



## Scaling up integrated HCV/HIV testing and linkage to care for PWID at drug treatment centres

Partner Organization(s):  
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### OVERVIEW

Greece has a high HCV prevalence among people who inject drugs and has experienced a rise in HIV diagnoses from 2011 to 2012 among PWID. National efforts are required to scale up integrated testing and support linkage to HCV treatment and HIV care.

Because PWID face serious difficulties in accessing information about diseases and preventive services, national outreach programs seek to reach PWID and facilitate access to the public health system. PWID is a patient group with multiple vulnerabilities and special attention is needed to secure regular medical care and compliance during treatment. For PWID living with HIV and/or with viral hepatitis retention in care is the main challenge.

The National Public Health Organization (NPHO) in collaboration with The Organisation Against Drugs (OKANA) launched a pilot activity to enhance the promotion and support for HCV and HIV testing and linkage to care for PWID attending the drug treatment units at OKANA.

### APPROACH

- 01 OKANA's drug treatment units implemented a special '**holistic protocol**' to **enhance integrated HIV, HBV & HCV testing** and strengthen treatment uptake and completion among PWID.
- 02 Users were **informed about available drug preventive/detoxification services** & connected to **free testing services** through outreach programs and mobile units. All PWID enrolled in the drug treatment programme were offered testing at the MAVI medical unit of OKANA.
- 03 **Collaboration between drug treatment centres, special hospital HCV treatment unit & infectious units for HIV treatment** supported linkage to care & treatment completion. At least 50 HCV+ patients per month would be included.
- 04 Among the beneficiaries who tested **HCV positive**, those **coinfected with HIV** and living with their families were **prioritized for free DAAs therapy** HCV treatment offer in collaboration with the hepatological unit of NIMITS hospital.

# Country Case Study: Greece



Joint Action on integrating prevention, testing and linkage to care strategies across HIV, viral hepatitis, TB and STIs in Europe



## LESSONS LEARNED



Health professionals often must provide specialized additional services to ensure and monitor linkage and retention in care for PWID. It is a patient group that often needs special interventions and persistence.



The pilot work has shown that tailored service delivery can scale up multiple disease testing, access to care and treatment adherence for PWID.



The 'holistic treatment' protocol was implemented in close collaboration between councilors at the drug treatment centre and the hospital units.

This collaboration proved very important as it allowed the councilors to monitor the patients' treatment procedures and provide additional support services.

Not being able to provide the testing and the treatment on site at the premises of the drug treatment centers is a limitation as cross-sector referrals may lead to risk of loss to follow-up.



OKANA has been able to secure resources for multiple disease screening & continue the enhanced follow-up and support services for PWID in treatment to ensure sustainability of the intervention at the moment.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The pilot was implemented during 12 months. 'Holistic treatment protocol' led to a scale-up of multiple disease testing uptake among the PWID and successful links to treatment.



**824** NEW CLIENTS



**45** TESTED HIV+



**425** TESTED HCV+



**21** TESTED HBV+



**80% COMPLETED TREATMENT**

of the HCV positive patients referred for DAA treatment.



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