

ECDC Scope and purpose document

Disease Programmes Unit/STI, Blood-Borne Viruses and TB Section

Webinar on testing and care of hepatitis B and C among migrant populations in the EU/EEA

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Background

In 2017, there were an estimated 4.7 million chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) cases and 3.9 million chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) cases in the European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA) [1]. Hepatitis B and C are epidemiologically complex diseases that affect a wide variety of key populations, have varying modes of transmission, are largely asymptomatic and have low awareness among healthcare providers and patient populations [2]. Migrants from endemic countries have been widely recognised as being at high risk for HBV and HCV infection, and often carry a disproportionate burden of the estimated scale of chronic HBV and HCV infection in the EU/EEA [3, 4]. In Ukraine, prior to the Russian invasion that has led to millions of refugees entering the EU/EEA [5], HBV and HCV were key public health issues because of their high prevalence, especially among risk groups including people who inject drugs and people living with HIV [6].

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 put hepatitis on the global public health agenda via target 3.3, which aims to 'end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, waterborne and other communicable diseases' [7]. The WHO Global Health Sector Strategy (GHSS) for viral hepatitis as well as WHO European Region Action plan for the health sector response to viral hepatitis were developed not long after, with the goal of eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health threat [8, 9]. Since then, the new GHSS on HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections for 2022-2030 that propose a common vision to end AIDS and the epidemics of viral hepatitis and STIs have been published [10], and new 2022-2030 European Region action plans for achieving this were adopted [11].

ECDC has supported countries in monitoring progress towards the SDGs and more specifically towards the targets outlined in the regional action plans. From the information collected related to hepatitis, there are countries in the EU/EEA that have reported that their country does not have a national plan or strategy that covers the response to viral hepatitis [12]. Specifically related to testing, migrants were the population group least frequently cited in these plans or strategies, despite being a key population at risk of having HBV/HCV infection [12]. Furthermore, there are major challenges in monitoring and providing services for migrant populations because of social, political and cultural barriers and they often experience stigma and discrimination within health care systems [13].

Continued efforts to ensure high-quality care of viral hepatitis for migrants and refugees in the EU/EEA need to be strengthened to improve health outcomes, eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat and achieve the SDGs and elimination targets.

Aim and objectives

The overall aim of this online webinar organised by ECDC, EACS and CHIP is to strengthen EU/EEA countries' capacities and capabilities to prevent and control viral hepatitis among migrant populations. At the end of the webinar, participants should:

- Be familiar with the epidemiological situation specific to HBV and HCV infection among migrant populations in EU/EEA countries;
- Have an understanding of the identified viral hepatitis service gaps, barriers, opportunities, challenges and lessons learned in EU/EEA countries;
- Have practical ideas about how to improve viral hepatitis testing and care among migrants in their countries.

Target audience

The webinar is aimed toward (i) representatives from public health and/or governmental institutions responsible for viral hepatitis programming and policy, (ii) viral hepatitis specialist clinicians and (iii) representatives from the viral hepatitis community.

Platform, format and approach

The webinar will be hosted online using Zoom with a duration of 90 minutes. The format will include expert plenary presentations and open discussion/Q&A. A set of background materials will be shared with the participants in advance via the [ECDC Virtual Academy \(EVA\)](#), including the following:

- ECDC: [Monitoring of responses to the hepatitis B and C epidemics in EU/EEA countries – 2020 data](#) [12]
- ECDC: [Monitoring progress towards elimination of hepatitis B and C in the EU/EEA](#) [14]
- ECDC/WHO/EASL: [Joint Statement: Ensuring high-quality viral hepatitis care for refugees from Ukraine](#) [6]
- ECDC: [Public health guidance on screening and vaccination for infectious diseases in newly arrived migrants within the EU/EEA](#) [15]
- WHO: [Global health sector strategies on, respectively, HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections for the period 2022-2030](#) [10]
- WHO Regional Office for Europe: [Draft resolution on Regional action plans for ending AIDS and the epidemics of viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections 2022–2030](#) [11]
- WHO Regional Office for Europe: [What is the evidence on existing national policies and guidelines for delivering effective tuberculosis, HIV and viral hepatitis services for refugees and migrants among Member States of the WHO European Region?](#) [16]
- [Estimating the scale of chronic hepatitis C virus infection in the EU/EEA: a focus on migrants from anti-HCV endemic countries](#) [3]
- [Estimating the scale of chronic hepatitis B virus infection among migrants in EU/EEA countries](#) [4]
- ECDC: [Hepatitis B - Annual Epidemiological Report for 2020](#) [17]
- ECDC: [Hepatitis C - Annual Epidemiological Report for 2020](#) [18]

Expected outputs and evaluation

The webinar slide presentations will be shared with participants within a maximum of two weeks following the webinar via the [ECDC Virtual Academy \(EVA\)](#).

At the end of the webinar, participants will be asked to respond to 5-7 quantitative and qualitative standardised evaluation questions to measure feedback on the webinar organisation and overall impact.

References

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2. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Hepatitis B and C testing strategies in healthcare and community settings in the EU/EEA – A systematic review. Stockholm: ECDC; 2018.
3. Falla AM, Ahmad AA, Duffell E, Noori T, Veldhuijzen IK. Estimating the scale of chronic hepatitis C virus infection in the EU/EEA: a focus on migrants from anti-HCV endemic countries. *BMC Infect Dis.* 2018;18(1):42.
4. Ahmad AA, Falla AM, Duffell E, Noori T, Bechini A, Reintjes R, et al. Estimating the scale of chronic hepatitis B virus infection among migrants in EU/EEA countries. *BMC Infect Dis.* 2018;18(1):34.
5. Operational Data Portal: Ukraine refugee situation [Internet]. UNHCR. 2022 [cited 13 September 2022]. Available from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.
6. Joint Statement: Ensuring high-quality viral hepatitis care for refugees from Ukraine [press release]. Stockholm: ECDC2022.
7. United Nations. Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. New York: UN; 2015.
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9. World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. Action plan for the health sector response to viral hepatitis in the WHO European Region. Copenhagen: WHO/Europe; 2016.
10. World Health Organization. Global health sector strategies on, respectively, HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections for the period 2022-2030. Geneva: WHO; 2022.
11. World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. Regional action plans for ending AIDS and the epidemics of viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections 2022–2030 - Draft resolution. Tel Aviv: WHO Europe; 2022.
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13. Kim JU, Ingiliz P, Shimakawa Y, Lemoine M. Improving care of migrants is key for viral hepatitis elimination in Europe. *Bull World Health Organ.* 2021;99(4):280-6.
14. Otero L, Sharrock KC, Noori T, Axelsson M, Buti M, Diaz A, et al. Monitoring progress towards elimination of hepatitis B and C in the EU/EEA. *PLOS Global Public Health.* 2022;2(8).
15. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Public health guidance on screening and vaccination for infectious diseases in newly arrived migrants within the EU/EEA. Stockholm: ECDC; 2018.
16. Nazareth J, Baggaley RF, Divall P, Pan D, Martin CA, Volik M, et al. What is the evidence on existing national policies and guidelines for delivering effective tuberculosis, HIV and viral hepatitis services for refugees and migrants among Member States of the WHO European Region? . Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2021.
17. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Hepatitis B - Annual Epidemiological Report for 2020. Stockholm: ECDC; 2022.
18. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Hepatitis C - Annual Epidemiological Report for 2020. Stockholm: ECDC; 2022.