



CAHIV

2014

ACTIVITY REPORT



CAHIV 2014 Activity Report

Name of the organization: CAHIV – Croatian Association for HIV and viral hepatitis

www.huhiv.hr; <https://www.facebook.com/huhiv>;
<https://www.facebook.com/checkpoint.zagreb>;
<http://www.youtube.com/udrugahuhiv>

Report date: January 14, 2015.

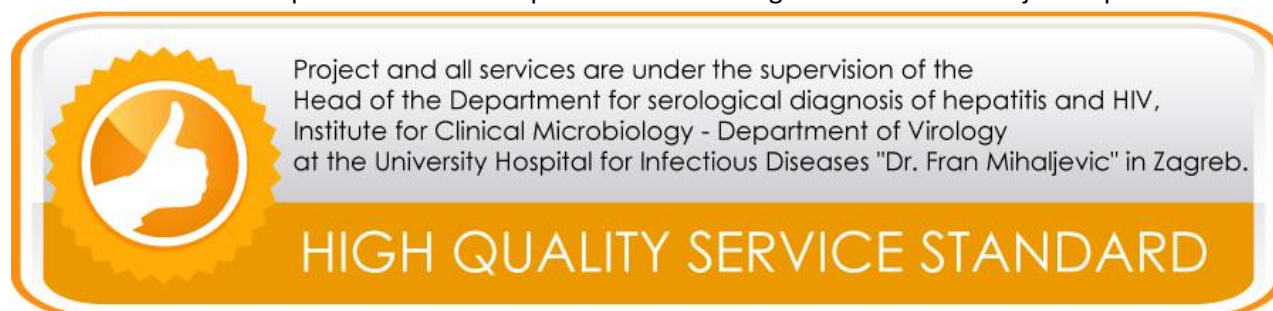
1. Activities implemented

Activities in 2014 were focused on the operation of and creating conditions for the permanent existence of CheckPoint Zagreb, improving the relationship with young people and respecting their needs by providing free education, counselling and HIV and hepatitis C testing, as well as on participation and promotion of CheckPoint Zagreb on the occasions of marking the World AIDS Day, the World Hepatitis Day and the European HIV testing week.

1.1. CheckPoint Zagreb

Continuous operation of the CheckPoint centre as a joint project of the public health non-institutional service of the City Office for Health, Zagreb and CAHIV implies the functioning of operative protocols of professional services and a quality control in cooperation with experts from Dr. Fran Mihaljevic Clinic for Infectious Diseases, the Croatian Red Cross and the mandatory supervision by the head of the Department for serologic diagnosis of hepatitis and HIV of the Institute for Clinical Microbiology - Department of virology at the Dr. Fran Mihaljevic Clinic for Infectious Diseases in Zagreb.

All standards and work procedures were implemented according to CDC rules and adjusted protocols.



According to protocols, two annual supervisions and internal professional training and education were carried out:

- ♥ training on and presentation of POC testing characteristics
- ♥ importance of evaluation
- ♥ quality control
- ♥ requirements for testing and storing the testing material
- ♥ testing protocol
- ♥ interpreting test results correctly (from given samples)
- ♥ demonstration of the entire testing process
- ♥ guidelines for users (informed consent, risk estimate, test results)
- ♥ internal content control and validity
- ♥ protocol for dealing with persons who test positive for HIV or hepatitis C and links with systems of care and treatment



The innovative technology and methodology for rapid and reliable saliva-based testing for HIV and HCV with protocols for providing education, counselling and care is implemented with an aim of reaching out to the public, young people and people at risk of infection.

According to the strategies and recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), non-institutional approach to screening and rapid testing in the community is the best approach to achieving the goals of prevention, early diagnosis and, in every sense, long-term viability of successful treatment and combating the spread of infection in society. This practice has already reached a high level of professional implementation in the society as a complementary addition to the health care system and represents an indispensable strategy of approaching this unique problem.

Key insights and conclusions

- ♥ Testing and education in the community efficiently complement the existing network of
- ♥ centres for counselling and testing – institutional obstacles are eliminated
- ♥ Focusing on young people in general and their inclination to experiment with risky behaviour has increased the overall societal acceptance – stigma was reduced
- ♥ Providing anonymous, non-judgmental, confidential and free counselling and rapid saliva-based
- ♥ testing has ensured it to be attractive to the population at real risk of infection
- ♥ Close cooperation with relevant institutions and professionals ensured quality and enabled further care and treatment for all people who test positive





CheckPoint Zagreb – Results in 2014 and cumulative results

During campaigns, other activities and walk-ins to the CheckPoint Centre we handed out a total of over 15 000 educational brochures and over 15 000 condoms, while visits at the CAHIV website increased by 96% as did inquiries via e-mail and SOS/info hotline. All of that resulted in **1382 persons taking HIV and HCV tests in 2014.**

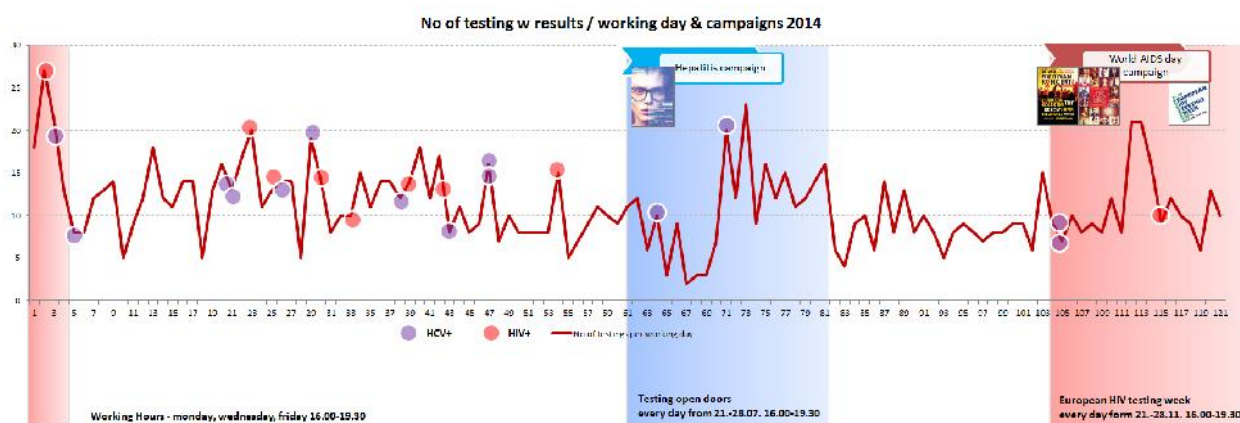
Counselling and education on HIV, hepatitis and other sexually transmitted diseases was provided to 1461 people. During that period, 9 HIV-positive and 14 HCV-positive people were detected. After providing them with medical and psychosocial assistance, all new cases were referred to the Clinic for Infectious Diseases for further processing, control and treatment.

During the 204 working days of the CheckPoint Centre, a total of 2780 people were educated, 2659 people were tested and 22 HIV-positive and 20 HCV-positive people were detected.

CheckPoint centre Zagreb report

		2013	2014	TOTAL*
EDUCATION	TOTAL NUMBER OF PRE-COUNSELLINGS**	1319	1461	2780
	TOTAL NUMBER OF POST-COUNSELLINGS***	1277	1382	2659
TESTING	TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS TESTED	1277	1382	2659
	TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS TESTED FOR HIV	1215	1339	2554
anti-HIV TESTING	HIV POSITIVE (+)	13	9	22
	HIV POSITIVE (+) ratio	1,07%	0,67%	0,86%
anti-HCV TESTING	TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS TESTED FOR HCV	1002	1230	2232
	HCV POSITIVE (+)	6	14	20
	HCV POSITIVE (+) ratio	0,60%	1,14%	0,90%

* 204 working days / 816 working hours



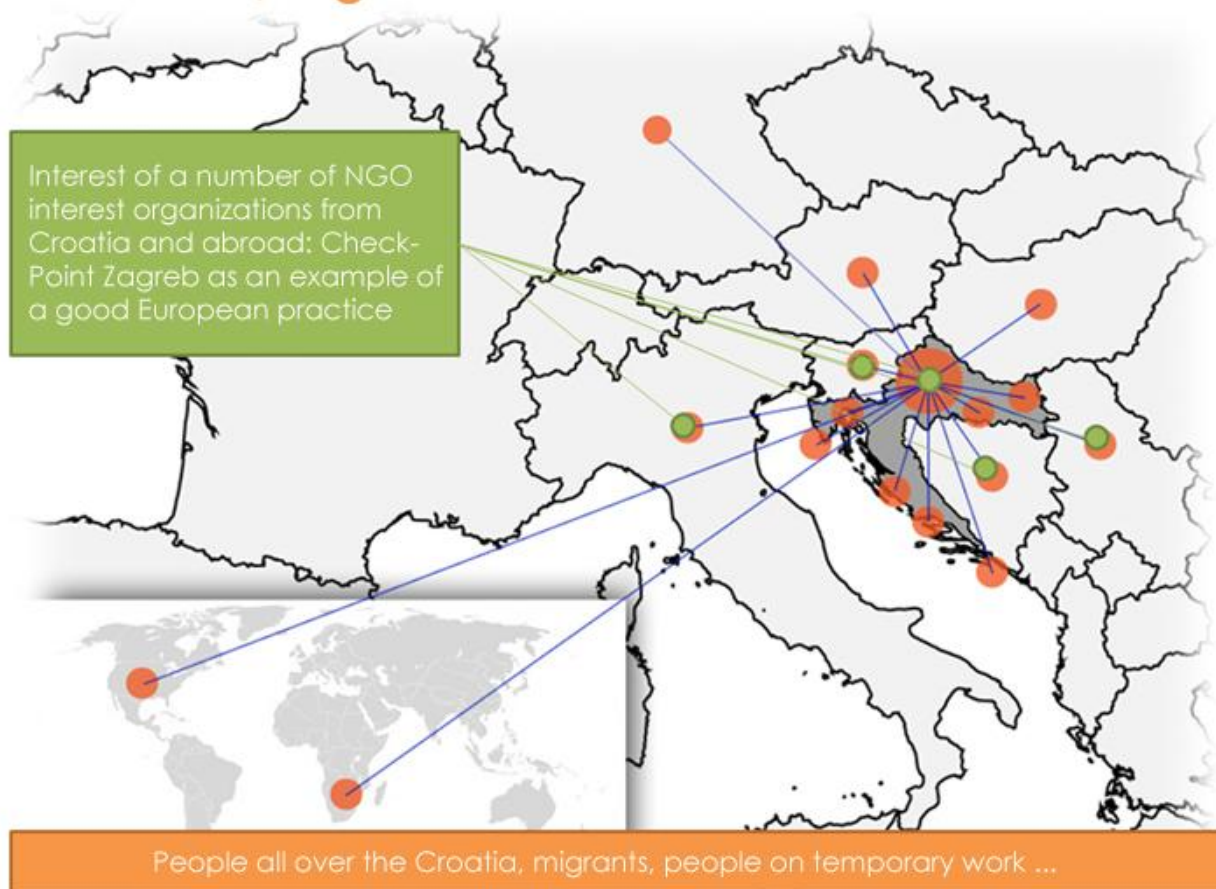
Great progress was made in the education of young people who usually do not use protection during sexual intercourse, do not perceive protection as protecting them against sexually transmitted diseases but only pregnancy and do not know what the real risky elements of HIV/HCV transmission are. Individual education during risk assessment and after the testing significantly contributes to raising the awareness and increasing the general knowledge about blood and sexually transmitted infections and reduction of new infections and their spread.

The interest of young people and citizens is extremely high. During a working day, on average 10-15 people come to the centre (opening hours: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 4:00 - 7:30 p.m.). Through direct contact with young people, the internet and social networks we received a huge number of inquiries, interest and praise for the existence and offer of this type of service, especially from young people and

students who emphasized all the advantages and the need for a permanent and continuous existence of such a centre.

National, regional and international outreach of testing was achieved (people from all over Croatia, migrants, people temporarily working here etc.), as well as interest of many NGOs and other domestic and foreign organizations for CheckPoint Zagreb as an example of a good European practice.

National, regional and international outreach



1.2. World AIDS day and European HIV testing week



The campaign to mark the World AIDS Day is the focus and the peak of our annual activities.

1.2.1. HUHIV Info tent and a public health campaign



HUHIV has again marked the World AIDS Day with an info tent on the Flower Square) in Zagreb as part of its traditional campaign **“LOVE and be healthy”**. In this cheerful and positive way we are sending a message to everyone, but primarily to young people that one should talk about HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, get informed, get tested, gain knowledge as the best prevention tool, and enjoy love and health worry-free. **Knowledge makes us stronger and smarter, knowledge prevents discrimination for which there is no need.** Knowledge gives us awareness to recognize risky situations, use protection, preserve our and other people's health and appreciate and enjoy even more the love and health that make our lives complete and happy. The only way to find out one's HIV status is to get tested which is no longer something unavailable and complicated in the word but a routine, a regular control of one's own health and a care for own and other people's lives. Anonymous testing was also enabled with rapid saliva-based tests which provide rapid and accurate results and are, within the CheckPoint Zagreb project, available in the community, closer to everyone and simpler. Regardless of the testing results, it should be known

that, with the use of modern drugs, a person with HIV nowadays can live long and have a fulfilling and healthy life, but it is important to find out about the infection on time and get tested.

We designed and printed promotional posters on the occasion of the World AIDS Day and the European HIV Testing Week as a pan-European initiative which we joined as members of global European organizations.

The campaign was featured on over 1500 advertising spaces in public transport vehicles in five Croatian cities, in colleges and student dormitories. We also prepared videos which were distributed to major national and local TV stations.





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8q8PQKEtSs>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxqBlvr6jYw>

During the campaign, which began in early November and lasted until the end of December, we had a significant impact on an increased interest of citizens and young people about this topic and content via the CAHIV website and Facebook. During the campaign, more than 160 persons responded to the invitation to get tested and several thousand brochures with educational information were distributed. The response was beyond all expectations.

We designed and printed:

- ♥ 20 000 CheckPoint Centre Zagreb brochures with a description of all services aimed at young people and people at high risk of HIV/HCV infection
- ♥ 20 000 flyers with a focus on reasons for HIV testing and basic information about HIV/AIDS, the testing, ways of transmission and the meaning of diagnosis
- ♥ 2 000 brochures with complete information about HIV testing.



About 25 000 different brochures and 20 000 condoms were handed out:

- During the traditional and educational Positive concert on November 28 and 29, 2014 on the occasion of the World AIDS Day, organized by CAHIV and attended by around 15 000 young people
- During the implementation of the European HIV Testing Week campaign at the CheckPoint Centre Zagreb
- During the marking of the World AIDS Day on December 1, 2014 by putting a promotional CAHIV info tent in the centre of Zagreb with the participation of volunteers - students of medicine and pharmacology and the Croatian Red Cross

- During peer education for high school students in Zagreb on December 1, 2014
- During a symposium on November 28, 2014 at the Dr. Fran Mihaljevic Clinic for Infectious Diseases organized by prof. dr. sc. Josip Begovac and
- During activities and events organized by partner organizations throughout Croatia (student associations and clubs, Croatian Red Cross Vukovar...)





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1.2.2. EDUCATIONAL EVENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

As part of activities to promote sexual and reproductive health, information, protection and testing, **CAHIV organized interactive lectures** using the Y-PEER method (peer education) at the Flower Square in Zagreb. Six lectures were held in total, each lasting an hour per group. Lectures, held by volunteers from CroMSiC, an association of medical students, were delivered in a funny, interactive and approachable way. Around 270 students and ten teachers and expert associates participated in those educational events.

Students, accompanied by teachers, first came to the CAHIV info tent where they received educational materials and brochures and free condoms and then they went to the lecture hall for a lecture.





Educational events were attended by high school students from Zagreb, with a focus on future health care professionals in order to increase their professionalism and reduce discrimination in their future work. Students from the following schools participated: School of Midwifery, Mlinarska School of Nursing, Vinogradska School of Nursing, Vrapče School of Nursing, Zagreb Health School and First Private Grammar School.

Lecture topics included sexually responsible behaviour, reproductive health and protection from sexually transmitted infections with an emphasis on HIV. Students were lectured on the anatomy of the male and female reproductive system and the basics of the menstrual cycle with a focus on ovulation and fertile days, something that many of them had wrong information about. After that, they were informed about sexually transmitted diseases, modes of transmission, symptoms, treatments and protection. They were informed about the effectiveness and risks of different contraception methods as well as about the importance of continuous and correct use of the chosen method. Students actively participated in discussions and assessed lectures as useful and interesting.



Such an exceptionally high interest for education on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases indicates the society and young people's need for accurate, professional and creatively presented information and the need for health protection as well as for professional development and the development of positive attitudes in future occupations and working with people. Youth education is one of the most important initiatives CAHIV has been carrying out for many years for which there is a continuing need and huge interest.





On the occasion of the World AIDS Day, celebrated on December 1 in almost all countries of the world, CAHIV contributes with its educational activities to raising the awareness of this virus and to a better understanding of the needs of those infected. Due to an ever rapid increase in the number of infected individuals by viruses most often transmitted through sexual contact, especially HIV, as well as due to the insufficient understanding of the needs of people infected, there is still a need for talking about this issue publicly and openly.

1.2.3. Professional symposium on the occasion of the World AIDS Day



U Hrvatskoj 40 % osoba zaraženih HIV-om je otkrilo zarazu kasno, u uznapredovaloj fazi bolesti, kada se već razvio AIDS.

Rutinsko HIV testiranje smanjuje vjerojatnost kasne dijagnoze.

Danas postoje učinkoviti, djelotvorni lijekovi za liječenje zaraze HIV-om i zato:

zaraza HIV-om je kronična infekcija koja se uspješno liječi
zaraza HIV-om NIJE smrtonosna bolest

Ranije otkrivanje zaraze HIV-om omogućuje:

- * ranije liječenje = uspješnije liječenje = duži očekivani životni vijek
- * smanjuje mogućnost širenja HIV-zaraze na druge osobe
- * smanjuje obolijevanje i umiranje

Klinika za infektivne bolesti "Dr. Fran Mihaljević", Zagreb
Referentni centar za dijagnostiku i liječenje zaraze HIV-om
Ministarstva zdravlja Republike Hrvatske

21-28 EUROPEAN HIV TESTING WEEK
2014
TALK HIV. TEST HIV.

On Friday, November 28, 2014 a symposium was held at the Dr. Fran Mihaljević Clinic for Infectious Diseases on the occasion of the World AIDS Day, which is officially celebrated on December 1.

The symposium was organized by the Reference Centre for Diagnosis and Treatment of HIV Infection of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia, Dr. Fran Mihaljević Clinic for Infectious Diseases and the Croatian Society for Infectious Diseases of the Croatian Medical Assembly.

Dr. Sinisa Zovko presented the results of the Checkpoint Centre Zagreb whose opening enabled testing in the community. From the opening in May 2013 until the end of October 2014 over 2500 people were educated, mainly young ones. Over 2400 people were tested, about 2300 for HIV and about 2100 for HVC, predominantly male (60%). In most cases the reasons for testing were unprotected sex, partner's promiscuity, self-perceived promiscuity, sexually

transmitted disease, intimate relationships with a positive person or an intravenous drug user, the impact of alcohol and drug use, prostitution and other high-risk behaviours or situations. There is a significant proportion of people who got tested for HIV and/or HCV for the first time - about 75%. Among them, there is a high proportion of people with identified high-risk legitimate reasons for early and regular HIV testing.

To date, CheckPoint Zagreb detected 21 HIV positive and 20 HVC positive people. These results are extremely important because of the impact on the factors highlighted by experts during the symposium, which is a still too small number of tested and timely diagnosed HIV positive persons in the Republic of Croatia. CheckPoint's previous work indicates continuous need for facilitating testing in the community, outside institutions. According to data from professional studies, a testing facility is cost effective when it detects one HIV positive person per 1000 tested, and the CheckPoint's ratio of 1 detected person in 100

tested indicates its huge epidemiological and financial cost-effectiveness. In addition to early detection of infection, it is important to link with the system of care. All new cases, after receiving medical and psychosocial support, were referred for further treatment to the Clinic for Infectious Diseases.



In addition to presenting the results of its continuous work through the CheckPoint Centre Zagreb, CAHIV also distributed newsletters and educational brochures about HIV.

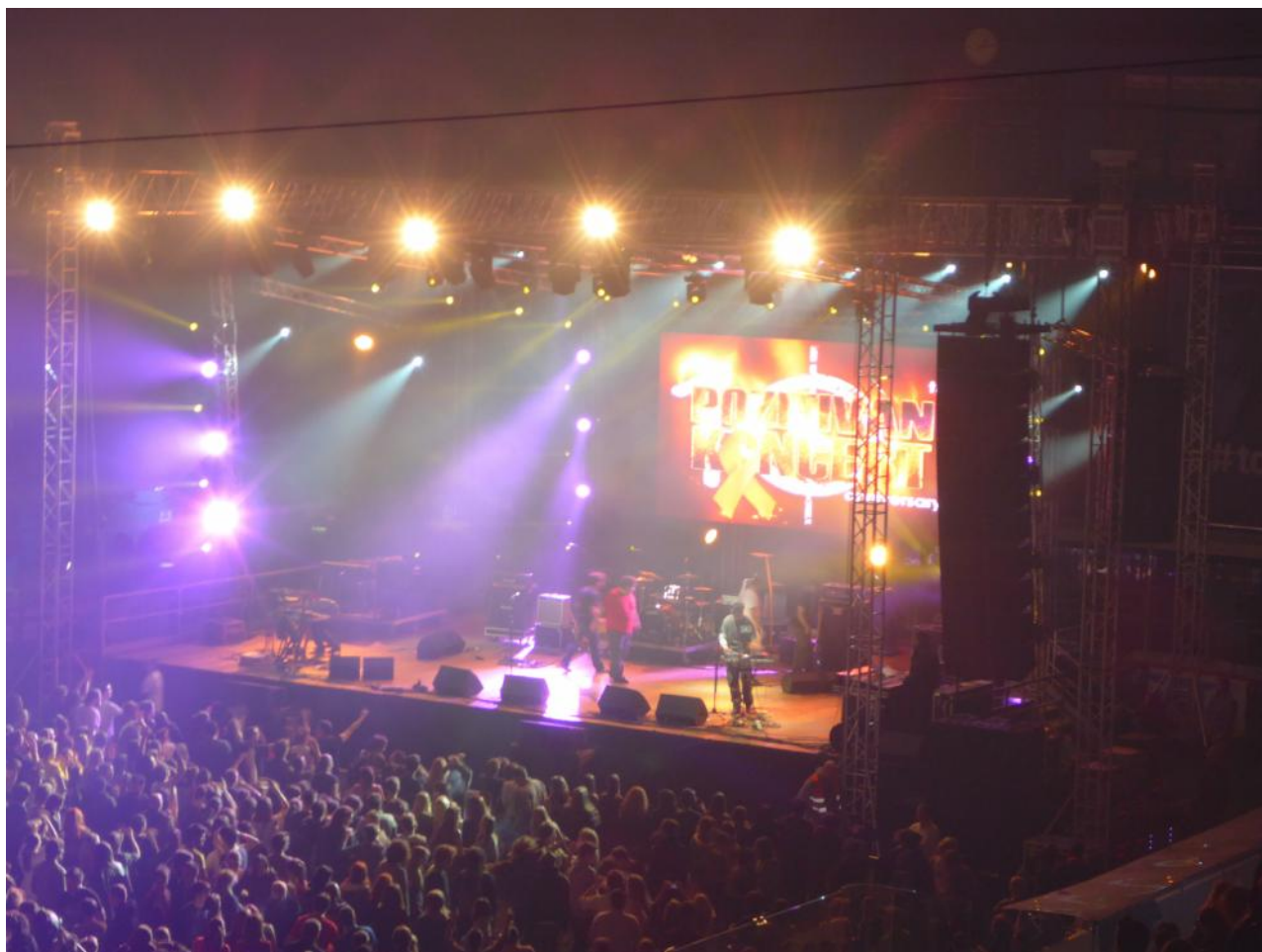
1.2.4. Positive concert



CAHIV organized the Positive concert which traditionally gathered young people looking for good entertainment. This event to mark the World AIDS Day also gathers numerous musicians who, with their participation and support, send messages to young people about the awareness of preserving health, responsible behaviour, the need for testing and anti-discrimination.

The aim of the Positive concert, which was attended by over 50 000 people in its tenth edition, is to mark the World AIDS Day through a positive musical message. We succeeded in doing so once again and we had a lot of volunteers handing out condoms, educational brochures and leaflets to warn the audience to behave responsibly during sexual intercourse.

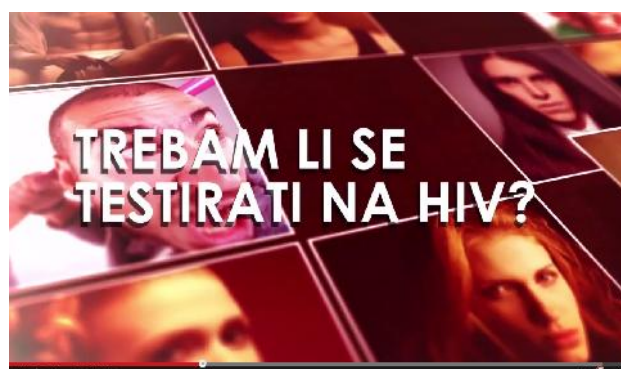
CAHIV will continue this tradition of educating young people with the aim of creating an AIDS free generation.



The Positive concert is just one of the events CAHIV organizes to point out the problems of AIDS and HIV, knowledge, protection and health. The primary role of the concert is to educate and encourage young people and people with high-risk behaviour to get tested and to behave responsibly. The Positive concert fights for and advocates an AIDS free generation.

During the two-day event, in cooperation with the volunteers of the International Association of Medical Students CroMSIC, over 15 000 condoms and over 20 000 different brochures and leaflets on HIV/AIDS with a focus on information, protection and testing were distributed. Furthermore, young people were educated during the concert itself via educational videos and messages on video walls.





<http://youtu.be/uCOqTsLp45Y?list=UUel0fQccmMnJemy9JNVWwpg>

<http://youtu.be/F2PxnuhLhkQ?list=UUel0fQccmMnJemy9JNVWwpg>

1.3. Project: Chronic infectious diseases - HIV and viral hepatitis

The town of Umag, within the framework of the Education and Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle project and in cooperation with the Croatian Association for the Fight Against HIV and Viral Hepatitis (CAHIV) and the Croatian Association of Social Workers (HUSR), organized a course "Chronic infectious diseases - HIV and viral hepatitis" for professionals from Istria and Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, and a lecture for elementary school pupils from Umag.

For the second year in a row, on the occasion of the World AIDS Day, celebrated on December 1 in almost all world countries, Umag contributed with educational activities to spreading the awareness of this virus

and to a better understanding of the needs of those infected. Due to an ever rapid increase in the number of infected individuals by viruses most often transmitted through sexual contact, especially HIV and viral hepatitis, as well as due to an insufficient understanding of the needs of people infected, there is still a need for talking about this topic publicly and openly.

Previous practice has shown the need to make efforts to educate the entire population, especially younger generations and professionals. On the one hand, members of the younger generation are still uninformed and reluctant to talk about sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, possible ways of protection, treatment of infected people and everything else that should raise the level of their general knowledge and reduce the potential infection. On the other hand, it has been shown that professionals from welfare and health care institutions are still biased towards providing services to infected persons. By recognising the need for continuous education of social workers and other professionals working in welfare institutions, welfare centres, health care and other institutions, and for informing the young population whose members get sexually active at an ever earlier age every year. By educating attendees about HIV and viral hepatitis and increasing their awareness of this issue, these activities aim at reducing the number of infected people with sexually transmitted diseases, reduce the occurrence of stigmatization towards the infected and increase the capacity of welfare and health care institutions for the care of infected persons.



Lectures were held by dr. Šime Zekan who spoke in general about HIV infection, advances in the treatment of this virus, successfulness of antiretroviral drugs, ways of transmission of this virus, prevention methods as well as biomedical interventions.

Prof. Adriana Vince in her lecture talked about viral hepatitis as the public health problem of our time. "Infection with this virus is a major global public health problem given a large number of infected and sick people and an insufficient number of detected patients with chronic hepatitis." Vince talked about all types of hepatitis, with an emphasis on hepatitis C as one of the most critical hepatitis in terms of the consequences for the person affected.

Anita Gavranović, BS in medical technology, spoke about standard protection measures (HIV and viral hepatitis) and about caring for HIV patients, which largely helped professional staff from homes for the elderly and disabled and other welfare institutions to understand the needs of patients and reduced their fear of infection while working with infected beneficiaries.

The next expert lecture was delivered by Kristina Duvančić, BS in social work, who explained the issue of psychosocial work with people affected by chronic infectious diseases, and stressed the importance of psychosocial support to infected persons and their families alike.

This series of lectures concluded with the lecture by Sunčana Roksandic Vidlička, MS, research assistant at the Department of Criminal Law, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, under the title "Data confidentiality protection".



As part of the above lectures, dr. Šime Zekan visited the primary school "Marija i Lina" where he talked to seventh grade pupils of both elementary schools in Umag about sexually transmitted diseases, the prevention in younger generations, familiarizing them with the occurrence of HIV and options for its treatment. A large number of questions asked by the pupils showed they were interested in the topic, but an almost "unanimous" negative answer to the question if they would sit together in the classroom with a friend who was infected with HIV showed the need for further systematic education and awareness raising among the general population about this issue as, clearly, little is still known about it.

1.4. Participation in the European HepHIV Conference 2014

The HepHIV 2014 Conference, held October 5-7 in Barcelona, was the right place for the exchange of experiences by top experts from the European professional and social community on HIV and viral hepatitis: Challenges of timely testing and care in Europe.

This conference brought together for the first time key professionals and organizations in the field of viral hepatitis and HIV/AIDS (from practitioners at the local level to top policy-makers). The conference was an opportunity for everybody to learn from each other, reflect on their experiences to highlight and discuss achievements and obstacles faced in both fields.

This conference was attended by experts from over 35 countries, presenting and representing more than 100 views on issues reflecting the extent of the problem across Europe, the course of scientific research, as well as the willingness and intention to urgently change the situation for the better.



Challenges and opportunities for community-based testing centres: Towards the network of centres

CAHIV representatives, or more precisely CheckPoint Zagreb representatives attended the meeting of European CheckPoint centres and all communities developing in the direction of non-institutional testing.



According to the strategies and recommendations by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), non-institutional approach to screening and rapid testing in the community is the best approach to achieving the goals of prevention, early diagnosis, and in every sense of the long-term viability of successful treatment and reversing the spread of infection in society. This practice has already reached a high level

of professional implementation in the society as a complementary addition to the health care system and represents an indispensable approach strategy to this unique issue.

Zagreb and Croatia have a very high level of success and innovation. We compared ourselves with developed non-institutional centres from a number of developed countries and European cities (United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Denmark, Greece...) and learnt a lot from many of them. Of extreme importance is the support by the political and professional community, openness and focus on real health objectives of young people, individuals, high-risk and vulnerable groups and the whole society.

CheckPoint Centre Zagreb was recognized as one of the best practice models and a role model among the countries from the region as well as the developed countries of Europe.



Professor Begovac and CAHIV representatives jointly presented a poster presentation with results achieved by the CheckPoint Centre Zagreb – Successful launch of HIV/HCV testing in the community, with a key conclusion that the CheckPoint Centre Zagreb, with its non-institutional organization, focus on young people, cooperation with experts and professional staff, friendly approach and above all the use of top-class testing technology has attracted a significant number of young people to get tested and educated, and its results significantly contributed to the detection of new cases of HIV/HCV infection in Croatia.

Such a great success in screening the population, especially young people and groups at high risk of infection is to be attributed to the model of professional involvement in the testing process (collaboration with health care institutions and physicians), a high level of professionally controlled protocols and quality assurance (professionally controlled dislocated laboratory) and, above all, the cutting-edge testing technology. Although some highly developed centres (Barcelona CheckPoint, London) enjoy exceptional support from political and professional circles and possess small laboratories with the possibility of testing for venereal diseases like syphilis and even vaccination, CheckPoint Zagreb is at the very top when it comes to professional organization, protocols and institutional supervision, especially in the

implementation of non-invasive cutting-edge testing technology using oral fluid as the best model of exceptional performance and openness to the community. The City of Zagreb was singled out and praised as having one of the best health care systems, with an excellent synergy between the institutional health care system and the community and investing in the health of its citizens.

Given all this, Zagreb and Croatia are clearly on the right track, testing in the community (CheckPoint) is the necessity and the best strategy for reaching out and screening the population, and we should continue in the direction of developing a non-institutional strategy for approaching testing and education, successful cooperation with health care institutions and enabling larger support for the development of positive regulations and protocols by enabling ever greater and more accessible testing services for all other blood and sexually transmitted diseases.

We are convinced that the cooperation between partners in the field of HIV and viral hepatitis through joint participation of the civil society, politics, health care workers and European public health institutions will urgently emphasize the need to continue solving and coping with the challenges of including people living with HIV and/or viral hepatitis earlier in the system of care, and that by working together we will be able to inform the system of political decision-making in Europe to influence early diagnosis and early care across Europe.

1.5. World Hepatitis Day

1.5.1. Public health campaign and Open Door Week



Further promotion of public health and services of the CheckPoint Centre Zagreb implied an awareness campaign to mark the World Hepatitis Day. We organized an awareness week of viral hepatitis with a campaign in public transport vehicles (in over 1500 advertisement spaces in 5 major Croatian cities), advertising in community health centres, on websites and social networks. A week of free and anonymous testing for hepatitis C was organized as part of the Open Door Days initiative by NGOs.



We prepared and printed 10 000 educational brochures with expert information on HIV and HCV infections (authors: Prof. Josip Begovac and Prof. Adriana Vince) targeting the general population, young people and people at high risk of infection.

During the campaign, more than 150 people responded to the invitation to get tested and more than 5000 brochures with educational information were distributed. The response was beyond all expectations.



1.5.2. Professional symposium on the occasion of the World Hepatitis Day

On Friday, July 25, 2014 a symposium was held at the Dr. Fran Mihaljevic Clinic for Infectious Diseases on the occasion of the World Hepatitis Day, which is officially celebrated on July 28. The symposium was organized by the Reference centre for diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis, Dr. Fran Mihaljevic Clinic for Infectious Diseases, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia, Croatian National Institute of Public

Health, City of Zagreb - Office for Health, ELPA and the Croatian Medical Association - Viral Hepatitis Section of the Croatian Society of Infectious Diseases.

During the symposium, leading experts in the field of viral hepatitis in the Republic of Croatia gave lectures on current policies and trends in the treatment in Croatia and abroad.



CAHIV participated in the symposium by distributing newsletters and educational brochures on viral hepatitis. Newsletters presented the results of the CheckPoint Centre Zagreb and the contribution of this extremely successful and important joint project of the City of Zagreb, City Office of Health and CAHIV in the fight against viral hepatitis in Croatia, providing citizens with a free rapid testing with an aim of early detection as one of the most important elements of successful treatment and cure. CheckPoint is very important for early detection of disease and, therefore, keeping the disease under control, successful treatment and cure, as well as saving on treatment. It turned out that the interest for testing in a non-institutional setting, since the centre opened, was much higher than in healthcare institutions, and that means we will detect HCV at an early stage in more people. These centres, located outside health care institutions and providing a simple way of obtaining rapid anonymous test results, are important because they make people far less reluctant to get tested.

1.6. Publication of the 14th traditional edition of the CAHIV newsletter/yearbook



<http://huhiv.hr/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/HUHIV-godisnjak-2013.pdf>

For the 14th year in a row, CAHIV proudly published its 2013 newsletter/yearbook. CAHIV yearbook has traditionally been designed for healthcare professionals and brings a rich overview of scientific articles, news and events in the field of HIV, hepatitis and other sexually transmitted diseases, quality of life and treatments, an overview of CAHIV events, projects, activities, participations and accomplishments, as well as news and research from the region and the world in 2013. The yearbook is distributed to 190 healthcare institutions and professionals throughout Croatia.

1.7. CAHIV website, SOS/info hotline, on-line support and social networks

Compared to the previous period last year, CAHIV maintained high interest of citizens and young people in health related issues, information on HIV, hepatitis and other sexually transmitted diseases, education, counselling and testing through a very necessary and quality project for the health of people.

People's interest and desire for information via CAHIV website and Facebook showed a continuity, i.e. a 200% higher interest at the time of marking the World AIDS Day and the European HIV Testing Week (250 - 1100 visits a day) compared to the same period the year before (on average 8500 visits a month).

1.8. Self-support groups

For the eight year in a row, CAHIV organized self-help groups aimed at helping people living with HIV and their family members through sharing experience and helping each other to accept their disease more easily and improve their quality of life.

1.9. NGO Open Door Day

CAHIV traditionally joined the Open Door Day and presented its services to the public.



NGO Open Door Day was one in a range of activities organized this year by the Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Croatian Government under an umbrella name Transparency and Openness. The goal of the 2014 NGO Open Door Day was to make the wider public more familiar with the programs and projects for the general well-being carried out by NGOs in Croatia, by organizing various activities in the premises of NGOs or elsewhere by opening the door of an NGO on a given day or days to all interested people.

The activities CAHIV presented primarily included health care, health protection and the promotion of quality living: all the information about CAHIV activities and projects, advice and education on HIV, hepatitis and sexually transmitted diseases, risks and protection of reproductive health, numerous educational materials and free saliva-based testing for HIV and hepatitis C with results in 20 minutes.

1.10. Protect yourself and help others - a joint campaign by CAHIV & dm



For the 10th year in a row, we ran a campaign primarily aimed at the fight against HIV/AIDS in Croatia. On the occasion of the International AIDS Day, 2 kuna earned from the sale of every packaging of condoms in November were traditionally donate to the Croatian Association for the Fight Against HIV and Viral Hepatitis (CAHIV) which provides prevention, education and support to people suffering from HIV infection and viral hepatitis.

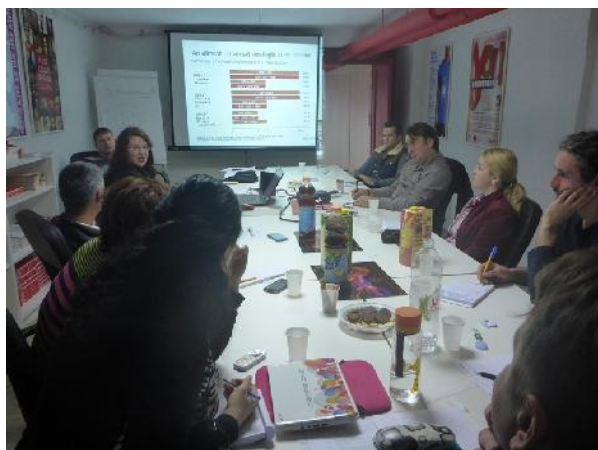
1.11. CAHIV Counselling centre at the Dr. Fran Mihaljevic Clinic for Infectious Diseases

Through our counselling centre, closely linked with the patients in the hospital, we continued to provide counselling, psychosocial support and assistance to those suffering from viral hepatitis and their family members.

1.12. Project: CheckPoint Zagreb – Regional centre of excellence

In August 2014 CAHIV launched an international project CheckPoint Zagreb - Regional centre of excellence within the goSHAPE program (Gilead Online Supporting Health Action for Patient Empowerment). The project consists of three modules and will run until mid-2015. Six non-governmental organizations from the field of care and prevention of HIV and viral hepatitis from three countries - Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia - are involved in the program. Experts from the Clinic for Infectious Diseases in Zagreb and the Croatian Red Cross are also included in the project led by CAHIV.

The main goal of the project is: **Development of community based approach in HIV/HCV infection prevention and suppression in the region.**



With this aim we primarily want to affect the region by creating opportunities and developing a community based approach to non-institutional HIV and HCV testing using the most quality innovative rapid screening technology available at the moment.



The whole story is based on previous and ongoing results of the CheckPoint Centre Zagreb, whose results regarding education, counselling and testing surpassed all testing centres in Croatia, including the Clinic for Infectious Diseases.

The main arguments for selecting the aforesaid countries from the region are similar to the arguments that had existed in Croatia before the CheckPoint Zagreb project was launched. They are: a very small number of voluntary testing in relation to the number of sexually active population, constant avoidance of health care institutions, especially by the high-risk population, discovery of new HIV/HCV positive cases in the late stage of infection, certain medical and procedural obstacles such as referrals etc., stigma, discrimination, fear of being seen, fear of the environment etc. All these led to the conclusion that these were countries with low prevalence, based on a very small sample of voluntary tests which distorts the actual epidemiological situation and there is a need, just like in Croatia, to establish the actual incidence and prevalence.

The main purpose of the project is to help countries in the region and show them how to achieve this approach towards the community in the prevention and fight against these infections, recommended by the world practice.

Education of countries in the region without access to testing in the community:

- specific goals:
 - provide the necessary knowledge and prerequisites for launching non-institutional testing in the community
 - increase the number of voluntary and anonymous HIV testing
 - enable free and anonymous testing for HCV.

As part of these activities, we plan to provide complete education activities and know-how for the entire project in order to help achieving the preconditions and provide the necessary partnerships in the target area in order to plan and implement non-institutional approach to education and testing of the target population in the community.

Furthermore, the project will enable for a comprehensive scientific study of behavioural and epidemiological data gathered through the operation of the CheckPoint Zagreb.

1.13. CAHV actively pursued views, suggestions and proposals through its daily operations and numerous initiatives in the health care system, health and social care

With an aim to influence the improvement of health and the development of civil society, as well as by warning about the data accuracy in national reports and strategies painting the picture about the situation in Croatia, by appealing to the need for creating the missing partnerships and collaboration with the UNDP, by including relevant institutions and organizations in joint activities and encouraging excellence in the early detection of blood and sexually transmitted infections.

2. Goals achieved in 2014

All efforts, activities and cooperation were aimed at stimulating young people to get tested for HIV and HCV and get informed about blood and sexually transmitted diseases, modes of transmission, protection and education.



We have significantly influenced the prevention of the spread of blood and sexually transmitted diseases through the operation and results of the CheckPoint Centre, by continuously directing interventions towards young people and people at high risk and through better information, thus creating and developing the awareness of risks and the importance of healthy living.

We have increased the number of testing for HIV and HCV among the general population with a special emphasis on young people and significantly influenced the knowledge and care of other blood and sexually transmitted diseases.

We have improved the detection of HIV and HCV status of people at high risk, influenced the reduction of stigma, fear and the regularity of health control.

We successfully provide interdisciplinary care of people who tested positive for HIV and/or HCV.

We educated the general population, young people and future health professionals and some professionals working in the health care system and the welfare system on HIV, HCV and other blood and sexually transmitted diseases.

We provided significant education through individual counselling and psychosocial support in the area of risk recognition, knowledge about modes of transmission and protection of sexual and reproductive health.

We have provided continuous care about one's own health through the availability of control and testing and through the professional work and services offered at the CheckPoint Centre Zagreb.

We conducted several public health campaigns during the World Hepatitis Day and the World AIDS Day which directly included over 30 000 people, and indirectly many more.

We distributed over 30 000 different educational leaflets, brochures and free condoms.

We aroused regional interest in the concept of community based approach to testing and education, with clear indications that successful programmes will be implemented in countries in the regions after the model of the CheckPoint Zagreb.

3. Activities and goals in 2015

In 2015, CAHIV will continue with promotional activities aimed at the CheckPoint Zagreb in order to promote HIV and HCV testing, counselling and psychosocial support and necessary education about blood and sexually transmitted diseases, modes of transmission, protection, prevention and quality and healthy living. Promotional activities will include Internet campaigns, cooperation with relevant experts in the field of testing and education of young people, organizations and partners at the national and international level, with an aim of reaching the target population and sharing and promoting best practices, mentoring and support to other organizations and countries in the implementation of these valuable and necessary programs.

Current activities include the following goals:

- Increasing HIV and HCV testing among young people and people at high risk of infection, preventing further spread of blood and sexually transmitted diseases
- Coverage of young people and people with high-risk behaviours in order to detect HIV and HCV



infection

- Providing psychosocial support and interdisciplinary care for people with positive test results and ensuring the provision of continuous health care and protection through regular check-ups and responsible behavior
- Providing education and information with a view of developing and creating awareness about the risks and the importance of healthy living

General goals for 2015:

- Ensure coverage of as many young people and people at high risk of infection as possible
- Improve sexual and reproductive health of young people and family planning
- Ensure the greatest possible support, information and protection of people living with HIV/HCV
- Strengthen the cooperation between NGOs, the public sector and the local community in providing care and protection of sexual and reproductive health in a friendly environment for young people
- Influence the improvement of policies concerning reproductive health
- Systematically implement education programs on HIV, hepatitis and other sexually transmitted diseases intended for young people, but also for all health professionals and welfare system workers.