

BORDER|NET - Telegram

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For regional network partners

BORDERNET Activities 2007

The year had just started and there were already many planned activities for the first half of this last BORDERNET year. The activities and meetings kicked off with a "Sentinel" BORDERNET meeting in Linz, Austria on the 26th and 27th of January. In this meeting the meaning and importance of the Sentinel was stressed through several presentations of the epidemiological trends in Austria and the Slovak Republic as well as a presentation of the BORDERNET sentinel results so far.

On the 30th of January the first Youth Film Day of this year took place in Wolgast. More of them are going to take place throughout the year due to the very positive response and popularity.

February started with a Tandem Region Meeting (Model Region III) on prevention, diagnostic and treatment of HIV and STI in Košice, Slovak Republic.

STI in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Szczecin and Zachodniopomorskie was the subject of a medical conference in Rostock on the 24th of February.

BORDERNET Tandem Regions

As you all know, in this last year of BORDERNET I the work with the Tandem Regions has to be intensified and strengthened. For this purpose, all the Regions have set up dates for visits to their respective Tandem regions, as well as dates for carrying

out meetings and trainings on several subjects. An example for this was the Tandem Meeting in Košice that was mentioned earlier, followed by the workshop on "HIV/STI and harm-reduction in Central and Eastern Europe".

HIV/AIDS and gay men

This is the subject of a meeting that took place in Graz from the 23rd to the 25th of March. To this BORDERNET Meeting were not only members of organisations or associations that work with gay men invited, but it was open for all gay men that are interested in the topic of HIV/AIDS. In this meeting, Peter Keogh (Sigma Research, London) presented the results of his study "Morality, Responsibility and Risk – Gay men and proximity to HIV"

and Michael Bochow (Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin) spoke about gay men and the search for a sexual partners through the internet. This meeting was a chance to network within the gay community through the introduction of invited members from Bosnia, Croatia and the Slovak Republic and for the discussion of the prevention needs in gay settings.

KABaSTI study among MSM in Germany

Between May and October 2006, the Robert Koch Institute conducted a large cross-sectional study on Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviour as to Sexually Transmitted Infections (KABaSTIstudy) in MSM in Germany. A standardized, self-administered 66-item questionnaire was distributed online through gay chat rooms or contact sites (n=5,928) or offline through HIV clinics, private practices or gay venues (n=905). The analysis included sexual risk taking, risk management, and sexual networks to identify potential pathways for the ongoing HIV transmission among MSM.

The study shows that the knowledge of STI is related on the one side to the individual education level and on the other side to which level is the person individually affected. The best informed are men between 30 and 44 years old. In general, it can be said that the more serious the (presumed) consequences of an STI are, the better it is known. MSM know little about Genital Herpes and Genital Warts, the least known STI is Chlamydia.

Concerning sexual risk management, the general idea of finding sexual partners with a concordant HIV serostatus in order to have anal sex without a condom, seems to be a popular risk reduction strategy among MSM.

Especially in MSM already living with HIV, this idea seems to translate into sexual practice. In contrast, MSM who regard themselves as HIV negative, predominantly use other strategies than serosorting to reduce their risk of infection.

One of the conclusions of the study is that HIV-focused risk management strategies, predominantly utilized by HIV positive MSM, contribute to a high incidence and prevalence of STIs in this group. An increase of HIV transmission probability due to concomitant STIs has to be expected particularly in MSM living with an untreated HIV infection. Increased HIV transmissibility may offset risk reduction resulting from serosorting.

Additional studies are required to estimate the efficacy of HIV serosorting in practice, and to elucidate how antiretroviral drugs may directly or indirectly affect bacterial STIs. The findings of the study underline further the need for low threshold STI screening programmes for MSM, especially for those who are HIV positive or can be ascribed to core zones of sexual networks.

For further findings of the study, please contact Dr. Ulrich Marcus (MarcusU@rki.de) or Axel Schmidt (kabasti@rki.de)

EU Health Minister Conference in Bremen: Responsibility & Partnership – Together against HIV / AIDS

The German Federal Government has chosen HIV/AIDS to be the main topic in of the German EU Presidency 2007 in the area of health. As the lead event, the conference "Responsibility & Partnership – Together against HIV/AIDS" is organized by the German Federal Ministry for Health together with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the European Commission and UNAIDS. The conference took place in Bremen on 12 and 13 March 2007.

The conference built on the results of previous conferences on HIV/AIDS in Dublin and Vilnius in 2004 and developed them further. The special importance of cooperation of state

and non-state actors in the joint fight against HIV/AIDS was in the focus of the conference program.

Prof. Anna Borón-Kazcmarska from the Department of Infectious Diseases and Hepatology of the Pomeranian Medical University in Poland held a presentation of BORDERNET in the EU Health Minister Conference which took place in March in Bremen, Germany.

In this presentation, which was developed with Elfriede Steffan, BORDERNET was introduced, presenting the objectives and the results achieved by the project. The presentation also enhanced the importance of cross border networks and their synergy effects. <http://www.aidsconference.de/>

BORDERNET II

Based on the achievements of BORDERNET I, SPI Research will submit in May a proposal for its continuation, BORDERNET II. For this purpose, we need all the help from the Regions that we can get. We need to discuss the different Work Packages for the new project

and we are open to any propositions, ideas or wishes that you may have for the further development of the project. This is an invitation to a crossborder brainstorming for our crossborder project.

BORDERNET TV

Last but not least : The TV channel ZDF, one of the most important statal TV channels in Germany, did a feature on the BORDERNET activities in the Model Region I in the frame of the EU Health Minister Conference in Bremen

in March. The focus of the feature was the crossborder aspect of all the BORDERNET activities. Take a look for yourselves:

<http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/inhalt/7/0,4070,5249447-0,00.html>