diagnosis and comprehensive anonymous treatment, including counselling, have been introduced in

some institutions thanks to the AIDS Centre's efforts. The AIDS Centre beneficially prioritises primary prevention and exploits existing structures of health, social security, education and law enforcement institutions to establish co-operation with local bodies. As the driving force and co-ordinating body, it co-operates with representatives of various sectors, Ministries, municipalities and NGOs to assure multisectoral and intersectoral response.

Prevention of HIV among vulnerable target groups was given priority attention by the AIDS Centre and other stakeholders, and received assistance from UNDP, UNAIDS, WHO, and other international organisations. The AIDS Centre introduced innovative initiatives, such as harm reduction services (syringe/needle exchange, 1991), drug users social and psychological rehabilitation (1992), low threshold services and street trust points for the high-risk populations (1998).

The AIDS Centre in Lithuania has taken the initiative of organising and co-organising a number of sub-regional and regional fora that contributed to the exchange of information and knowledge and stimulated discussion of effective ways to address HIV/AIDS problems. Those included the Symposium on HIV prevention among drug addicts (1996), Conference 'HIV prevention in a low HIV prevalence Country' (1998), Congress for Central and Eastern Europe countries 'Ten Years With AIDS' (1999), the Nordic-Baltic Congress on Infectious Diseases (1998), extended congress 'Drug use and AIDS – let's join our responses' (2000), 4th European Conference on the Methods and Results of Social and Behavioural Research on AIDS (2002), 2nd Open Europe Conference 'Europe and HIV/AIDS: new challenges, new opportunities' (2004), which adopted the 'Vilnius Declaration' on Measures to Strengthen Responses to HIV/AIDS in

Effective ways to address HIV/AIDS...



Saulius Caplinskas

the European Union and in Neighbouring Countries.

The Centre has used sound opportunities to counteract the epidemic by placing a new innovative network of preventive education, communication, information and care in partnership within EU, and with the neighbours of Lithuania. This bridging role of Lithuanian HIV/AIDS professionals and managers has been playing an important role in bilateral/regional activities in confronting the epidemic from its beginning, not least in regular exchange of epidemiological information, epidemiological trends and pattern, and lessons learned.



Saulius Caplinskas MD, PhD
Director, Lithuanian AIDS Centre
Associate Professor Mykolas Romeris University

Lithuanian AIDS Centre
Nugaletoju St 14D
LT-10105 Vilnius
Lithuania

Tel: +3705 2300125
Fax: +3705 2300123

aid@aid.lt
www.aid.lt