



**COBATEST**  
NETWORK

 Generalitat de Catalunya  
**Agència de Salut Pública  
de Catalunya**

## COBATEST Network Annual Meeting - Monday 14 May 2018

Agència de Salut Pública de Catalunya, Carrer de Roc Boronat, 81-95, 08005 Barcelona



### Opening

**Joan Colom, Public Health Agency of Catalonia (ASPCat)**

The meeting was opened by Joan Colom of the Director of the Programme for Prevention, Control and Attention of HIV, STIs and viral Hepatitis at the Public Health Agency of Catalunya (ASPCat). He welcomed the attendees and noted the importance of the Catalan CBVCTs in the strategy to improve early diagnosis of at-risk populations.

### Community Testing in Europe: WHO Objectives

**Elena Vovc, World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe**

Elena Vovc connected via video call from the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen and shared how community-based testing is helping to reach the goal of 90% of all people living with HIV knowing their status. The WHO's strong recommendation that trained lay providers can safely and effectively perform HIV testing services using rapid diagnostic tests was once again highlighted. In order to improve the effectiveness of testing, it is recommended that strategies focus on the testing of key population over mass testing campaigns.

### European Testing Week

**Lauren Combs, CHIP**

Lauren Combs presented on European HIV-Hepatitis Testing Week (ETW), of which many of our members already participate. The materials available to participants were presented, including a dossier of evidence to support those lobbying for access to free, confidential CBVCT services. Thanks to outreach and campaigning by participants, most organisations see a big increase in testing activity during this week. As part of the INTEGRATE Joint Action, it is being investigated how to adapt tools such as COBATEST to assess the impact of ETW.

The COBATEST Network and this meeting receive funding from a Gilead grant



## Past, Present and Future: The COBATEST Network

Jordi Casabona, CEEISCAT

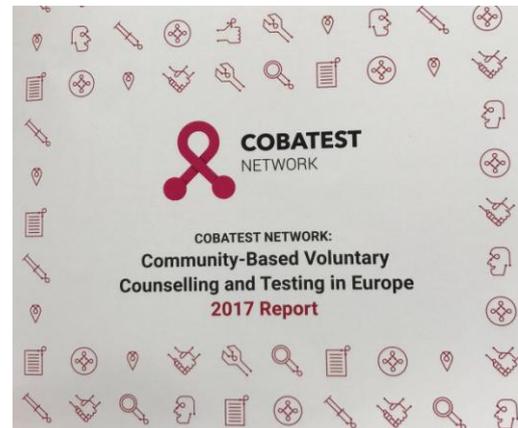
In 1995, a Network of CBVCT services in Catalunya was established. Later, as part of the HIV-COBATEST project, this network expanded and became the COBATEST Network. The inclusive definition of CBVCT ensures the Network captures data from the many different service models across Europe. Having already defined M&E indicators and a standardised data collection tool, the Network will now focus on quality assurance and data integration with the national surveillance systems. The Network will assure its sustainability through the AIDS Action Europe collaboration, the creation of strategic alliances and by reinforcing its applicability to services and national surveillance.



## Results from the COBATEST Network 2017

Anna Conway, CEEISCAT

The Network news from 2017 was shared, including a summary of barriers to data collection faced by some members. The results from 2017 demonstrated that key populations are being tested more frequently than the general population. People from key populations are more likely to return to the same CBVCT to be tested within 12 months, showing services are building relationships with these users, particularly sex workers and transgender people. The Network is improving its data collection of transgender users, and preliminary results show that the proportion of reactive tests (7.2%) is much higher in this group than any other key population. Another indicator presented in the report, number of persons needed to test to find a positive HIV result, demonstrated that testing was most efficient in men who have sex with men (MSM), male sex workers (MSW) and transgender populations.



## Impact of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Anna Conway, CEEISCAT

The GDPR will come into force on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2018 and will affect the COBATEST Network data collection. According to the new regulation, the disaggregated data we collect cannot be considered anonymous and is of a sensitive nature. In order to comply with the GDPR, organisations will have to seek the client's explicit consent to collect and analyse their data. A draft of this consent was shared and discussed.

## **COBATEST associated projects: WHO study of Combined PoC Tests for HIV & Syphilis in CBVCTs** **Laura Fernández López, CEEISCAT**

Four COBATEST Network members will be taking part in a WHO study based on one of the WHO's priority actions of "Validation and standardization of innovative technologies and approaches". The study will assess the utility and operational characteristics of point of care tests for the dual screening of HIV/syphilis in MSM in non-clinical settings. The study will further assess the acceptability and usability of the tests among CBVCT providers and users. The results will be shared with the rest of the COBATEST Network to improve their testing strategies.

## **COBATEST associated projects: COBA-Cohort** **Nicolas Lorente, CEEISCAT**

Five COBATEST Network members participate in the COBA-Cohort – a cohort of MSM using CBVCT services in six countries which aims to describe testing patterns and behaviours in this group. Participants complete a questionnaire and their testing is also recorded. A cohort study allows assessment of HIV incidence and identification of determinants of seroconversion. The study has benefitted from users' willingness to participate and the use of tablets to facilitate participation. For sites that were not able to use tablets, the study represented increased workload for staff which led to recruitment fatigue. The sustainability of the cohort was discussed on the second day of the COBATEST Network meeting.



## **Quality Assessment of HIV testing data in the community setting "COBATEST Network"** **Juliana Reyes Ureña, CEEISCAT**

The results of an ECDC-commissioned report into the quality of HIV testing data in the COBATEST Network were presented by the report's author. The study was based on surveys and audits of COBATEST Network members carried out in 2017. The study concluded that despite the lack of representative of the COBATEST network across Europe, the network serves as a sentinel source of HIV testing information, and it is considered relevant and of added value as it provides a unique EU-level perspective. The data and data collection could be improved by centralising M&E activities in the network, including training, mentoring initiatives and fostering data use (including dissemination) for evidence-based decision-making.

## Rede de Rastreio, A National CBVCT Network Paula Meireles, ISPUP

The Rede de Rastreio Portugal is a great example of how a national CBVCT Network can be established and what the benefits of doing so are. In order to implement the network, ISPUP and GAT Portugal provided training for CBVCT sites, rapid tests, external quality control and an online data collection form similar to that of the COBATEST Network. At the end of 2017, the network counted 27 CBVCT sites from 18 NGOs among their members. Now the network faces the challenge of engaging more NGOs and guaranteeing the sustainability of the network in terms of financial and human resources.



## COBATEST Data Collection Tool

After lunch the new version of the COBATEST Data Collection Tool was demonstrated and the members split into groups to discuss the changes and how to improve data submission to the Network. It is noted that the majority of members who are already using the online tool are organizations in Spain and they note the new version is



accessible, simple-to-use and has good graphics. The same members noted that the previous tool sometimes froze when data was being entered, resulting in loss of data and increasing the workload of staff. Members not using the tool were most concerned that the COBATEST data collection would implicate more work. The new tool is now available through mobiles and tablets which allows data collection to be completed during the consultation, reducing the data entry burden for administrative staff. Members would like to see the COBATEST Network provide training on best practices.





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## COBATEST Network Associated Projects - Tuesday 15 May 2018

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### MSM Checkpoint Toolkit Workshop Matthias Kuske, Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe

Matthias opened the second day of the meeting with a workshop on the MSM Checkpoint Toolkit <http://www.msm-checkpoints.eu/>. Members discussed the possibility of making the toolkit more accessible by linking it through the COBATEST Network website. To improve the Toolkit, members suggested expanding its content to share best practices, making it useful for Checkpoints that want to test for more diseases, providing contact details of Checkpoints, securing funding to achieve sustainability. To make it more useful for members, it should be clear how users can chart their achievements using the toolkit and present the work of organisations using the toolkit. Going forward we will work on improving the synergies between the COBATEST Network and the toolkit.



### General presentation and update of COBA-Cohort

Nicolas Lorente, *Centre for Epidemiological Studies of Sexually Transmitted Disease and AIDS in Catalonia (CEEISCAT)*

Nicolas presented the results of the COBA-Cohort report – available [here](#). This was followed by presentations from members and possible future members. The minutes from the discussion will be available online.



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