

Barring The Way To Health

How legal and regulatory barriers are hindering modernising HIV testing across Europe

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Why does HIV testing need to change?

- Scaling up testing interventions for 90/90/90
- Reaching key populations
- Reaching those who are reluctant to test
- Reaching those who do not/cannot use clinics
- Cost effectiveness
- Task shifting
- New/improved testing technologies

OptTEST work on legal & regulatory barriers

- Literature review identifying barriers across Europe
- Questionnaire developed from the findings, tested in community settings, distributed by GNP+ and EATG
- 160 responses from 49 countries
- Cross-checked with existing data sources
- Website “Barring The Way To Health” - updatable, searchable, cross-comparable
- Also toolkit and report to be published

What testing is being done?

- 37/47 countries restrict who can do an HIV test
- 39/49 have legalised decentralised (community) testing (38 in outreach settings)
- 11/49 have legalised self testing - but only 2/49 have also regulated it to ensure quality
- 5/49 are currently doing or piloting “postal sampling” testing

Who isn't being tested?

- At least 7/49 countries did not offer free testing to all key populations
- Migrants were least well served (4/49) with at least 13/49 countries also not offering access to treatment services to some or all migrants
- These include EU, EFTA and non EU/EFTA countries
- Literature review and country reports suggest many countries fail to target key vulnerable populations, particularly MSM and PWID, preferring to test e.g. all pregnant women twice

Reasons given for failure to modernise or target testing appropriately

- failure to update guidance linked to older testing technologies
- custom and practice
- failure to legalise or make available rapid testing
- clinician resistance to community based testing
- unnecessary qualifications required despite simplified procedures
- attachment to compulsory intensive pre-test counselling
- over-cautiousness on safety
- key populations “harder to reach”

Potential remedies

- European-wide testing guidelines regularly updated and publicised
- Documentation of practical experience and successful pilots
- Cost-effectiveness data
- Challenges to “custom & practice”
- Use of comparative data across Europe in testing campaigns e.g, European HIV/Hep Testing Week
- Barring The Way To Health website
- OptTEST tools and publications

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