THE CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING OF PROGRESS IN HEPATITIS C RESPONSE FOR PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS RELATED TO THE WHO 2030 ELIMINATION GOALS IN 35 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Background
In Europe, testing and treatment for hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection in people who inject drugs (PWID) remain insufficient. To achieve 2030 World Health Organisation's (WHO) HCV elimination goals, HCV continuum-of-care for PWID must be implemented and monitored. This study presents monitoring of progress in HCV response during two consecutive years led by civil society organisations (CSOs) that provide harm reduction (HR) services for PWID.

Methods
In 2019 and in 2020, the Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network invited CSOs providing HR from 35 European countries to complete 27-item online survey on four strategic fields: use/impact of guidelines on HCV testing/treatment for PWID, availability/functioning of continuum-of-care, changes compared to previous year and, role of CSOs of PWID. A descriptive analysis of responses was undertaken.

Results
Compared to 2019, in 2020 there was decrease in countries reporting no guidelines on HCV treatment (17% vs. 9%, respectively) and no specific treatment guidelines for PWID (34% vs. 9%, respectively). There was decrease in reporting positive impact of guidelines on accessibility to HCV testing/treatment (96% vs. 79%, respectively). In 2019 and 2020, direct acting antivirals (DAAs) were reported available in 97% and 100% of countries, respectively, and contraindicated for active PWID in 26% during both years. Compared to 2019, in 2020 HCV confirmatory testing and DAA treatment increased in drug dependence clinics and harm reduction/community services whereas treatment increased in prisons (Figure). In 2019 and 2020, compared to previous year, HCV awareness campaigns, testing and treatment on service providers' own locations increased in 43% vs. 36%, 51% vs. 38%, and 43% vs. 24% of countries, respectively.

Conclusion
CSOs engagement in HCV awareness, testing and treatment for PWID remains high, however major shortfalls in provision of those services remain. CSOs must be included in strategic planning for HCV continuum-of-care and monitoring progress towards elimination goals.

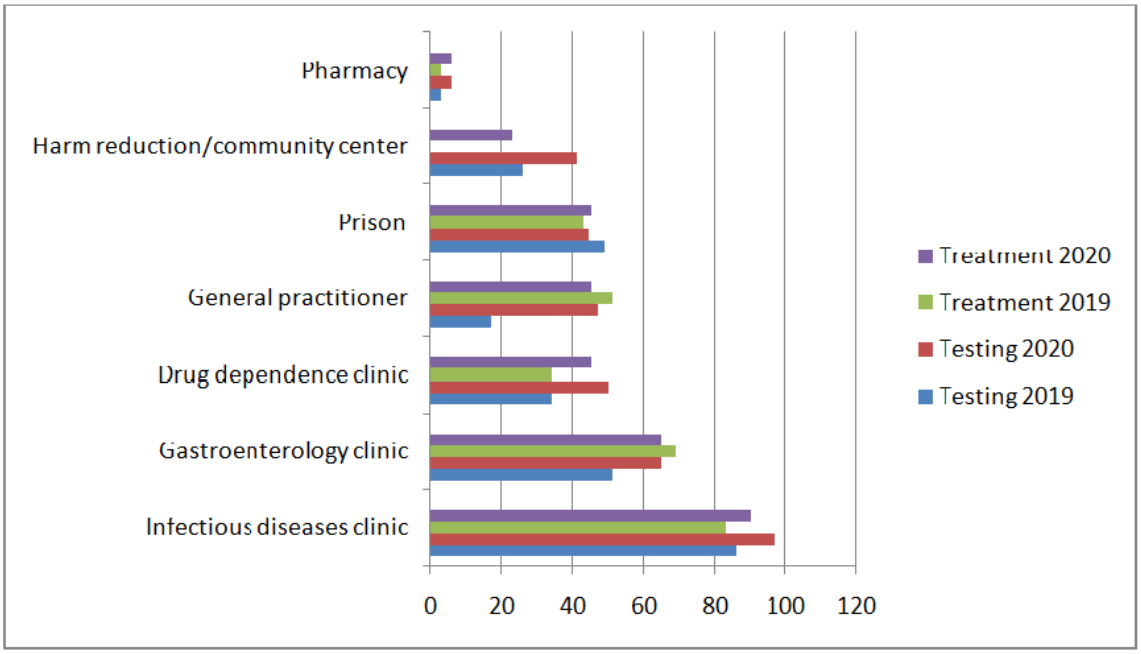

Figure. Proportion of countries performing hepatitis C testing and treatment at various settings in the years 2019 and 2020, as reported from 35 European countries.