

*Joint statement regarding the situation in Ukraine, from Board Members of the Nordic HIV Organizations; Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark:*

**Tuesday March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.**

Given the sad situation in Ukraine, the five Nordic patient organizations for people living with HIV unified in HIV-Nordic, emphasizes the urgent need to address awareness on an expected increase in difficulties upholding HIV treatment for people living with HIV in Ukraine and for refugees.

Within a few weeks from now, it is certain, that people living with HIV in Ukraine will be in lack of medicine, as the access to antiretroviral therapy has stopped due to the invasion. This will eventually affect prevention strategies all over Europe.

To secure access to HIV treatment for people affected by the war, the Ministries of Health, and health providers of the Nordic countries should do everything possible to provide necessary HIV treatment for refugees expected to seek asylum in the Nordic region. It is also urgent to begin every action possible to provide vital treatment for people left behind in Ukraine affected by the Russian invasion.

UNAIDS estimates that 260.000 Ukrainian people living with HIV<sup>i</sup> are in need of upholding or even beginning antiretroviral therapy. Without a continuous correct combination of specific medicines, provided daily for people living with HIV, resistance towards effective therapy will rapidly occur, resulting in virus mutations and higher risks for HIV transmission. Eventually more lives will be at risk. Reports from the International Red Cross, as well as other humanitarian organizations, indicate that people in Ukraine are already experiencing severe difficulties in accessing medicines.

We stress, that well treated people living with HIV cannot transmit HIV virus, and virus cannot mutate in well-treated environments. Upholding antiretroviral therapy should be a high priority for everybody living with HIV.

It is therefore urgent, that provider of medicine, health authorities, volunteers and organizations is taking necessary and appropriate steps, to prevent an increase in HIV transmissions, virus mutations and development of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). For people in Ukraine living with HIV, already subjected to stigma and discrimination worldwide, we emphasize the importance of safeguarding and prioritizing their access to this vital treatment.

The five Nordic patient organizations for people living with HIV: HIV-Iceland, HIV-Sweden, HivNorway, HivFinland and HIV-Denmark encourage those in charge, to act immediately.

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<sup>i</sup> UNAIDS 2020;

[https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/JC3032\\_AIDS\\_Data\\_book\\_2021\\_En.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/JC3032_AIDS_Data_book_2021_En.pdf)