



Eurasian Coalition on Male Health



Annual Report

2016

Dear Readers,

In front of you is the Eurasian Coalition on Male Health's (ECOM) Annual Report for 2016. Last year, ECOM saw a number of significant improvements that will contribute to increasing the efficiency of the Coalition's activities.

2016 was a crucial year for those involved with the global HIV response. Two major forums, the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS (HLM) and the International AIDS Conference 2016, took place, providing stakeholders and activists important opportunities to discuss issues related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In addition to these two events, ECOM was involved in numerous other initiatives and events, in order to advocate for the rights of men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans* people in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA).

Unfortunately, the situation with respect to HIV and LGBT rights in the EECA region remains tense. Throughout 2016, ECOM's activities continued to focus on supporting the needs of MSM and trans* people at the national, regional and global levels. To this end, ECOM participated in a number of International advocacy events and also provided several minor grants to our members in EECA countries.

In addition, we finalized our legislative analysis project, which examines legislation related to HIV and LGBT rights in 9 countries of the region. ECOM also released a number of publications on HIV prevalence among MSM in EECA, and promoted several advocacy tools.

Aside from these programmatic developments, 2016 also witnessed a number of

organizational changes to ECOM. Over the past year, ECOM nearly doubled its staff, and elected new Steering Committee members, who will be responsible for the Coalition's strategic guidance during the next 3 years.

ECOM continued to work closely with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and made final preparations for its Regional Program 'Right to Health', which will kick off in February 2017 in 5 countries of EECA. All of these activities and several more are detailed in the following pages.

We look forward to 2017, as it marks the beginning of our Regional Program, in addition to more opportunities to advocate for the rights of MSM and trans* people, to support community organizations, and to enhance our partnerships at the regional and global levels.



VITALY DJUMA

ECOM's Executive Director



List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome	MSMGF	Global Forum on MSM & HIV
CCM	Country Coordinating Mechanism	MSMIT	Implementing Comprehensive HIV and STI Programmes with Men Who Have Sex With Men: Practical Guidance for Collaborative Interventions
CRG	Community, Rights and Gender Special Initiative	NGO	Non-governmental organization
CEECA	Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia	OC	Oversight Committee
ECOM	Eurasian Coalition on Male Health	PCB	UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board
ECRG	Emergency Community Response Group	PEPFAR	U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
ECUO	East Europe & Central Asia Union of People Living with HIV	PLHIV	People living with HIV
EECA	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	PrEP	Pre-exposure prophylaxis
EECAAC	Eastern Europe and Central Asia AIDS Conference	PUD	People who use drugs
EHRN	Eurasian Harm Reduction Network	RAG	Regional Advisory Group
EU	European Union	RCNF	Robert Carr Civil Society Networks Fund
GBT	Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender	SC	Steering Committee
GF	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund)	SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	STI	Sexually transmitted infection
HLM	United Nations High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS	TRP	Global Fund Technical Review Panel
ILGA	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association	UBRAF	UNAIDS Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework
ISP	Inadequately Served Populations	UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
KPIF	Key Populations Investment Fund	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
LFA	Global Fund Local Fund Agent	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender	WHO	World Health Organization
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation		
MSM	Men who have sex with men		

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General Situation in EECA

2016 saw the continuation of certain troubling trends with respect to LGBT rights and the HIV response in the EECA region. Draconian legislation, limiting the rights of LGBT people and restricting the access of MSM and trans* people to HIV services, remains on the books across the region. Moreover, new data shows that HIV prevalence among MSM is rapidly increasing in many EECA countries. At the same time, funding for HIV programs targeting MSM and trans* people is drying up, as international donors, such as the Global Fund, withdraw from the region.

In April, the European Parliament adopted a report "On implementation and review of the EU-Central Asia Strategy," which highlights concerns over freedom of the media, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly and association. The report makes specific reference to infringements upon the rights of LGBT people and calls upon all countries of the region to end discrimination and ensure the rights of LGBT people.

ECOM's Executive Director, Vitaly Djuma, also remarked upon conservative trends

in the region with respect to LGBT rights in his speech at the Civil Society Hearings side event, "Unfinished Business: HIV among gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men." Djuma decried the introduction of legislation prohibiting the so-called propaganda of "non-traditional sexual orientations" in countries such as Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Regulations imposed by Russian legislation on NGOs receiving funding from abroad has made the work of civil society there more difficult. Meanwhile, Estonia continues to be the only country in the region to recognize same-sex unions. Other EECA countries, including Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, sought to amend their constitutions to prohibit same-sex marriages.

The report of the European Parliament and Djuma's speech both echo the findings of ECOM's legislative analysis report, published at the beginning of 2016. According to the report, MSM and trans* people in the region are subject to discrimination, stigma, violence, and other human rights violations on a daily basis. Social stigma, discriminatory legislation, and homo- or transphobic violence remain pervasive in EECA countries. Unfortunately, governments have refused to implement greater human rights protections for these vulnerable populations. As a result, MSM and trans* people suffer from high rates of depression, suicide, and HIV and STI infection.

The troubling political and legislative environment in EECA has had an effect on the HIV epidemic among MSM and trans* people in the region. Regular population studies of groups vulnerable to HIV infection show that

**First in the EECA,
the PrEP Training
was Held in Tbilisi,
Georgia**

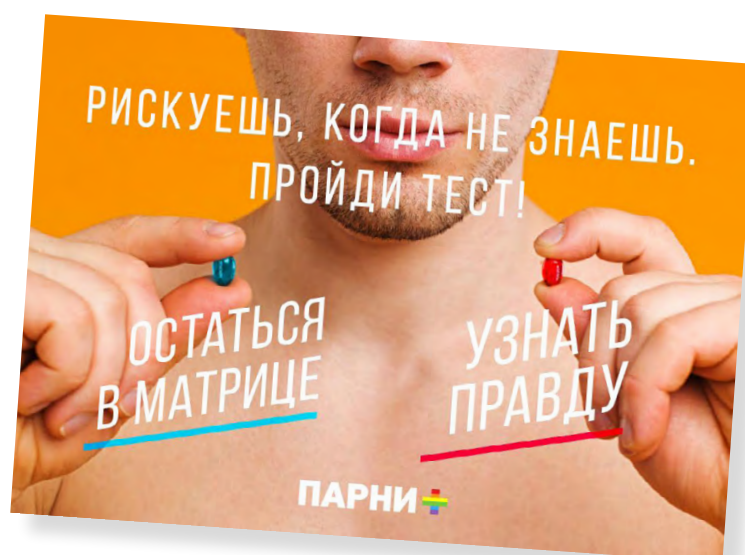


HIV prevalence among MSM in 7 countries (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine) continues to increase. At the same time, in the majority of EECA countries, less than 60% of MSM are covered by HIV testing services, a rate insufficient to effectively control the epidemic.

Unfortunately, as HIV prevalence rates continue to rise, and as MSM and trans* people fail to have sufficient access to HIV services, a decrease in funding from international sources is also taking place. The Global Fund, previously the main source of funding for programs targeting MSM, is encouraging countries to transition to national funding for HIV programs as it scales down its funding in the region. However, the governments of EECA countries refuse to fund targeted programs aimed at MSM and trans* people, leaving these populations without the adequate resources to combat the HIV epidemic.

Despite these troubling trends and major setbacks for the fight against the HIV epidemic in EECA, there were several small victories and beacons of hope. In June, following the disappointing results of the United Nations High Level Meeting On Ending AIDS, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) announced that it would create a \$100 million Key Populations Investment Fund (KPIF) to expand access to HIV prevention and treatment services for key populations. In addition, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted an historic resolution on the "Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity" and mandated that an independent expert on the subject be appointed. These developments will prove to be invaluable in future work to combat the HIV epidemic among key populations in the region.

In EECA, civil society enjoyed some success in the field of HIV testing, thanks to



the effective implementation of two projects by MSM and HIV-service organizations in Russia. In August, a project funded by ECOM partner Phoenix PLUS was underway in 16 of Russia's largest cities, including Saint Petersburg, Krasnodar, Samara, and Novosibirsk, allowing GBT people to undergo testing at community-based organizations. This initiative provides greater testing coverage for GBT people in Russia and seeks to achieve the ambitious 90-90-90 target.

In December, another testing project was launched in Russia that seeks to ensure anonymous and confidential HIV testing for LGBT people. Through the SAFE BOX project, supported by the Elton John Foundation, LGBT people can obtain a self-testing kit via post or at the office of an LGBT organization. Unfortunately, due to stigma and fear of discrimination, many LGBT people do not regularly get tested for HIV. This program will allow them to do so anonymously and with confidence.

In addition, to testing programs, a PrEP pilot program was launched in EECA for the first time. The pilot project will be implemented under a Global Fund grant in Tbilisi, Georgia. The project will include a communications strategy to inform the LGBT community about PrEP, as well as a mechanism for recruiting and retaining clients. Over 200 clients are expected to participate in the program.

Russia's Phoenix PLUS Self-Testing Project Poster.

LGBT/MSM Community-based HIV Testing to Be Carried out in 16 Cities of Russia

Evgeny Pisemsky



Gay, bisexual men, and transgender people now have an opportunity to undergo HIV testing in community-based organizations in 16 cities of Russia. We discussed this news with Evgeny Pisemsky, who is in charge of general project coordination at «Phoenix PLUS» NGO, based in Orel, Russia.

Tell us about the project – who's working on it and why do we need this?

It's not actually a single project, but a complex initiative, supported by the Global Fund (and AHF in one city).

9 LGBT organizations in Russia are running community-based testing for the very first time. It used to be the case that LGBT people had little involvement with community prevention work, as it was mostly service organizations carrying out such activities.

Why is it that GBT people can't just undergo testing using existing opportunities and why is community-based testing more effective?

It's clear that having more opportunities provides greater coverage. In order to reach the 90-90-90 goals, we have to create more opportunities for HIV testing. The less obstacles we have, the closer we will get to achieving one of the goals, of having 90% of people knowing their HIV status.

Are there any other services for those wishing to undergo testing (i.e. counseling, linkage to treatment)?

All 16 projects have pre- and post-test counseling, and are also able to accompany clients to AIDS centers.

This is the minimum level of services offered to everyone, the rest depends on capacity of individual organizations. For instance,

there are support groups for HIV positive gay men in Moscow, St Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, and Krasnoyarsk. There are also transgender support groups in Moscow and St Petersburg. Most of the projects organize seminars on HIV for LGBT people, and also offer psychological support services.

How do projects engage with trans*populations?

"Action" (St Petersburg) and "T9 NSK" (Novosibirsk) plan to implement testing just for trans*people. "LaSky" initiative of Moscow also intends to work closely with the trans*community. Testing results will be used to fill gaps in the poor, existing data on trans*populations in the EECA region.

What can be done by ECOM to make testing quality and coverage better in EECA?

Post-Soviet states have similar situations regarding HIV prevalence, including among MSM. I am convinced that ECOM can take a leading role in unifying testing approaches and preparing guides for community-led testing. In addition, we must promote better funding opportunities for organizations in the EECA region to carry out testing programmes.

We rarely use regional experience and are often unaware of prevention programs in neighbouring countries. It is important that we promote the sharing of experiences across the region and it is within ECOM's power to do so.

ECOM's Internal Developments



ECOM Team at
the New Office.

During 2016, ECOM devoted much effort to the organization's internal development, more than doubling its staff, diversifying its fundraising sources, and solidifying its international partnerships.

ECOM added six new staff members to its team in 2016. Their combined experience, expertise, and knowledge will ensure effective implementation of ECOM's future programs and projects.

In February, Gennady Roshchupkin was appointed as Technical Support Coordinator, tasked with developing ECOM's Technical Support strategy, budget, and work plan, as well as managing provision of technical support to ECOM's members and partner organizations. Gennady has significant experience in providing technical support to and developing the capacity of NGOs and affected communities, having been involved

in the HIV response in EECA since 1991.

Maxim Kasianczuk was brought on as ECOM's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Coordinator in September. He will provide leadership and guidance on M&E for ECOM's programs and ensure effective development and management of ECOM's M&E system. Thanks to his extensive academic experience, Maxim is an established high-level expert on MSM, LGBT, HIV/AIDS and human rights issues in EECA. Maxim holds a PhD and has authored over 200 publications on issues related to HIV/AIDS, human rights, and key populations.

In November, ECOM hired Paata Sabelashvili as its Advocacy Coordinator. Paata will be responsible for the effective development and implementation of ECOM's advocacy strategy to ensure an increased access of MSM and Trans* people

to HIV services in EECA. Paata has many years of experience working in several different LGBT community and harm reduction organizations, both in Georgia and on the European level, serving as a Board Member at ILGA Europe.

In December, Elena German was selected to fill ECOM's Program Director position. Having worked for more than 15 years in the field of HIV services in Ukraine, Elena will be responsible for managing all aspects of ECOM's current activities, including planning, organization and overseeing program and project implementation, managing the staff of program departments, and establishing and maintaining strategic partnerships with ECOM members, partner organizations, donors, and other stakeholders.

Yuri Yoursky joined ECOM in December as its Legal Issues Advocacy Officer. Yuri previously worked as a program director at the Ukrainian Public Organization "Gay Alliance Ukraine", where he was responsible for several projects related to the protection of LGBT rights and increasing public awareness of fundamental rights. Yuri will deal with the legal aspects of ECOM's advocacy strategy to ensure an increased access of MSM and trans* people to HIV services in EECA.

In December, ECOM also appointed Natalja Kauzova as Finances and Administration Director. Natalja has substantial experience working in finance and as an accountant and will oversee ECOM's financial management.

As part of efforts to solidify and diversify funding for ECOM's management

and program implementation, ECOM looked to attract funding from a wide range of international partners. In December, ECOM finalized and signed a grant agreement with the Global Fund for funding of the regional program "Right to Health: Community Actions to Increase Access of MSM and Transgender People to HIV Services in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia." (For more information on this, please refer to chapter on ECOM and the Global Fund p 10).

ECOM also continued to build new international partnerships and maintain its relationships with existing partners. In August, ECOM became a member of ILGA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), the biggest international LGBT organization. ECOM's membership in ILGA will provide the coalition with additional advocacy opportunities, as well as the chance to build new partnerships with other organizations operating regionally and internationally. In addition to joining ILGA, ECOM continued its fruitful collaboration with existing partners, including UNFPA, MSMGF, UNDP, the Global Fund, and other regional key population networks working in EECA.

 [Read more on the ECOM's Secretariat:
ecom.ngo/secretariat/](https://ecom.ngo/secretariat/)

On the Twentieth Anniversary Conference of ILGA-Europe: EECA became a part of the general response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic

Latsin Alijev



The Twentieth Anniversary Conference of ILGA-Europe (International Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans and Intersex Association) concluded on October 22, 2016 in Nicosia, Cyprus. Around 400 LGBT community activists from most European countries, including from the EECA region, took part in the conference. We asked ECOM member and director of the Estonian Network of PLWH, Latsin Alijev about the conference and his impressions of it.

Were the countries of Eastern Europe represented at the conference? How?

I enjoyed the interesting Russian-language workshop 'Focus on Russia', which was held jointly by the Transgender Legal Defense Project and Insight-Ukraine. In this workshop, we discussed real issues related to strategic litigation and legal assistance for transgender people, including problems, methods, and communicating with people.

Legislative issues, court decisions, and the experience of trans* people showed that there are no set procedures for changing one's documents in Russia. This leads to a difference in the number of court applications and the actual number of transgender people in the country. In order to support the community, a group of professional lawyers was established to assist applicants and to accompany them to court.

In Ukraine, «Insight» is an example of solving problems within the framework of existing legislation without using the judicial system. It is important to build a dialogue with transsexual and intersexual people: we are talking about individual, living people, not just impersonal cases. «Insight» carries out constant monitoring of legislation and conducts detailed analyses of judicial practices.

Today, we need a new strategic action plan in support of resolutions on rights and the right to equality. The protection of rights

should be the main goal of the strategy for the near future; while advocating for people's interests is also a key priority.

How do you think we can contribute to improving the situation of gays and other MSM in the countries of EECA by participating in international initiatives like the ILGA-Europe conference?

Activists from LGBT community NGOs and initiative groups from Eastern Europe and Central Asia were widely represented at the conference (Russia, Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Moldova, etc.).

When speaking about the improvement of the situation of gays and other MSM in EECA countries, we can state that many rights issues are integrated with one another. This situation is clearly reflected in the ratings put together by ILGA, which presents a clear picture of equality issues.

The ratings indicate that EECA has become a part of the overall response. Hope remains that in the future, issues related to the health of MSM and gay men will also be monitored, which will create a generation of activists who will be really motivated by similar conferences. It would also be quite helpful to have a new criterion in ILGA's Rainbow Map, which assesses health issues of the LGBT community.

Within the framework of the conference, a rather modest emphasis was placed on health

issues and socially significant diseases, and on the right to prevention, treatment, and support. This reflects the real context of the issue of the relationship between LGBT and HIV: when dealing with rights, we must not forget the fundamental right to health. It is important that ECOM begins to work more closely with ILGA, using their platform to raise the issues of HIV and of male health in particular. It is also necessary to increase the awareness and the motivation of the LGBT community to pay more attention to the role of the LGBT movement in the HIV/AIDS response.

ECOM and the Global Fund

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) continues to be one of ECOM's closest partners. Following the signing of the grant agreement for ECOM's regional program, the Global Fund is also set to become ECOM's biggest donor. During 2016, ECOM continued its close collaboration with the Global Fund and ramped up preparations for the implementation of its regional program.

ECOM's Regional Program— Right to Health: Community Actions to Increase Access of MSM and Transgender People to HIV Services in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Following the success of the regional consultation on ECOM's regional program concept note, held in Istanbul in November 2015, ECOM proceeded with the development of the final version of the concept note at the beginning of 2016. In January, ECOM's

Steering Committee opted to include Georgia as the fifth target country for the program, along with Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Macedonia.

Shortly thereafter, ECOM submitted the concept note for the regional program to the Global Fund in February. The three main objectives of the program, as detailed in the final version of the concept note are: (1) to contribute to an increase in MSM and trans* community participation in decision-making in national HIV responses; (2) to contribute to building the capacity of MSM and trans* organizations by strengthening organizational structures, technical competence, and fundraising capacity; and (3) to strengthen enabling environments for HIV services for MSM and trans* people, by fighting stigma and discrimination, promoting and protecting human rights, and removing legal and policy barriers.

In May, ECOM was thrilled to learn that the Global Fund had approved its concept note. The Global Fund's Technical Review Panel (TRP) found the concept note to be technically sound and strategically focused, and noted that all proposed interventions are of the highest priority.

During the months following the approval of the concept note, ECOM began collaborating with the Global Fund on the grant-making process. In conjunction with this, ECOM appointed Maxim Kasianczuk as Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator. As head of ECOM's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) program, Maxim will provide leadership and guidance on M&E and ensure the effective development and management



of ECOM's M&E system for the regional program.

For the first time in the history of ECOM, there is a complete system allowing the organization to not only evaluate the achievement of individual phases of its programs, but to also make informed managerial decisions based on carefully selected indicators. The M&E system developed for the regional program will serve as the basis for ECOM's overall M&E system and will include monitoring and evaluating other ECOM projects, as well as the implementation of its strategic plan. Presently, ECOM is developing an integrated management computer system, which will include both program and financial indicators.

The regional program's M&E system is comprised of three main components. ECOM will first conduct several related basic studies (quality of strategic information in CEECA countries, organizational capacity of national partners, prejudice towards LGBT people among people and institutions providing HIV and other social services, internalized homophobia among the LGBT communities in CEECA countries). Subsequently, ECOM will monitor the timeliness and quality of the implementation of individual phases of the project (the milestones). At the end, ECOM will repeat the basic assessment studies. This will enable ECOM to ensure that all planned activities were completed and to see what changes occurred in the countries within the framework of the regional program.


In September, ECOM received two members of the Global Fund's Local Fund Agent



Maxim Kasianchuk is in Charge of ECOM's M&E System

(LFA) at its offices in Tallinn, Estonia. The LFA officers were tasked with conducting a capacity assessment and with advising ECOM on further grant-making processes. Members of ECOM staff conducted their own site visits to Georgia, Armenia, and Macedonia in order to meet with country partners and discuss plans for the upcoming implementation of the regional program.

ECOM was pleased to sign the grant agreement for its regional program with the Global Fund in November. According to the final terms of the agreement, the budget for the three-year program will be € 2,998,076, of which 30% will be directed to the activities of communities at the national level. The remaining funds will support implementation of regional-level activities, including programmatic capacity development of communities. The program will run from January 2017 through December 2019. ECOM intends to select sub-recipients in the coming months.

 [Read more on the Regional Program: ecom.ngo/regional-program-description/](http://ecom.ngo/regional-program-description/)

ECOM and other Global Fund-related Activities

In addition to activities related to its regional program, ECOM was also involved in a number of Global Fund initiatives and meetings in 2016. In May, Vitaly Djuma traveled to Amsterdam, Netherlands to participate in the "Expert Group Meeting of Communities & Civil Society on the Global Fund Strategy 2017-2022 & Sustainability and Transitioning." The objectives of this meeting included informing communities and civil society network representatives on the new Global Fund Strategy 2017-2022 Framework, Eligibility Policy, Global Fund

Sustainability, Transition and Co-Financing Policy, and the Allocation Methodology 2017-2019, and strategizing for medium- and long-term advocacy related to financial sustainability.

Gennady Roshchupkin was brought on as a trainer for the Russia Global Fund Training for MSM Outreach Workers. The training was aimed at MSM outreach workers and focused on increasing their professional competencies and on community systems strengthening among MSM populations in Russia. The training was held over four days in May in Moscow, Russia.

In October, ECOM held a call for applicants to work on case studies on the involvement of MSM and trans* people in Global Fund processes in countries of EECA. The project will have consultants examine specific examples of best practices related to the involvement of MSM and/or trans* people in Global Fund processes, including participation in national or local working groups on HIV, membership in national country coordinating mechanisms (CCM), involvement in the development of national HIV/AIDS programs, and influence over budget discussions or decisions related to national funding of HIV/AIDS programs. The results of these case studies will be published by ECOM once the consultants have completed their work.

United Nations 2016 High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS



ECOM's Vitaly
Djuma in NYC.

The United Nations 2016 High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS (HLM) took place from June 8-10 in New York, United States. The meeting was intended to bring together government officials, representatives of international organizations, the private sector, civil society, PLHIV, and other stakeholders to

focus on the importance of accelerating the response to HIV and putting an end to the global AIDS epidemic by 2030 in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The HLM offered ECOM an invaluable opportunity to advocate for the rights and needs of MSM and trans* people of EECA at

the global level and to ensure their inclusion in the global response to the HIV epidemic. Unfortunately, as early as May, ECOM and over 20 other NGOs from around the world were presented with significant obstacles when a coalition of conservative states blocked them from registering to attend the HLM. It later came to light that these organizations were banned from attending the meeting due to their support for so-called "liberal causes", including LGBT rights. Despite this setback, ECOM redoubled its advocacy efforts and continued preparations for the meeting.

Shortly before the HLM, ECOM, along with 7 other regional networks, developed and published the position paper "Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Let's not Lose Track!" detailing the catastrophic HIV epidemic in EECA and the necessary steps that must be taken to ensure that EECA catches up with the rest of the world and moves towards ending the AIDS epidemic in the region by 2030. The comprehensive advocacy document was widely disseminated among ECOM's partners, at the HLM itself, as well as after the meeting.

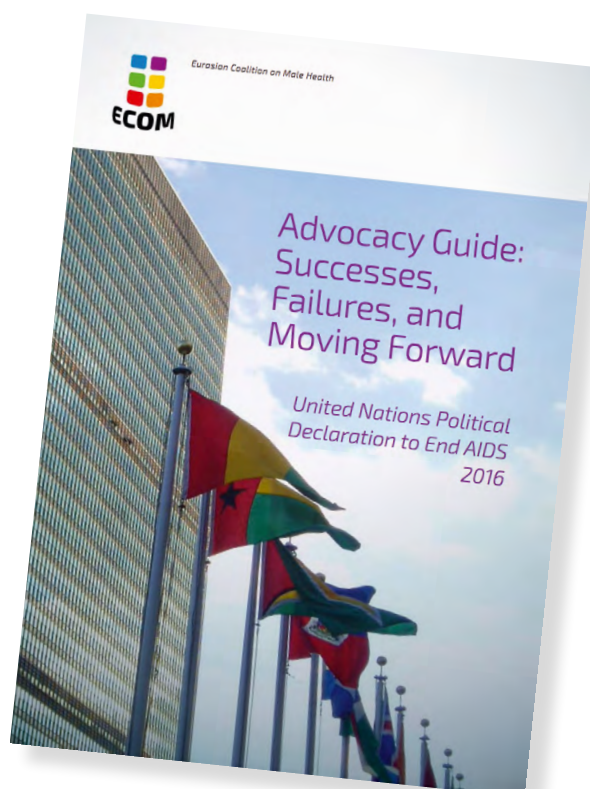
ECOM's Executive Director, Vitaly Djuma, traveled to New York during the HLM, despite ECOM having been officially barred from attending the event. Djuma took part in actions protesting the exclusion of LGBT organizations from participating in the HLM, and also attended side events where he was able to engage in further advocacy on behalf of MSM and trans* people in the region and meet with other activists from around the world.

At the conclusion of the HLM, United Nations member states adopted the "Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast-Track to Accelerate the Fight against HIV and to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2030." Unfortunately, the Political Declaration falls short in its treatment of MSM and trans* people, essentially ignoring evidence

showing that these groups and other key populations are consistently at high risk of becoming infected with HIV. This failure to adequately address the HIV epidemic among key populations, including MSM and trans* people, all but ensures that these populations will remain invisible and will fail to receive the necessary resources and support to effectively respond to the HIV epidemic.

In response to the failures of the Political Declaration, ECOM, in cooperation with the Global Forum on MSM and HIV (MSMGF) and the Global Platform to Fast-Track the HIV and Human Rights Responses Among Gay and Bisexual Men and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men (The Platform), published an "Advocacy Guide: Successes, Failures, and Moving Forward." The Advocacy Guide analyzes the paragraphs of the Political Declaration relevant to MSM and trans* issues and identifies entry points and barriers for advocates seeking to address the UN Political Declaration. This Advocacy Guide will serve as a useful tool for developing future advocacy strategies, in light of the failures of states parties at the HLM.

Read more on the Advocacy Guide: ecom.ngo/declaration-advocacy-guide/



Advocacy Events

Attending conferences, meetings, trainings, and other advocacy events is a fundamental part of ECOM's work. The presence of ECOM's staff and members at these events ensures that the Coalition can effectively advocate for the rights of MSM and trans* people and that it remains an important and visible stakeholder at the national, regional, and international levels. In 2016, ECOM staff and members took part in over 30 such events, in places ranging from New York City to Dushanbe to Durban. This section details highlights from advocacy events, in which ECOM participated. A full list of events can be found in the table below.

In March, ECOM participated in the 5th Eastern Europe and Central Asia AIDS Conference in Moscow. ECOM held its own session, "Prevention and Treatment Particularities among MSM Populations." National and regional experts, including Executive Director, Vitaly Djuma, gave informative presentations to over 40 participants. ECOM also organized a seminar on regional cooperation in the context of the response to the HIV epidemic among MSM and trans* people in EECA.

In April, Vitaly Djuma was invited to speak at the Civil Society Hearings side event, "Unfinished Business: HIV among gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men." Djuma identified the challenges faced by MSM, trans* people, and by civil society organizations in the region. At the same time, he pointed to some positive trends, such as the adoption of antidiscrimination legislation protecting LGBT people in certain countries of the region.

ECOM took part in a training in Tbilisi,



ECOM's Advocacy Officer Marcus Oda at the 38th Meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board

Georgia in May dedicated to the development of a pilot project for PrEP. The training, aimed at community representatives and medical professionals, explored how to ensure a high level of knowledge on how to support MSM and trans* people using PrEP, how to facilitate cooperation with doctors, and how the overall scheme of PrEP services should look. The training was organized jointly by ECOM and LGBT Georgia, with significant input from ECOM's Technical

"As a gay man living with HIV for almost 30 years, as an activist of my community, and a citizen of my country, I hope that, in Amsterdam, we will discuss the RESULTS of universal access to testing and treatment programs, the expansion of sexual education in schools, and the availability of PrEP for those most at risk."

*Gennady Roshchupkin at AIDS 2016
Conference Closing Ceremony*

Support Coordinator, Gennady Roshchupkin.

In May, ECOM's Program & Advocacy Officer Marcus Oda attended the 38th Meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) in Geneva. The meeting focused on reviewing UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé's report on the HLM, the report of the NGO delegation on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of people most affected by HIV, as well as the Unified Budget, Results, and Accountability Framework (UBRAF). A third day was also devoted to the thematic segment on the role of communities in ending AIDS by 2030. Marcus was invited to intervene in discussions and made remarks before member states' delegations on the exclusion of ECOM from the HLM and on the need for better access to HIV services and greater human rights protections for LGBT people.

The 2016 International AIDS Conference took place in July in Durban, South Africa. Gennady Roshchupkin was honored to be selected as one of a handful of speakers, and one of the only ones to represent the community, at the closing ceremony. Gennady's speech looked to the future and expressed hope that universal access to testing and treatment programs, the expansion of sexual

education in schools, and the wide availability of PrEP will be realities before the next International AIDS Conference.

The U.S. Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons, Randy W. Berry, met ECOM's staff and board members during an official visit to Estonia. ECOM was able to discuss MSM- and LGBT-related issues in EECA countries, shared information about ECOM's activities, and identified challenges in the fight against the HIV epidemic in the region.

In conjunction with the IX National LGBT Movement and MSM Service Conference of Ukraine, ECOM and the East Europe & Central Asia Union of People Living with HIV (ECUO), organized a pre-conference in order to establish cooperation and share experiences between MSM and LGBT activists from different EECA countries. Much of the pre-conference focused on barriers preventing MSM from accessing the HIV continuum of care in EECA. A separate session co-hosted by UNDP, UNFPA, and ECOM was devoted to the implementation and use of the MSMIT. ECOM also provided funding for the main conference.

These examples represent just a small portion of advocacy events that ECOM participated in during 2016. A complete list of events can be found in the table below.

Title	Participant(s)	Location	Date
Global Platform to Fast-Track HIV and Human Rights Responses with Gay, Bisexual and Other Men Who Have Sex With Men	Vitaly Djuma	Geneva, Switzerland	January 12-13, 2016
Meeting of the Global and Regional Networks on CEECA: Our Strengths, Key Challenges and Responses	Vitaly Djuma; Gennady Roshchupkin; Daniyar Orsekov	Amsterdam, Netherlands	January 29-30, 2016
Georgia CCM Civil Society Forum	Gennady Roshchupkin	Tbilisi, Georgia	February 17, 2016
Regional Stock Taking Meeting on the Implementation of the Investment Approach in EECA	Vitaly Djuma	Vienna, Austria	February 23-25, 2016
Third Extended Meeting of the Regional Technical Advisory Group Within the Regional Program "Harm Reduction Works—Fund It!"	Vitaly Djuma; Gennady Roshchupkin	Vilnius, Lithuania	March 30-April 1, 2016
Fifth Eastern Europe and Central Asia HIV/AIDS Conference	Vitaly Djuma; Ivan Lavrentjev	Moscow, Russia	March 23-25, 2016
HIV UBRAF 2016 Work Plan Meeting	Marcus Oda	Istanbul, Turkey	March 9-10, 2016
Side Event to the Civil Society Hearings on HIV and AIDS: Unfinished Business	Vitaly Djuma	New York, USA	April 5, 2016
ECUO Strategic Planning Meeting	Gennady Roshchupkin	Kyiv, Ukraine	April 15-17, 2016
Meeting of the Advisory Committees for the Development of European Action Plans for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and Viral Hepatitis in the WHO European Region, 2016-2021	Gennady Roshchupkin	Copenhagen, Denmark	April 4-5, 2016
15th LGBT Festival "Moldova Pride"	Marcus Oda	Chisinau, Moldova	May 17-22, 2016
Expert Group Meeting of Communities & Civil Society on the Global Fund Strategy 2017-2022 & Sustainability and Transitioning	Vitaly Djuma	Amsterdam, Netherlands	May 10-11, 2016
Russia Global Fund Training for MSM Outreach Workers	Gennady Roshchupkin	Moscow, Russia	May 1-4, 2016
United Nations High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS	Vitaly Djuma	New York, USA	June 8-10, 2016
UNFPA Mission to Tajikistan	Marcus Oda	Dushanbe, Kulyab, Khujand, Tajikistan	June 6-13, 2016
CRG Workshop Georgia	Gennady Roshchupkin	Tbilisi, Georgia	June 19-22, 2016
JTraining: Budget Advocacy and Evaluation of Investments and Priorities for HIV Prevention, Diagnostic, Treatment, and Care Services	Vitaly Djuma; Marcus Oda	Kyiv, Ukraine	June 21-23, 2016
Russian MSM Expert Committee Meeting	Gennady Roshchupkin	Moscow, Russia	May 31-June 1, 2016
International AIDS Conference 2016	Gennady Roshchupkin	Durban, South Africa	July 18-22, 2016
Training of Trainers on Implementing Comprehensive HIV Programmes with Men Who Have Sex With Men	Gennady Roshchupkin; Marcus Oda	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	August 1-2, 2016
Ukraine LGBT Conference	Vitaly Djuma	Kyiv, Ukraine	September 30 - October 2, 2016
WHO Regional Technical Consultation on Dissemination of the WHO Guidelines on HIV and Viral Hepatitis for 12 Eastern European and Central Asian Countries	Gennady Roshchupkin	Minsk, Belarus	September 26-29, 2016
Sustainability and Transition Coordination Summit	Vitaly Djuma, Gennady Roshchupkin	Vilnius, Lithuania	October 20-21, 2016
EECA Regional Consultation on HIV and SRHR among Young Key Populations	Ivan Lavrentjev	Kyiv, Ukraine	November 2-3, 2016
Strategic Meeting for Representatives of HIV-Service and LGBT Organizations	Gennady Roshchupkin	Moscow, Russia	October 26-29, 2016
First Russian National Conference of HIV Service Organizations and the LGBT Movement	Gennady Roshchupkin	Moscow, Russia	December 16-18, 2016

Legislative Analysis

In May, ECOM fully published its legislative analysis following months of hard work on the project. The project, carried out in cooperation with the Regional HIV Legal Network, analyzes legislative and regulatory acts and documents related to HIV and the rights of MSM and trans* people in 9 countries of EECA. The comprehensive project is comprised of four components, including a general report on the EECA region, individual country reports drafted by legal experts and national representatives, country factsheets summarizing the legislation of each country, as well as a regional factsheet presenting all of the information in a succinct manner. The project surveys the following nine countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine.

The project addresses key issues related to the rights of people living with HIV, gay, bisexual and other MSM and trans* people, including: travel and immigration bans on PLHIV, criminalization of HIV transmission, bans on blood donation by MSM, forced medical procedures, criminalization of same-sex sexual activity, same-sex unions and adoption by same-sex partners, "gay propaganda" laws, gender identity policies and procedures, antidiscrimination protections for LGBT people, hate crimes legislation, and community advocacy initiatives.

The report finds that MSM and trans* people in the region are disproportionately

affected by the HIV epidemic, often lacking access to necessary health services. In addition to an increased risk of HIV infection, these groups are subject to discrimination, stigma, violence and other human rights abuses on a daily basis. Governments in the region have largely refused to implement greater human rights protections for these vulnerable populations, despite being subject to international human rights obligations to prohibit discrimination, torture, and other degrading treatment and to protect the freedoms of expression and assembly of all citizens.

In addition to the difficulties faced by individual members of MSM and trans* populations, legislation and unfriendly social climates in these countries also pose problems for community-led advocacy in the region. Civil society organizations and other community groups face significant barriers to implementing successful advocacy initiatives aimed at bringing about legislative change.

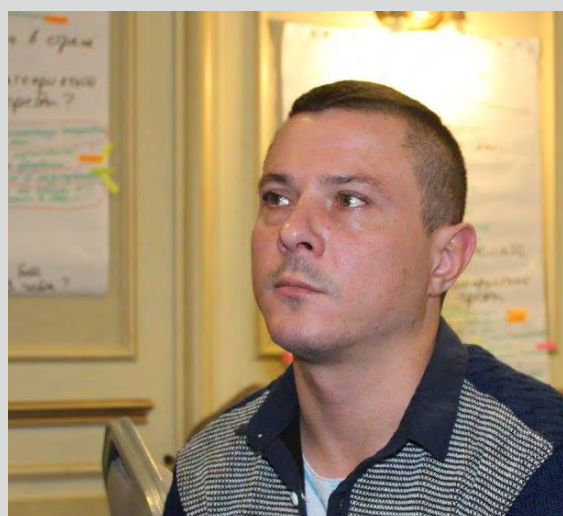
ECOM's report examines all of these issues in detail and makes recommendations to governments and civil society organizations, aimed at improving the legislative environment in the region. ECOM will use the report to inform future activities and projects, as well as for advocacy purposes at the national, regional, and international levels. Each component of the report is available in electronic format on ECOM's website.



New HIV Services Standard Adopted in Moldova with Special Attention Given to MSM

Veaceslav Mulear

On December 23, 2015 the standard of quality of HIV prevention services among key populations, including MSM, was adopted by order of the Ministry of Health of Moldova. An annex outlining a package of services for MSM was also included in the document. We spoke with the co-author of the standard, ECOM member Veaceslav Mulear.



What is the essence of these amendments?

These standards ensure the implementation of existing regulations on HIV and are based on recommendations developed by WHO, UNAIDS and other international organizations.

How will the standard be reflected on the NGOs of Moldova?

From now on, the public funding of services for HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support among key populations will be based on these standards for the quality of service

provision. In the future, services will be introduced on the basis of these standards (especially when funding from the state budget is possible).

How quickly will these amendments be implemented and how soon will key populations experience these innovations?

The standards are already being implemented, as they are mentioned in the National Programme for HIV. However, there was formerly no legal basis for these standards and, at the moment, they are being financed

by international sources. This amendment will provide greater stability for the package of services.

Currently, what are the most critical barriers to access to HIV prevention and treatment services in Moldova?

At the moment, the most problematic issue is the political instability in the country, as there is currently no government. The political instability in the country can change the overall direction of the country, which could adversely affect the LGBT community.

Advocacy Efforts

Advocacy activities comprise a large part of ECOM's work throughout the year. These activities extend beyond participation in regional and international conferences and meetings, and entail publishing numerous position papers, letters of support, and other materials to further ECOM's goals and to assist partner organizations and affected communities. In 2016, ECOM published a number of such documents and widely disseminated them in electronic and paper formats to its members, partners, donors, and other stakeholders. In addition, ECOM signed on to advocacy statements of partner organizations to support common causes and further collaboration with partners.

In May, ECOM completed its legislative analysis project, a comprehensive report analyzing legislative and regulatory acts and documents related to HIV and the rights of MSM and trans* people in 9 countries of EECA. The project is comprised of a general report on EECA, individual country reports, country factsheets summarizing the relevant legislation of each country, as well as a regional factsheet presenting all of the information in a succinct manner. The results of the project will provide ECOM and its partners with crucial data and information to use for future advocacy activities.

Ahead of the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS (HLM), ECOM, along with 7 other regional networks, developed and published the position paper "Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Let's not Lose Track!" detailing the catastrophic HIV epidemic in EECA and the necessary steps that must be taken to ensure that EECA is successful

in ending the AIDS epidemic in the region by 2030. The position paper was widely disseminated among ECOM's partners and at the HLM itself. (See chapter on High-Level Meeting p 13 for further information)

Following the HLM, ECOM played a key role in the development of the "Advocacy Guide: Successes, Failures, and Moving Forward." The Guide analyzes the paragraphs of the Political Declaration relevant to MSM and trans* issues and identifies entry points and barriers for advocates seeking to address the UN Political Declaration. This Advocacy Guide will serve as a useful tool for developing future advocacy strategies, in light of the failures at the HLM. (See chapter on High-Level Meeting p 13 for further information).

➤ [Read more on the Regional Networks Joint Position Paper: ecom.ngo/eeca-position-hlm/](http://ecom.ngo/eeca-position-hlm/)

ECOM released a position paper in conjunction with World AIDS Day at the beginning of December. The position paper details the worsening health situation among MSM and trans* people in EECA. The paper indicates that HIV prevalence among MSM in 7 countries of the region continues to increase, while less than 60% of MSM are covered by HIV testing services in the majority of countries of the region. The paper calls upon stakeholders to strengthen advocacy



sustainability and expand HIV services, to ensure national funding of targeted HIV programs for MSM and trans* people, and to provide technical support to communities and governmental structures in the region.

Read more on December 1 Statement: ecom.ngo/ecom-publishes-position-statement-for-world-aids-day/

In December, ECOM addressed a letter to the Prime Minister of Estonia, calling upon the Estonian EU Presidency to prioritize responses to tuberculosis, hepatitis C, and HIV in 2017. In particular, the letter highlights the funding crisis affecting EECA and the need for greater investment in programs combatting these epidemics.

In addition, ECOM recently addressed a letter to key members of the Ukrainian government, including President Petr Poroshenko, in support of a bill to decriminalize sex work in the country. ECOM considers it indispensable to engage with representatives of national governments, and will continue to advocate for the rights of MSM, trans* people, and other vulnerable groups in the future.

Aside from its own advocacy materials, ECOM was also responsible for publishing the Russian translation of "The global response to HIV in men who have sex with men," first published in English in *The Lancet*, a well-known weekly peer-reviewed general medical journal. The article details the challenges that MSM face in ensuring their human rights and obtaining access to HIV services. The Russian translation of the article will undoubtedly serve as an excellent

resource for advocacy activities in the region.

Supporting partner organizations is essential to ensuring an active and effective civil society response to the HIV epidemic. To this end, ECOM was honored to provide letters of support to key partners in 2016, in order to assist them with obtaining funding opportunities. ECOM endorsed Right Side NGO's project on trans* issues and rights and provided them with a letter of support to Open Society Foundations—Armenia. ECOM was also pleased to provide a letter of support for APCOM's application to PEPFAR's Key Populations Investment Fund (KPIF).

ECOM was also one of over 600 NGOs to sign on to a statement delivered to the Human Rights Council in June. The statement highlighted the human rights violations faced by LGBT people around the world and called upon the UN Human Rights Council to establish an Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

The Lancet Article
Translation Online: ecom.ngo/lancet-globalnyj-otklik-na-epidemiyu-hiv-msm/



HIV among MSM in EECA

Data obtained between 2015-2016 shows that, in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the HIV epidemic and other epidemics of sexually transmitted infections continue to develop rapidly among MSM.

Regular population studies of groups vulnerable to HIV infection were carried out in only 11 countries, with data from 6 countries (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine) demonstrating a steady increase in the proportion of HIV-positive MSM: a catastrophic increase took place in Georgia (25% of MSM in Tbilisi were found to be HIV positive according to data in 2015, in comparison to 13% in 2012), whereas in the remaining countries, a rapid increase occurred (up to six times higher in Kyrgyzstan).

The prevalence of syphilis in the majority of the countries of the region remains stable (from 2% to 8% in different countries), whereas Tajikistan has seen a twofold increase over the past five years (from 5% in 2011 to 9% in 2015). The stability indicator demonstrates the inadequacy of prevention measures.

Global initiatives, such as "90-90-90", are focused on accelerating the eradication of AIDS. In particular, these initiatives assume effective HIV testing coverage of vulnerable groups (90%) and beginning ARV therapy immediately after an HIV diagnosis.

However, in the majority of the countries of the region (9 out of 10, for which there is data), less than 60% of MSM are covered by HIV testing services, which is clearly

Changing the position of governments will only be possible by mobilizing organizations and activists from the LGBT community to participate in active advocacy, and by providing them with quality data on the effect of MSM and trans people on the HIV epidemic and on the effectiveness of existing interventions.*

insufficient for the effective control of the HIV epidemic. Data on the coverage of HIV-positive MSM with ARV therapy is available only in Ukraine.

As a whole in the region, the coverage of MSM with preventative services has stabilized around 40-60%. In order to increase coverage, it is necessary to develop new approaches to attract MSM and trans* people to participate in prevention programs with the support of community-based organizations, as well as to prevent discrimination and rights violations on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

In order to properly plan the relevant national budgets, it is necessary to know the population sizes of vulnerable groups. However, special studies on the evaluation of population sizes are only regularly carried out in Georgia and Ukraine. For most countries, data on population sizes are outdated (dating from 5+ years ago).

Together with the increase in HIV prevalence, a decrease in funding from

international sources is also taking place – until now, the Global Fund has been the main source of funding for programs targeting MSM, but is currently encouraging countries to transition to national funding for HIV programs. However, the governments of countries of the region refuse to fund targeted programs aimed at MSM and trans* people, arguing that, firstly, these two groups have no significant effect on the growth of the HIV epidemic in the country in general, and, secondly, that prevention and treatment programs aimed at the general population are effective for MSM and trans* people as well.

In order to change the existing situation as quickly as possible, ECOM calls upon:

- **GAY AND TRANS* COMMUNITIES:** to strengthen advocacy sustainability and expand HIV services;
- **GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURES:** to ensure national funding of targeted HIV programs for MSM and trans* people;
- **INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURES:** to provide technical support to communities and governmental structures in the region.

ECOM collects relevant data and keeps the information on HIV prevalence among MSM in the EECA region (and Macedonia) up-to-date. In 2015, several countries (Georgia, Tajikistan, Ukraine) have seen publication of new data, which allow more adequate programming for MSM in the region.

	Size estimation	Year of last PSE	% HIV	% MSM+ who know their status	% on ARV	% 0 viral load	% HBV	% HCV	% Syph	Knowledge ¹	Coverage ²	Testing ³	Condom use ⁴
Armenia	12500	2016	0,8	62,0	50,0	n/a	0,3	n/a	0,0 (?)	74,8	39,7	32,5	80,4
Azerbaijan	6572	2011	2,0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	23,5	24,5	28,5
Belarus	60000	2014	5,7	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,3	2,7	2,1	46,6	70,1	64,1	64,0
Estonia	9000	2010	3,0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	36,6	52,7
Georgia	17200	2015	20,7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11,1	33,3	91,0	52,0	44,3	69,6
Kazakhstan	39800	2015	3,2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6,4	n/a	n/a	62,7	70,7
Kyrgyzstan	22000	2013	6,3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,6	7,9	56,8	47,9	40,0	81,6
Latvia	12280	2010	7,8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	25,7	39,8
Lithuania	17760	2010	2,7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19,8	42,3
Macedonia	19300	2014	1,9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,5	0,6	49,2	n/a	19,0	51,8
Moldova	13500	2013	5,7	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,8	4,8	14,6	50,7	n/a	24,4	49,2
Russia	n/a		7,0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,4	n/a	n/a
Tajikistan	13400	2015	2,7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7,4	8,0	28,6	68,1	57,1	75,8
Turkmenistan	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ukraine	176000	2015	8,5	23,0	6,0	n/a	2,7	4,0	2,7	60,0	54,0	54,6	70,9
Uzbekistan	n/a		3,3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,0	1,3	54,7	n/a	56,1	94,6

1 % MSM, who gave right answers about HIV and AIDS (GARPR indicator "Knowledge").

2 % MSM, covered with HIV services (GARPR indicator "Coverage").

3 % MSM, tested on HIV during last 12 months (GARPR indicator "Testing").

4 % MSM among having anal sex with men during last 6 months, who use condom (GARPR indicator "Condom use").

There is a High Level of Transphobia in Kazakhstan

Iskander Xanov

ECOM continues with its series of interviews with community activists from EECA countries. This time we discussed the situation of trans*people in Kazakhstan with Iskander Xanov, a representative of the organization AlmaTQ.

What are AlmaTQ's activities?

We are an initiative that deals with advocacy support for trans*people in Kazakhstan. Our organization is made up of trans*people, whose rights are constantly violated and who have decided to unite in order to contribute to improving the lives of trans*people in Kazakhstan.

Transgender people in Kazakhstan – who are they?

We carried out a study of trans*people in Kazakhstan. We tried to get know their needs, problems, and the discrimination they are facing. 41 participants from 11 towns took part. The results show a high level of discrimination and violence towards trans*people. Many of these cases could be avoided if trans*people had proper identification

documents corresponding to their gender. This problem also affects trans*people when they seek employment or enroll in educational institutions.

How are gender reassignment issues being regulated in Kazakhstan nowadays?

On March 31, 2015 (the International Day of Transgender Visibility) the Ministry of Health published a decree on this issue. Due to these recent developments, transgender people have essentially lost the possibility of undergoing gender reassignment procedures. Now, only people in perfect health, with significant financial resources, and who are willing to undergo sterilization and genital reconstruction surgery are able to undergo these procedures.





Technical Support

ECOM has a robust technical support program through which it provides technical assistance and support to its members and partner organizations. In February, Gennady Roshchupkin was appointed as ECOM's Technical Support Coordinator. In this role, Gennady has been responsible for developing ECOM's Technical Support strategy, budget, and work plan, as well as overseeing the provision of technical support to members and partner organizations.

Throughout 2016, Gennady traveled frequently across the EECA region to participate in trainings, conferences, and consultations. Gennady was often instrumental in organizing these events, preparing materials, or acting as a facilitator. In May, for instance, Gennady traveled to Moscow to take part in a Global Fund training for MSM outreach workers in Russia. His many years working with MSM in Russia and his expertise as a Technical Support Coordinator contributed to the success of the event, which brought together over 20 participants.

Gennady also played a large role in the first training on the MSMIT tool for community members, which took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in August. Gennady assisted with preparations for the training and the development of training materials. He also acted as a facilitator and trainer at the two-day training, which included a general overview of the MSMIT, as well as detailed presentations on each of the six chapters.

In September, Gennady was invited to



attend the WHO Regional Technical Consultation on dissemination of the WHO guidelines on HIV and Viral Hepatitis for 12 Eastern European and Central Asian countries, which took place in Minsk, Belarus. Some of the objectives of the technical consultation included drafting plans and next steps for sequencing the adaptation and implementation of new WHO recommendations, and providing an opportunity for WHO staff and national program managers to have discussions regarding new policy recommendations. Gennady was invited to contribute his expertise by giving a presentation on the role of PrEP in EECA countries.

Within the framework of its Regional Program, "Right to Health", ECOM will expand its Technical Support program. With Gennady's supervision, ECOM staff will continue to take part in such events and ensure that ECOM's members and partners are able to receive the support and assistance needed for effective implementation of their programs and activities.

ECOM's Technical Support Coordinator
Gennady Roshchupkin.

MSMIT

Interest in the tool, “Implementing Comprehensive HIV and STI Programmes with Men Who Have Sex With Men: Practical Guidance for Collaborative Interventions” (MSMIT), continues to grow among ECOM members and partners in EECA. Consequently, ECOM continued its collaboration with the UNFPA in 2016 on rolling out and implementing the MSMIT in the region. The MSMIT provides operational guidelines on HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for key populations, published in 2014 by the WHO. These guidelines outline the HIV services needed by MSM, while the MSMIT explains how to implement these services. The tool comprises six chapters, including community empowerment, addressing violence, condom and lubricant programming, delivering health-care services, information and

communication technology, and program management. The MSMIT will play a crucial role in ECOM’s future work on implementing HIV programs for MSM in the region.

ECOM was a key player in ensuring that a Russian version of the MSMIT was available as soon as possible after publication of the original English text. ECOM member, Yury Sarrankov, provided invaluable input as a community member and assisted translation and editing of the final Russian text of the MSMIT for publication. ECOM and UNFPA published the Russian version of the text online in February. ECOM also obtained hard copies and distributed them among its members.

ECOM continued to be involved in the roll out of the MSMIT in the region and participated in the first MSMIT training for community members, which took place in Bishkek,

MSMIT Training took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.



Kyrgyzstan in August. The two-day training included a general overview of the MSMIT, as well as detailed presentations on each of the six chapters. The participants were also given time during each chapter presentation to share experiences, work in small groups, and present their group work for further discussions. The final two hours of the training were devoted to collecting feedback from the participants on the training and to discussing the way forward and the rolling-out of the MSMIT at the national level.

Following the Bishkek training, ECOM has been developing a MSMIT training module based on the training materials from

Bishkek, as well as on the feedback of the initial participants. A second MSMIT training, held in Bishkek in November and attended by MSMIT consultant, Denis Kamaldinov, also provided a basis for the training module. The module comprises PowerPoint presentations to be used at future community trainings on the MSMIT, as well as a tool to assist trainers with preparing for trainings. The training module was piloted at MSMIT trainings that were held in Ukraine in December. The training module was finalized by the beginning of 2017 and will be widely used across the region to facilitate the roll out of the MSMIT tool.

Budget Advocacy

Along with two other EECA regional networks, the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) and the Eastern Europe & Central Asia Union of PLWH (ECUO), ECOM formed the Eurasian Regional Consortium to implement the project "Money Can Buy Health, If You Budget For It." Within the framework of this project, the Consortium partners with and builds the capacity of communities of Inadequately Served Populations (ISP) to advocate governments and donors to invest in services along the continuum of HIV care prioritized by ISP communities in EECA. The Consortium, with financial support from the Robert Carr Civil Society Networks Fund (RCNF), divides the work along community lines, with EHRN working with PUD organizations, ECOM with MSM and trans* people, and with ECUO working with groups of PLWH.

The overall goal of the Consortium is to ensure that people living with HIV, men who have sex with men, trans* people, and

people who use drugs and their allies in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) will influence the mobilization of resources for effective and sustainable responses to the HIV epidemic. In order to achieve this, the Consortium works to build the capacity of regional networks and their members so that they are able to influence investment in sustainable, effective responses to HIV, which address the needs of ISPs, and will also advocate for strategic, sufficient and sustainable investments in HIV responses that address the needs of PUD, MSM, trans* people and PLWH.

In June, ECOM selected the sub-recipients of its portion of the grant, three MSM-service and LGBT organizations working in three countries of the region. The organizations, New Generation, VEK LGBT, and Kyrgyz Labrys were selected to implement the project among MSM and trans* people in Armenia, Estonia, and Kyrgyzstan respectively.

All sub-recipients, as well as representatives of ECOM, EHRN, and ECUO were invited to participate in a training on budget advocacy in Kiev at the end of June. At the training, EHRN staff members introduced participants to the goals and objectives of the project and provided participants with an overview of the methodology that would be used to implement the initial part of the project. The meeting also enabled the Consortium and sub-recipients to develop a work plan for the remainder of 2016.

Following the Kiev training, sub-recipient organizations conducted a series of discussion meetings with LGBT community members in their respective countries. These meetings allowed sub-recipients to improve their connections with community members in order to ensure that their voices were heard and their needs considered. During the meetings, community members were asked to discuss and summarize their opinion regarding the most demanded services for the protection of community members' sexual health and rights and their experiences with requesting and obtaining such services.

The results of these meetings were shared between each of the three sub-recipients in each country. ECOM oversaw the sub-recipient meeting in Estonia in September.

At the October general meeting in Kiev, the sub-recipients shared the information they collected and assessed its quality. The participants of the meeting remarked that the work previously done would serve as a basis for future development:

- the information collected will help to develop a better agenda for budget advocacy during the second and third years of the project,
- regularly held discussion groups in 2016 assisted in ensuring that community members became interested in advocacy

issues related to providing access to services and peer support, which in turn, creates the conditions needed to increase community participation in advocacy and other activities planned by sub-recipients during the next years of the project.

In addition to supporting work in individual countries, ECOM also contributed to the development of the Eurasian Regional Consortium. One of the most difficult issues was coordinating projects with similar goals, which are led by various members of the Regional Consortium. In particular, within the framework of several projects, it was planned to create national and regional advocacy plans. In order to avoid a plurality advocacy plans with similar tactics and key messages, ECOM offered to facilitate the development of discussion and coordination platforms in each country, where a single, national advocacy plan can be developed and agreed upon by communities. As a result of the agreement and coordination between national groups and community organizations, these national plans will be organically complemented by new resources and initiatives of regional networks and other partners. This concept was adopted by members of the Regional Consortium and will serve as the basis for the project work during years 2 and 3.

“Community representatives are experts on their own life and experiences. We want to move away from the often narrow conception of what it means to be an expert. We also need to take into account the real priorities of the community and recognize that HIV may not be a top priority for them.”

Kristina Manicheva, Kyrgyzstan

Regional Civil Society Community Support, Coordination and Communication Platform

In January, ECOM signed a contract with Alliance Ukraine for the formation of the Regional Civil Society Community Support, Coordination and Communication Platforms (the Regional Platform). The Regional Platform is one of a number of Global Fund interventions to support and strengthen civil society and community engagement at all levels of client processes. It forms part of the Community, Rights and Gender (CRG) Special Initiative. The CRG is comprised of three elements including: (1) the provision of technical assistance to civil society organizations to aid them in all steps of the funding process up to and including the concept note development stage; (2) regional civil society-led platforms to enhance coordination of technical assistance, information to country level civil society groups on technical assistance, and additional pre-defined support to country level civil society groups, and; (3) longer-term capacity development of key population networks, to be carried out through a partnership with the Robert Carr Civil Society Networks Fund.

The Regional Platform will contribute to the following overall goal of the CRG: civil society and communities are effectively engaged in, and contributing to, the development, implementation and oversight of the client supported programs. In order to achieve this goal, ECOM, in the context of the Regional Platform, has been working to fulfill a number of objectives, including enhancing the knowledge of civil society and community groups about the Client

and access to technical support, improving understanding of technical assistance/capacity development gaps for civil society and community groups, and working on a number of strategic capacity development initiatives.

ECOM has been actively involved in a number of activities over the course of the implementation of the Regional Platform project in order to achieve the project goals and objectives. ECOM's Technical Support Coordinator, Gennady Roshchupkin, has overseen these activities, including regularly updating listservs, collecting relevant resources for the "Technical Assistance Resource Library", assisting community engagement in Global Fund processes, contributing to the development of shadow reports as a form of community oversight on Global Fund grants and national programs, and coordinating activities and management of the program across Regional Platform members.

The Regional Platform project continued throughout 2016. The activities of the project have assisted community-based organizations to strengthen their capacity, gain greater access to resources, and to increase collaboration and cooperation with one another in hopes of solidifying community engagement in Global Fund processes.



Grantees

ECOM is proud to be able to support partner organizations and initiative groups in the region through its small grants program. Through this program, ECOM awards funding to LGBT and MSM-service organizations enabling them to implement various activities and programs. In 2016, ECOM provided funding for nine programs, which are detailed below.

Printing and Distribution of Informational Materials for Russian MSM Organization

ECOM provided the Russian MSM-service organization, Phoenix PLUS funding in order to print important informational material on MSM, trans* people, and HIV. Eight thousand copies of four different brochures, including "Transgender People and HIV", "Sex. It's the Same as Before", "MSM at the Doctor", and "10 Tips about How to Talk about Your Status", were printed and distributed across Russia and other countries of EECA. The materials were also distributed at the EECAAC 2016 Conference in Moscow.

2016 TransCoalition Meeting

Kyrgyz Indigo applied for funding from ECOM in order to organize a meeting of the TransCoalition in Post-Soviet Countries. The goal of the meeting was to empower a large network of trans* activists and organizers in order to become a sustainable and community-based trans* rights

movement in EECA. The TransCoalition Meeting was focused on developing the strategy of the TransCoalition, exchanging best practices on trans* advocacy, and creating a web-based platform to unite trans* activists across the EECA region.

Emergency Community Response Group

Kyrgyz Indigo also received funding to implement its Emergency Community Response Group (ECRG) program. An initiative run jointly with the NGO "Labrys", the ECRG is a volunteer program to prevent and respond to violence and human rights violations targeting LGBT people in Kyrgyzstan. ECRG staff document cases of violence, discrimination, and other rights violations and aid victims in receiving social, psychological, and legal assistance. The funding will cover the cost of site visits, legal consultations, and equipment for the ECRG office premises.

Sentinel Surveillance among MSM in the Kyrgyz Republic

ECOM provided the organization Kyrgyz Indigo with funding to conduct sentinel surveillance studies among 500 MSM in the Chuy oblast of Kyrgyzstan. The money from the small grant was used to rent a safe space to conduct sentinel surveillance activities and to fund a training on sentinel surveillance for employees of Kyrgyz Indigo, as well as other stakeholders such as medical specialists from the AIDS center. Kyrgyz



HIV Testing Promotion in Narva, Estonia

Indigo staff conducted sentinel surveillance to evaluate the prevalence and distribution of HIV among MSM and to assess behavior models and risk factors. The information from this study will be used to design, plan and implement prevention programs and to develop similar sentinel surveillance studies in other cities of Kyrgyzstan.

Safe Spaces for GBT/MSM

In December, Kyrgyz Indigo began implementing a program to create safe spaces for GBT and MSM in Kyrgyzstan through funding from ECOM. The program seeks to provide gay, bisexual, trans* people, and other men who have sex with men with a temporary shelter, food, and

household service in times of need. HIV testing services, a social support program, as well as referrals to friendly doctors will be available to clients of the program. The program aims to assist upwards of 100 GBT and other MSM in Kyrgyzstan.

Public Awareness in Estonia

In November, the Estonian Network of PLHIV applied for funding from ECOM to support its public awareness campaign for International AIDS Day. ECOM provided funding for advertising in the forms of commercials and posters promoting HIV testing, which were displayed in the Estonian cities of Tallinn and Narva.

5th National Conference of LGBT Organizations of the Kyrgyz Republic

This grant, awarded to the Association of AIDS Service NGOs of the Kyrgyz Republic "AntiAIDS", provided funding to support the 5th National Conference of LGBT Organizations of the Kyrgyz Republic. More than 50 activists from 10 organizations took part in the two-day meeting, which was devoted to increasing cooperation and collaboration across LGBT and MSM-service organizations in the country.

PrEP Georgia

ECOM provided funding to the organization, LGBT Georgia, in order to strengthen community systems of MSM and LGBT in Georgia and to provide training on PrEP. The funds were used to coordinate a planning workshop on PrEP programs and to provide travel and accommodation for participants of the meeting. The meeting and training were held in May in Tbilisi, Georgia and focused on increasing knowledge of PrEP and bringing together stakeholders,

including community representatives, medical service providers, and leaders of community-based organizations.

Moldova Country Consultation

ECOM, in conjunction with MSMGF, funded a country consultation on Moldova. The purpose of this project was to gather information for a report on the meaningful engagement of communities in HIV grant-making processes and grant implementation. The funds were used to organize and host a one-day consultation in Moldova of 10-15 participants and to develop a report from the consultation on the meaningful engagement of key and vulnerable populations in Global Fund grant-making processes.

IX National LGBT Movement and MSM-Service Conference of Ukraine

ECOM provided funding and support for the IX National LGBT Movement and MSM-Service Conference of Ukraine, entitled "LGBT and Politics: The Turning Point". Over 100 participants from 12 countries of the region took part in the conference, including experts on LGBT and MSM issues, employees of community-based organizations, human rights advocates, and other stakeholders. The conference was aimed at establishing cooperation and at sharing experiences between activists from different ECEA countries. In addition to providing funding, ECOM also co-hosted a satellite event on the implementation of the MSMIT tool with the UNDP and UNFPA.

ECOM provided support for the Ukrainian LGBT movement and MSM service conference.



We rely on rational arguments, not slogans

Sviatoslav Sheremet



Ukrainian society and governmental bodies are currently discussing a potential legislative bill to legalize same-sex partnerships, while in Lvov, the organizers of an LGBT festival are facing pushbacks from local authorities and attacks from radicals. ECOM discussed the developing situation with Sviatoslav Sheremet, leader of the Gay-Forum of Ukraine.

How is the situation in Ukraine developing with respect to the recognition of same-sex partnerships?

At the end of 2015, the government resolved to draft a bill on civil partnerships by the second quarter of 2017. A broad range of people began to widely discuss this issue. On the one hand, many who criticize same-sex partnerships believe themselves to be the majority; they say, we are against this, so it should not happen. On the other hand, some critics of the bill realized that attempts to regulate other people's relationships contradict the norms of morality.

In general, as long as disputes continue, we, Ukrainian LGBT organizations, decided to take the initiative and prepare a bill ourselves. We already have the support of a number of members of parliament for such an innovative legislative initiative as our "registered civil partnership" bill.

Doesn't it seem to you that the government is reluctant to deal with these issues, and is only doing so due to the demands and expectations of EU countries and structures, and of the international community?

Legalizing civil partnerships is

not a priority for the government, therefore it is only reluctantly dealing with these issues. However, I do not agree that this is happening due to pressure from the EU and the international community; the EU never demanded that Ukraine recognize same-sex partnerships. We, LGBT leaders, first raised this issue 10 years ago. Since the government is not really taking the initiative, it is now up to us to draft a quality bill, lay down all arguments, cite data from studies, etc. As a matter of fact, according to the data of sociologists, there are 100 to 200 thousand same-sex couples in Ukraine.

It seems that, in Ukraine, where authorities and society are often discussing their adherence to European values, values such as equality and non-discrimination, including on the bases of sexual orientation and gender identity, are being ignored.

In Ukraine in general, many values are being ignored. There is one general rule to make sure that people do not ignore you: people react to those who speak up for themselves loudly. Promoting values is the destiny of those who share them. Sometimes these values must come in the

form of posters with slogans on the street. This is why there are events, such as Marches, Equality Festivals, and Prides, in Ukraine. And it works.

Studies show that the legal regulation of same-sex relationships also positively affects the health of couples living together. What do you think, could this argument be important for Ukrainian authorities and society?

In our work, we rely on rational arguments, and not on slogans. Of course, increasing responsibility for one's health and the health of one's partner is a strong argument, which we are already using. Ukraine plans to legalize civil partnerships in general, not just ones for same-sex couples. Every year in our country, there are thousands of court cases to divide up the property of couples who are splitting up, but who are not married. Of course, this is also a strong argument for the regulation of same-sex partnerships, as it would prescribe in law the rights and obligations of people in civil partnerships, and would relieve the courts from having to do this.

What do you and your colleagues intend to do in the future to

support the recognition of same-sex relationships in Ukraine?

We plan to connect public activity with our routine work, as we did before. Cooperate with decision-making centers, such as ministries, ombudsman's offices, parliamentarians, and parliamentary committees, avoid unnecessary confrontations, resort to sound, rational arguments, and of course, make compromises, without which the path to our goals through the winding labyrinth of socio-political activity would not be possible.

In addition, we must destroy the irrational arguments of our opponents. To do this, economic reasoning can be used. At the recent International Conference on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the UNAIDS leadership excellently showed that homophobia can cost the economy billions of dollars.

Moreover, much depends on the openness of the LGBT community. After all, if no one sees the person affected by these problems, then no one will solve them. Therefore, we must openly declare at all levels that we are the very people who need the institution of registered civil partnerships. Fortunately, we have such open couples already in Ukraine.

ECOM Steering Committee

In the fall, ECOM held elections for its second Steering Committee (SC). According to the results of the election, published on December 1, the following members were elected to ECOM's SC: Igor Medvid, Daniyar Orsekov, Sergey Gabrielyan, Andrey Chernyshev, Sviatoslav Sheremet, Oleg Eryomin and Evgeny Pisemsky.

As of this day, the new SC replaced the previous group of Oleg Eryomin, Dastan Kasmamitov, Vitaly Vinogradov, Dmitri Ufimtsev, Igor Medvid, Evgeny Sorokoumov, and Evgeniya Kuvshinova. It is not possible to fully describe all the work carried out by members of the SC, especially since their advocacy and analytical activities are often conducted behind the scenes.

The SC confidently guided the work of the Secretariat, implemented ECOM's strategic plan, and approved new members to the Coalition. During its period of tenure, the first SC added 14 new members to the Coalition.


It is also necessary to highlight the role of the SC in the development of ECOM's Regional Program "Right to Health". In 2016, the SC was responsible for selecting the program's target countries, approved ECOM's concept note to the GF for the regional program, and also confirmed ECOM's Secretariat as the Principal Recipient of the program. The SC also approved draft grant procedures for the project, developed by the Secretariat.

In addition, the SC approved a

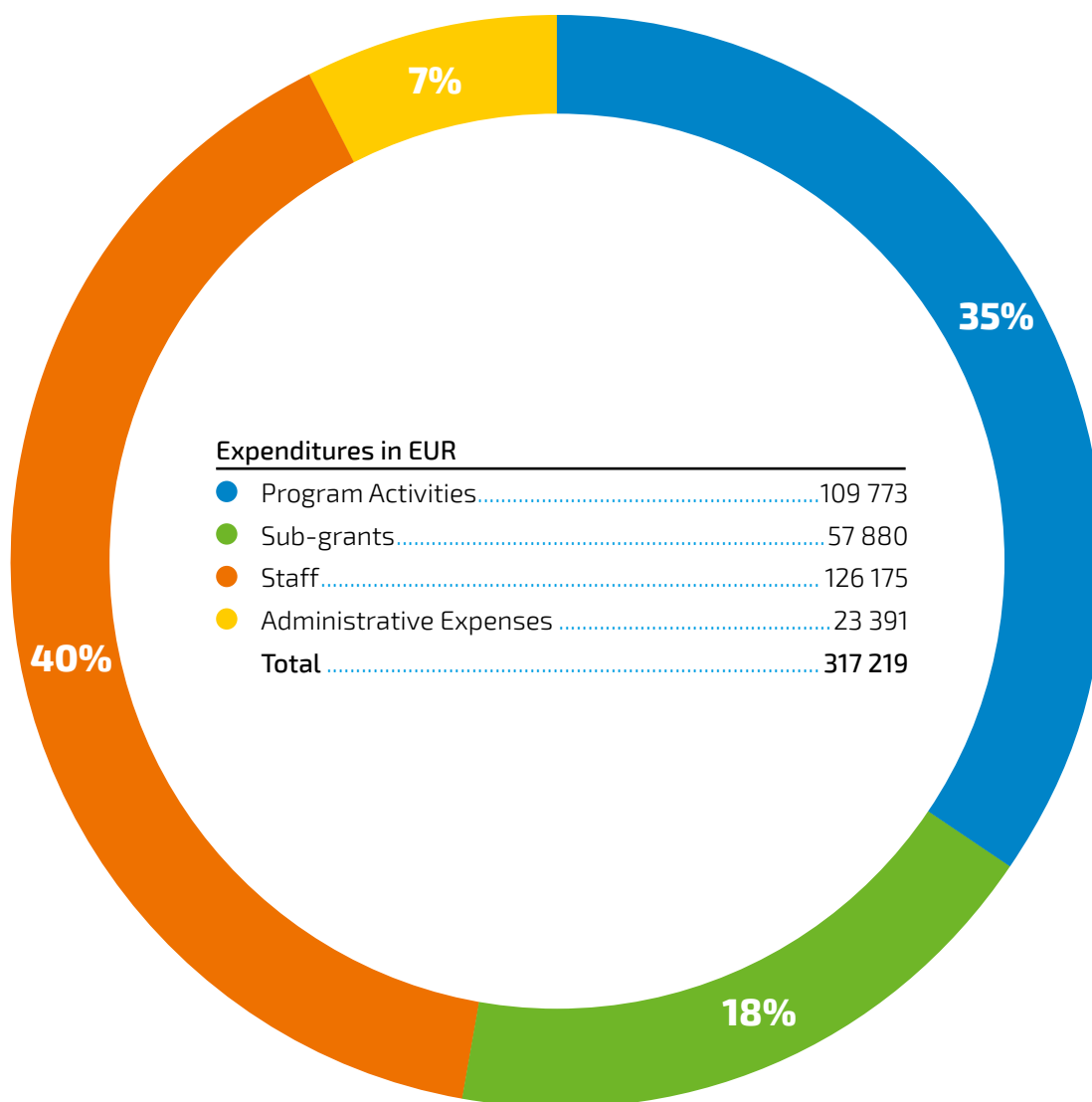
management scheme for the regional program, consisting of three key structures:

- The SC will act as the Regional Coordinating Mechanism of the program, responsible for making strategic decisions, such as the approval of requests for funding;
- The Oversight Committee (OC). The Committee will include ECOM representatives, as well as representatives of key partners, such as CCM members from the program target countries, and will be responsible for conducting oversight over the program's activities.
- Regional Advisory Group (RAG). The RAG's activities will include assisting ECOM's SC with selecting best practices that will allow the Coalition to best implement the regional program.

On November 25, ECOM signed a grant agreement for its regional program with the Global Fund. Evgeny Sorokoumov and Igor Medvid signed the agreement for the SC, as representatives of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism for the program, which ECOM's Executive Director, Vitaly Djuma, signed for the Secretariat, as the program's Principal Recipient.

 [Read more on the Steering Committee: ecom.ngo/about-ecom/steering-committee/](http://ecom.ngo/about-ecom/steering-committee/)

Financial Review 2016



ECOM appreciates the support from its donors in 2016



ECOM Members List, as of 31 December 2016

1. **Action**, Russia
2. **Adali Public Fund**, Kazakhstan
3. **Agora Initiative Group**, Ukraine
4. **AHF Europe**, Regional
5. **Alexandr Lepekhov***, Kazakhstan
6. **Alexander Nosov***, Russia
7. **Alexey Kozyrev***, Russia
8. **Anastasia Kristel Domani***, Ukraine
9. **Anna Dovbakh**, Ukraine
10. **Anti-AIDS Public Fund**, Kazakhstan
11. **Antons Mozalevskis***, Latvia
12. **Centre of Democratic Development**, Ukraine
13. **Community Friends**, Kazakhstan
14. **Convictus Ukraine**, Ukraine
15. **Demetra**, Lithuania
16. **Denis Efremov***, Russia
17. **EHPV**, Estonia
18. **Equal Opportunities**, Tajikistan
19. **Future Without AIDS**, Ukraine
20. **Galaxy**, Russia
21. **Garant Civil Society Center**, Armenia
22. **Gay-Alliance**, Ukraine
23. **Gayplus-HIV+ MSM, Gay and Bi Community Team**, Russia
24. **Gender and Development**, Azerbaijan
25. **Gennady Roshchupkin***, Russia
26. **HPLGBT**, Ukraine
27. **Humanitarian Project**, Russia
28. **Kirill Barsky***, Russia
29. **Kyrgyz Indigo**, Kyrgyzstan
30. **Labrys**, Kyrgyzstan
31. **Lachin Alijev***, Estonia
32. **LaSky Network**, Russia
33. **Laverna**, Russia
34. **LGBT Belarus**, Belarus
35. **Maxim Kasianczuk***, Ukraine
36. **Men with Social Mission**, Armenia
37. **menZDRAV Foundation-Russia**, Russia
38. **National Association of Social Activities of the Republic of Kazakhstan**, Kazakhstan
39. **New Generation Humanitarian NGO**, Armenia
40. **Nikolaos Marmalidi***, Kazakhstan
41. **Parni Plus Moscow**, Russia
42. **Phoenix PLUS**, Russia
43. **PINK**, Armenia
44. **Positive Wave Foundation**, Russia
45. **PULSAR, Interregional LGBT Project**, Russia
46. **Queer-Credo**, Ukraine
47. **Ravnodenstvie Interregional Association**, Ukraine
48. **Roman Dudnik***, Kazakhstan
49. **Svyatoslav Sheremet***, Ukraine
50. **T9 NSK**, Russia
51. **Tanadgoma**, Georgia
52. **Terry White***, Regional
53. **Veaceslav Mulear***, Moldova
54. **Vstrecha**, Belarus
55. **Vyacheslav Revin***, Russia
56. **Yury Sarankov***, Ukraine
57. **Zdorovy Vybor**, Russia

* Individual member

● New members

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