



ECOM members' success stories:

collection of best practices
for promoting sexual
and reproductive health
and rights
in the EECA region

2023

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Publication prepared by:

Yana Panchenko, Tina Sobko

Edited by:

Anna Oleynik

Design and layout by:

Alina Bukina

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ECOM, 2023.

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Introduction

ECOM – The Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexuality Diversity (ECOM) once again presents you with an inspiring collection of best practices based on the experiences of our coalition members. This time we have collected stories and achievements that reflect our common struggle for the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of LGBT people in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA).

ECOM is not just an association of non-profit organizations and activists, but also a family in which everyone contributes to the creation of a progressive space for LGBT people in the EECA region. Our coalition members are our main heroes. Working across our region, they drive change, develop activism, and strive to ensure that everyone, regardless of gender or sexual identity, has their rights protected and are able to look after their health.

In this brochure, we share both success stories, as well as the various strategies and methods that ECOM members have used in their activities. We collected stories about different approaches that will definitely be useful in your work to support sexual and reproductive rights and health. These include publishing a variety of informational videos, opening a safe LGBTQ+ youth center, and collaborating with family medicine faculty to raise awareness about working with transgender people.

These practices have been important in promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EECA region, and we are confident that some, and perhaps all, of them will serve as examples for other regions.

LET'S CONTINUE

OUR IMPORTANT WORK TOGETHER

AND BUILD A PROGRESSIVE AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY FOR ALL!

ARMENIA

The background features a large, curved green shape in the upper left corner, a yellow shape in the middle, and a green shape in the lower right corner, all set against a white background.

Story 1.

New Generation Humanitarian NGO (NGNGO)

The work of NGNGO (www.ngngo.net) to prevent HIV and to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and about tools to prevent the disease is admirable. The organization actively works to disseminate information and create educational materials to ensure the health and well-being of the community.

Key steps taken by NGNGO in raising awareness about HIV and AIDS include:

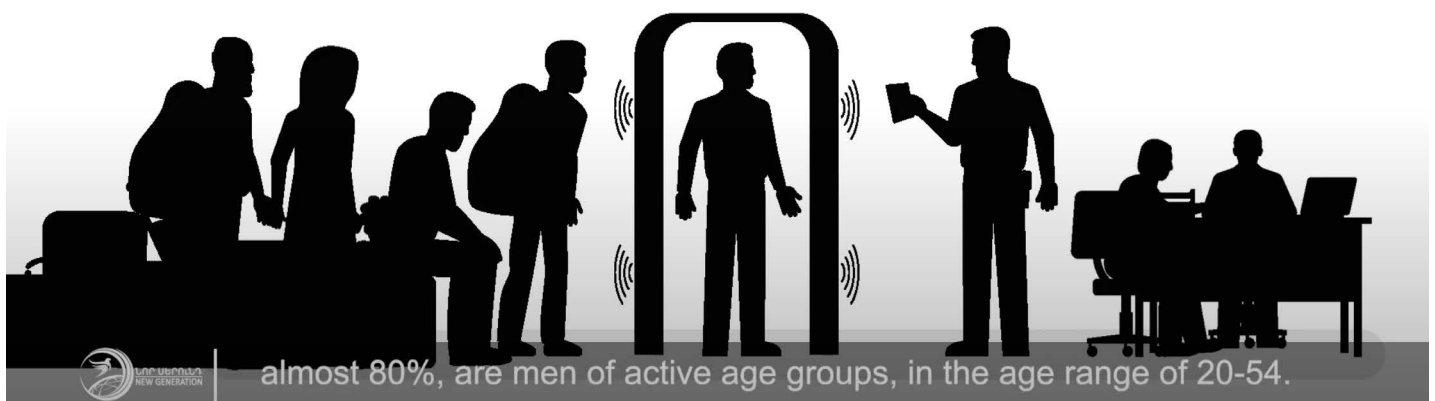
- 1 repairing informational booklets and posters to disseminate knowledge about HIV and AIDS;
- 2 creating a sexual health library on its official website, where everyone can find useful materials and resources;
- 3 organizing awareness-raising events, such as those dedicated to World AIDS Day, with the participation of representatives of embassies, international and local organizations, healthcare workers and the community;
- 4 conducting trainings on the following topics: the right to health, HIV and AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), hepatitis, psychoactive substances, etc. for community representatives;
- 5 conducting trainings for healthcare workers on the specifics of working with vulnerable groups, in particular with trans people;
- 6 posting a variety of informational and educational videos on the NGNGO YouTube channel, which has become a valuable source of knowledge.

ԱՂԲՅՈՒՐԸ ԱՐՄՍՏԱՏ 2020 / SOURCE: ARMSTAT 2020

Հայաստանից արտագաղթողների ճնշող մեծամասնությունը

80%

**ԱԿՏԻՎ ՏԱՐԻՔԱՅԻՆ
ԽՄԲԵՐԻ ՏՂԱՄԱՐԴԻԿ ԵՆ**



Below are just a few of the videos:

“I Have the Right to Health”

the story of representatives of the gay community about the stigma and discrimination that prevent them from accessing health care.



“I Have the Right to Health”

the story of a trans person about the stigma and discrimination that make it difficult to access medical care.



Video of the World AIDS Day 2022 event,

in which diplomatic missions, organizations, and public figures participated.



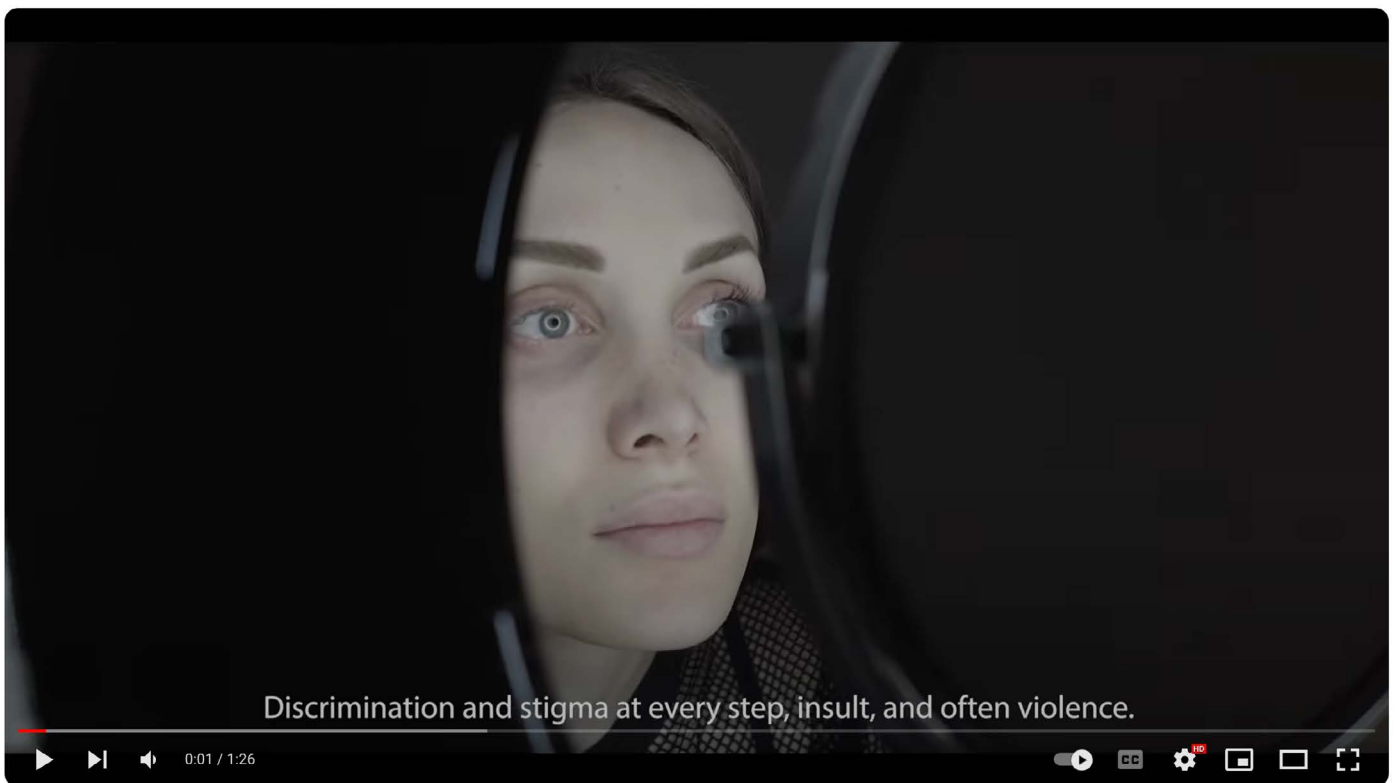
“HIV and Migration: the importance of prevention and information for migrants”

an indispensable resource on the importance of HIV prevention among migrants.



Informational animation about HIV and AIDS

a visual guide to the main issues.



ԵՍ ՈՒՆԵՄ ԱՌՈՂՋՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԻՐԱՎՈՒՆՔ/ I HAVE THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

New Generation Humanitarian NGO
 192 subscribers
 Subscribe
18
Share
Download
Save
...

In addition to the videos above, you will find many more valuable videos on this topic on the [NGNGO YouTube channel](#).

Story 2.

New Generation Humanitarian NGO (NGNGO)

NGNGO’s efforts also focus on promoting pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV (PrEP). The effectiveness of this method cannot be overestimated, and we are proud that NGNGO advocates for the free provision of PrEP to those who need it in Armenia.

PROMOTING PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS INCLUDES:

Social videos that help raise awareness about PrEP and its role in preventing HIV.



Posting information about PrEP and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV on the official NGNGO website so that everyone can receive up-to-date and reliable information on this topic.

Website of the organization:

<https://ngngo.net/prep-2/>

PrEP PrEP PrEP PrEP PrEP

Ի՞նչ է PrEP-ը
PrEP-ը (PrEP-ը) համաճեղմանը հակադրվող մեթոդ է, որի ամենօրյա ընդունումը կարող է կանխել HIV-ի վարակումը:

ԱՐՆՆԻՆԻ PrEP-ը Ի՞նչ ԵՍՏՄԻՐ Է

- Ի՞նչ էլքով են սպասարկվում պահանջարկը և ստանալու համաճեղմանը հակադրվող մեթոդը:
- Ի՞նչ էլքով են սպասարկվում համաճեղմանը հակադրվող մեթոդը:
- Ի՞նչ էլքով են սպասարկվում համաճեղմանը հակադրվող մեթոդը:

In 2022, NGNGO supported 27 beneficiaries by giving them the opportunity to receive PrEP for free for a whole year. This is proof that the organization’s initiatives have a real impact on people’s health and quality of life.

Story 3.

National Trans Coalition (NTC)

The National Trans Coalition makes efforts to:

Build a trans community in Armenia;

Protect the rights of trans people and achieve gender equality;

Integrate the trans community on the basis of inter-sectoral approaches.

NTC also works actively on interdisciplinary issues, including human rights, justice, HIV, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Understanding that the majority of trans activism initiatives in Armenia focus on HIV and SRHR issues, NTC also makes a gender approach a key aspect of its work.

For this reason, NTC organized and successfully conducted the first Gender Academy in the history of Armenia. Over 20 trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people from across the country took part in this unique event. The Academy was organized to address the acute issue of gender inequality and human rights violations that make trans people vulnerable to HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis and other infections.



During the Academy, participants gained an understanding of how human rights violations and discrimination can impact HIV prevention and the overall health of trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people. The Gender Academy included intensive theoretical and practical classes, lectures, seminars, motivational speeches and group work.

In 2023, NTC announced the second Gender Academy, confirming its commitment to continue the fight for the rights and health of the trans community in Armenia.

Story 4.

“DiverCity” NGO

NGO “DiverCity” is a socio-cultural human rights non-governmental organization from Armenia.

In 2023, it organized a crowdfunding campaign, thanks to which it was able to purchase and renovate its own premises. This important step allowed the organization to open the “Space” youth center for all LGBTQ+ people, their allies, and women and girls.

The “Space” is a safe space for LGBTQ+ youth. The center hosts educational events that discuss sexuality, human rights, ecology, and legal issues, which helps expand the horizons and opportunities of target groups.

The following events are held at the “Space”:

engrossing training courses;

discussions and seminars;

cozy meetings and informative readings;

classes on sexuality and gender diversity;

events dedicated to environmental issues, environmental pollution and global warming.



In addition, the “Space” has become a hub for organizing events hosted by various groups that share the organization’s mission.

If you wish to keep up to date with the activities of the “Space” center, follow its [Instagram account](#).

RUSSIA

Story 5.

“Guys PLUS” LGBT Portal

The “Guys PLUS” portal published the brochure, “Keeping an Open Mind: What is “harm reduction”?”, developed specifically for employees and volunteers of non-profit organizations and activists of initiative groups working with gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM).

The use of psychoactive substances in the context of sexual relationships can have both positive and negative consequences. This brochure debunks myths and misinformation about harm reduction, introduces the methodology and philosophy of this approach, and emphasizes the value of having an open mind.

This is the first part of Timofey V. Sozaev’s work “Harm reduction and HIV prevention among GBMSM practicing chemsex and other types of sexualized substance use. Guide for organizations and specialists.” There will be 5 parts in total, the publication of which is planned for the end of 2023.

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE:

Keeping an Open Mind: What is “harm reduction”?

Special relationship of GBMSM and transgender people with psychoactive substances: psychosocial cultural causes and consequences.

Chemsex as a phenomenon of the gay community: cultural uniqueness, practices and effects.

Harm reduction as a tool for promoting community health and well-being.

Organizing comprehensive community-centered chemsex harm reduction programs.



LINK TO PART 1:

[“KEEPING AN OPEN MIND: WHAT IS “HARM REDUCTION”?”.](#)

[PRESENTATION OF PART 1 ON YOUTUBE.](#)

PRESENTATION OF PART 3: “CHEMSEX AS A PHENOMENON OF THE GAY COMMUNITY: CULTURAL UNIQUENESS, PRACTICES AND EFFECTS”.

Expect the next parts of the Guide on the “Guys PLUS” Portal (<https://parniplus.com/health/>) and on social media.

EECA REGION

NAME OF COUNTRY
NOT PUBLISHED
FOR SECURITY
REASONS

Story 6.

Name of organization not mentioned for security reasons

ECOM members work with educators in family medicine departments to inform them about the specifics of working with trans people.

Work with educators began with a seminar for employees of the state medical institute in order to increase their awareness about providing medical and social assistance to transgender and gender non-conforming people.

This event was organized to improve the qualifications and awareness of employees of the state medical institute, in particular educators in the departments of family medicine, psychiatry, endocrinology and gynecology.

The sessions were conducted by an endocrinologist, psychotherapist and gynecologist who have extensive experience working with the trans community and who were able to share their knowledge with colleagues.

Faculty members of the departments had the opportunity to ask questions of interest and discuss them both with the medical specialists involved and directly with representatives of the trans community.

In order to better understand the specifics of working with the trans community, participants of the event received the “Guide to providing medical and social assistance to transgender, transsexual and gender non-conforming people,” which included methodological materials for psychiatrists and endocrinologists.

Systematic work with doctors has a direct impact on improving the quality of life of trans people in the country.

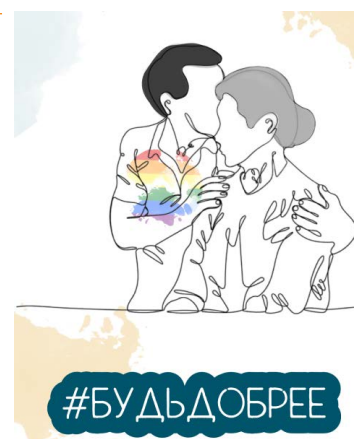
Story 7.

Name of organization not mentioned for security reasons

WE PRESENT TO YOU THE CAMPAIGN “IF YOU DON’T KNOW, THEN ASK”!

The goal of the campaign is to educate society about careful and proper communication with LGBT people, destigmatize the LGBT community, and to prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

The campaign includes a series of videos, posters with QR codes, as well as stylish merchandise, such as sticker packs and badges. Friendly spots in the city, such as clubs, bars and cafes, actively support the campaign by posting posters with QR codes through which you can access video materials. In addition, partner organizations are giving away stylish merch, such as free campaign stickers and badges.



Thanks to this, the number of people gaining new knowledge about the LGBT community, including on the issues of sexual and reproductive rights and health, is increasing.

SWITZERLAND

The background consists of three main color regions: a large green area in the top-left corner, a large pink area in the middle-right, and a green area in the bottom-right. The shapes are defined by smooth, curved lines.

Story 8.

Life4me+ plus

Life4me+ plus (<https://life4me.plus/en/>) is an international non-profit organization that has made its mission to fight HIV, hepatitis C and tuberculosis. The organization works in the field of IT medicine and anti-discrimination, supports people living with HIV, and also collaborates with healthcare systems and public organizations around the world.

One of their most significant achievements was the launch of the international project “Stay on ART” in May 2023. This project aims to ensure access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) abroad for migrants and refugees in the 53 countries of the WHO European Region.



“Stay on ART” is a unique navigator that facilitates access to HIV treatment outside a person’s country of residence. On the project website, www.stayonart.com, everyone will be able to find answers to frequently asked questions, such as:

How and where to get ART?

Can drugs be purchased in pharmacies?

Where to go for emergency assistance?

The site currently provides information on 12 countries in the region in six languages, and Life4me+ constantly updates the data to reflect geopolitical and legislative changes.

This work was particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, Life4me+ collaborated with partners and doctors to help people living with HIV

receive the necessary treatment in the countries where they found themselves during lockdown. Thanks to the support of Life4me+ and vital medications, more than 1,000 people were able to continue treatment and receive the necessary assistance.

The work of Life4me+ continues, and in 2022, the need for the help they provide has increased even more. In connection with Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, the organization expanded its activities and launched an international project to support migrants and refugees living with HIV.

EECA REGION

NAME OF COUNTRY
NOT PUBLISHED
FOR SECURITY
REASONS

Story 9.

LGBTQ+ group “Coming Out”

The LGBTQ+ group “Coming Out” (<http://standpointspb.com/>) focuses specifically on issues of sexual health. The group’s work aims to overcome stigma, provide access to information, combat misinformation, and to warn about the risks associated with sexual health. All of this has enormous implications for the health and well-being of the LGBT community and for everyone who seeks honest answers to these important questions.

The team of the LGBTQ+ group “Coming Out”, together with its allies, has been conducting live streams for several years and preparing materials that openly discuss the reality of diseases such as hepatitis, syphilis, HIV and STIs. Below are some examples:

Live stream: “Viral hepatitis and syphilis.”

This video discusses in detail issues related to viral hepatitis and syphilis. Experts share information about methods of protection and treatment, and also answer questions from viewers.

Live stream: “HIV: complex issues made simple.”

Legends and myths related to HIV are discussed on the live stream. Experts talk about the routes of HIV transmission, what methods of prevention exist, and how to treat HIV infection.

Live stream “HIV status”.

This live stream discusses the importance of being aware of your HIV status and the availability of testing. It discusses how to live a full-fledged life while taking your HIV status into account.

[“Safe sex for people with vaginas”](#)

This article addresses 8 popular questions and misconceptions about safe sex for people with vaginas.

[Article about chemsex](#)

The article examines important aspects of chemsex, warns against risks, and provides advice on safe practices.

These materials help raise awareness and support the health of the queer community and anyone seeking answers to important questions.

Story 10.

LGBTQ+ group “Coming Out”

The group focuses heavily on the health and well-being of the trans community, particularly now as policies targeting trans people are becoming more repressive in Russia. “Coming Out” holds events aimed at supporting this group. For example, this year the team dedicated Pride month to transgender people.



20 ОКТЯБРЯ 2023

ЧЕК-АП ДЛЯ ТРАНС*ЛЮДЕЙ: КАКИЕ СКРИНИНГИ НУЖНЫ И ГДЕ НАЙТИ ФРЕНДЛИ-ВРАЧЕЙ

In addition, the LGBTQ+ group “Coming Out” regularly publishes informational materials, including the following:

[“Check-up for trans people: what screenings are needed and where to find friendly doctors”](#)

this provides current information about obtaining medical care for transgender people. The text describes in detail what you should pay attention to while taking medications and after stopping them, and what tests and screenings are necessary and how frequently you should undergo them.

[“How will the Law “on the prohibition of trans transition” operate and what opportunities still remain?”](#)

a “Coming Out” lawyer explains how the new Law “on the prohibition of trans transition” operates and what opportunities for receiving medical care are still available for trans people.

“Gender cannot be changed: what State Duma deputies know about transgender transition”

in 2023, Russia passed a repressive law banning transgender transition. The “Coming Out” team analyzed statements of State Duma deputies and confirmed that they have a very poor understanding of the topic of their lawmaking, as well as of the life and health of trans people. By selecting several quotes from public speeches, “Coming Out” was able to demonstrate their incompetence in this area.

“The document “Everything you wanted to know about prescriptions for testosterone: information for patients and doctors”

is a guide aimed at making life easier for all those purchasing testosterone drugs. In Russia, they are only available at pharmacies to those with a prescription form filled out correctly.

“The fight for quality of life: how the war has affected hormone therapy for trans people”

due to anti-war sanctions and disrupted supply chains, difficulties arose with respect to the availability of drugs for gender-affirming therapy. “Coming Out” talked to trans people, activists, and specialists about the situation of hormone therapy in Russia now and what will happen in the future.
