



## Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community-based testing for HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections in the WHO European Region

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### Consortium composition:



+ Independent experts

**Objective:** to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CBVCT for HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs in the WHO European Region.

### Methods

**Online survey:** distributed between 14 October-13 November 2020 to actors involved in the provision of services in the WHO European Region.

**Key questions:** impact on testing volume, reasons for the observed impact, measures to mitigate, economic effects, and areas where guidance or support were needed

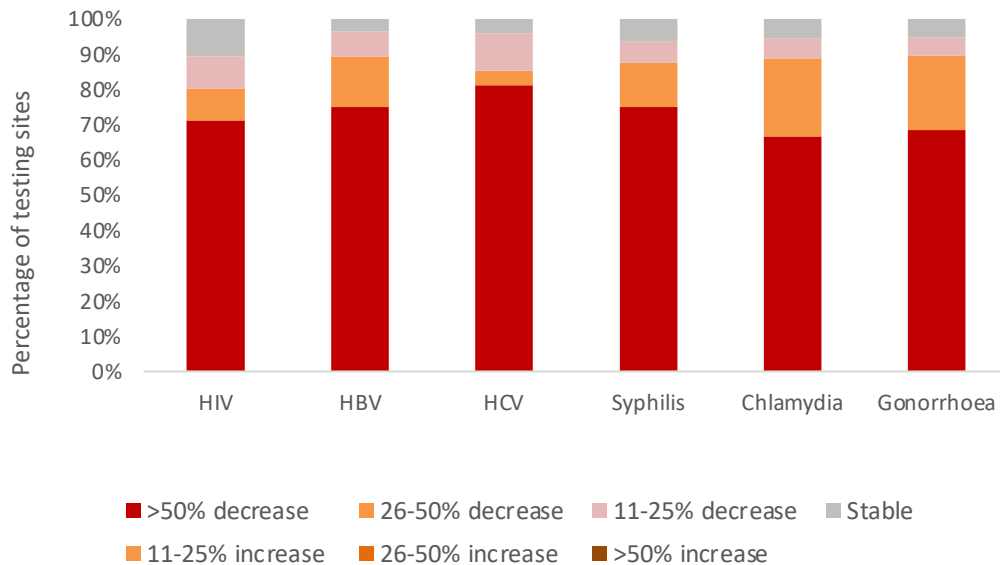
**Data analysis:** A descriptive analysis on data reported by CBVCT services was performed.



## Results:

- 71 CBVCTs from 28 different countries completed the survey
- Changes in testing volumes

Period March to May 2020, in comparison with the same 3 months last year

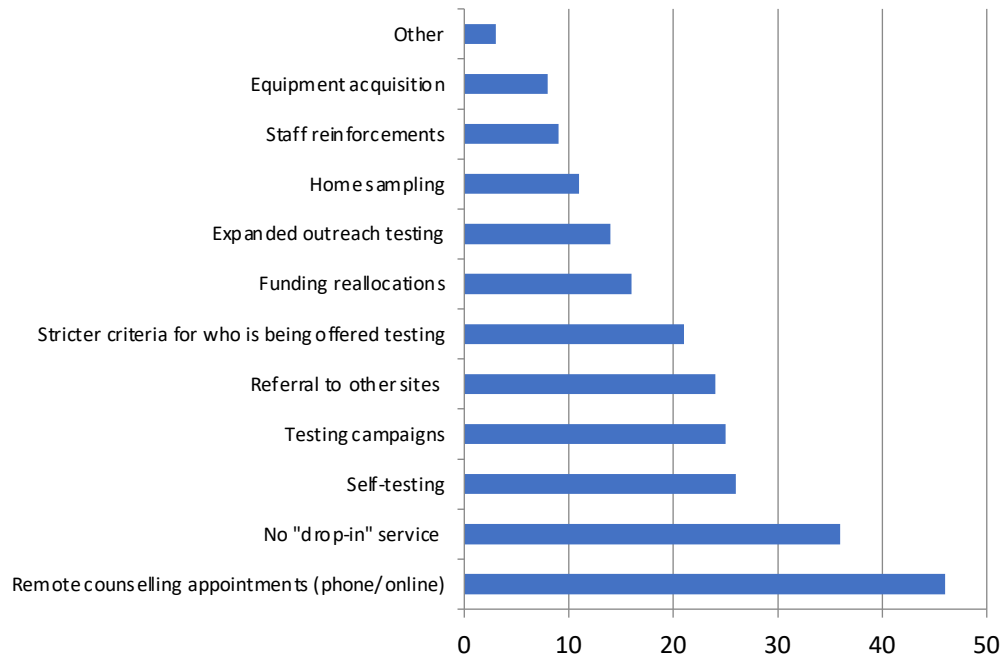


- Reasons for observed declines in testing volume

| Community level sites (n=71)   | major/ medium |     | minor/ no decrease |     | not applicable/ do not know |     |
|--|---------------|-----|--------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|
|  | n             | %   | n                  | %   | n                           | %   |
| Site(s) closed during lockdown   | 49            | 69% | 12                 | 17% | 10                          | 14% |
| Staff re-allocated to support COVID-19   | 13            | 20% | 20                 | 30% | 33                          | 50% |
| Reduced staff in site  | 40            | 60% | 18                 | 27% | 9                           | 13% |
| Fewer appointments scheduled/reduced attendance  | 45            | 66% | 15                 | 22% | 8                           | 12% |
| Fewer serological samples drawn and sent to the laboratory/fewer referrals to blood draw/testing | 14            | 21% | 18                 | 27% | 35                          | 52% |
| No 'drop-in' service (only testing by appointment)   | 38            | 57% | 17                 | 25% | 12                          | 18% |
| Fewer referrals to your site   | 16            | 25% | 21                 | 33% | 27                          | 42% |
| Changes in financing system  | 11            | 16% | 19                 | 28% | 37                          | 55% |
| Stock-out of test kits, tubes, reagents or consumables   | 4             | 6%  | 31                 | 47% | 31                          | 47% |
| Triaging of patients   | 18            | 27% | 23                 | 34% | 26                          | 39% |
| Moved to telemedicine/remote consultations   | 26            | 39% | 23                 | 34% | 18                          | 27% |
| Other  | 7             | 22% | 4                  | 13% | 21                          | 66% |

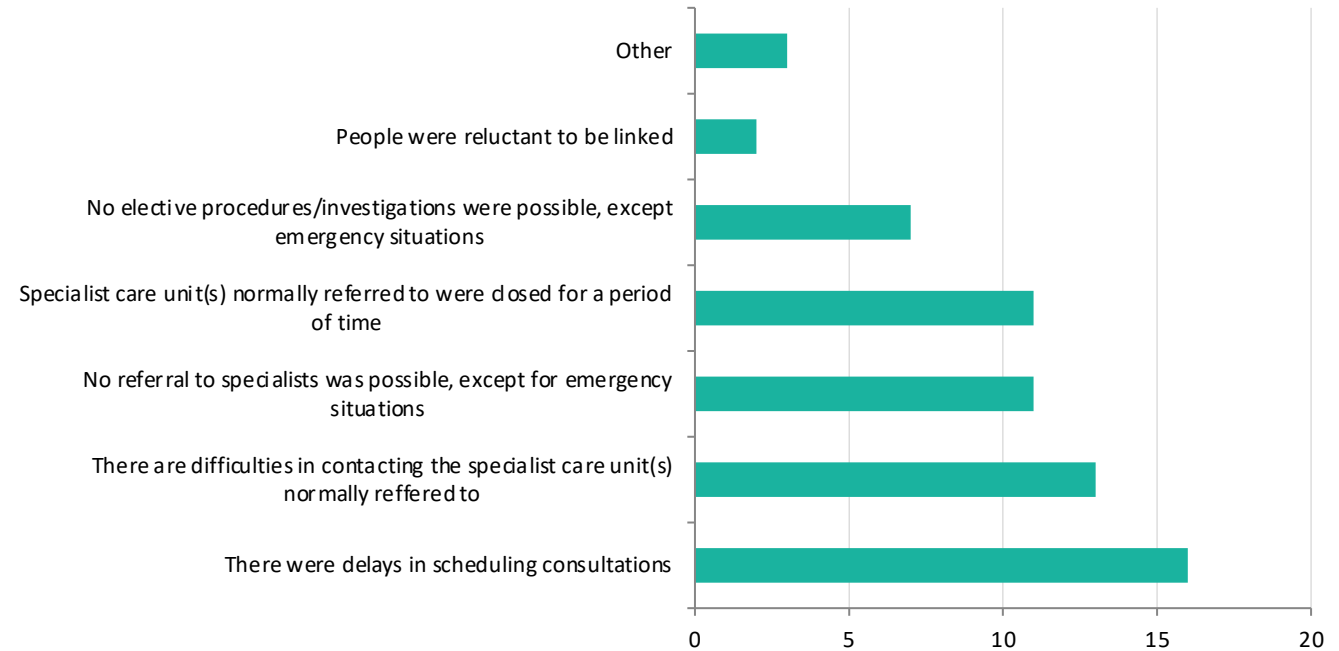
## Results:

- Measures put in place to restore the provision of testing services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic



- 22 sites (31%) reported problems in ensuring linkage to relevant health care services

**Main challenges for linkage to care**



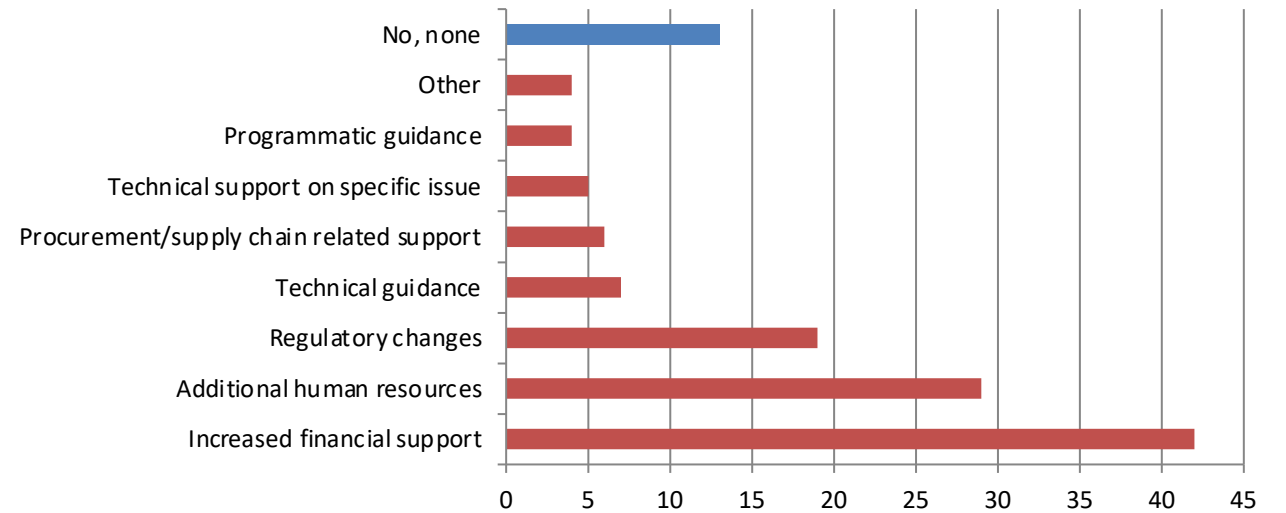
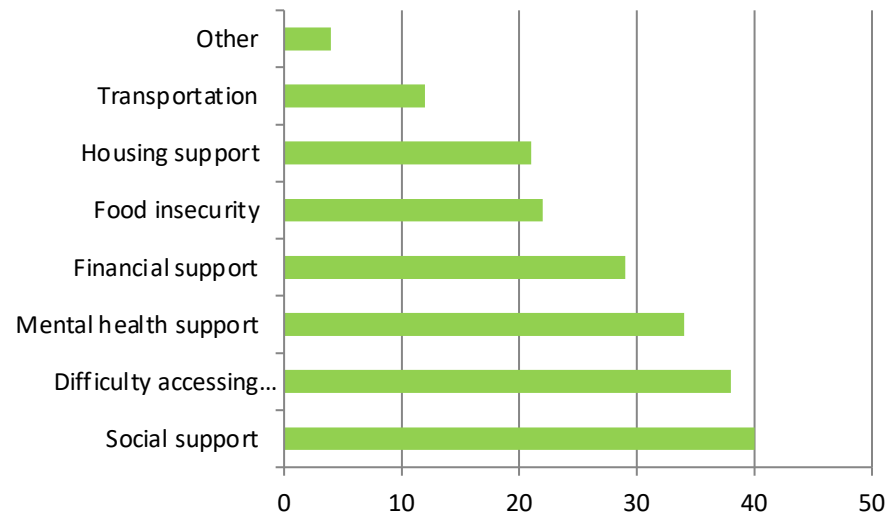


## Results:

□ Some kind of budget cuts due to the COVID-19 pandemic was reported by almost one third (30.0%)

□ In 49 sites (69%) clients reported increased needs and/or any new needs since the pandemic

□ Totally 82% reported the need of guidance/support in the coming months





## Conclusions:

- ❑ The COVID-19 pandemic has had considerable impact on testing for HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs in CBOs in the WHO European Region.
- ❑ Most of respondents reported testing less than half the expected number of people during the first wave of lockdown measures across Europe.
- ❑ These findings suggest that key populations attending CBVCT services have experienced further reduced access to testing and other essential services than before the pandemic.
- ❑ Several new measures were implemented due to the pandemic to provide minimum services or adapt testing capacity.
- ❑ Support and guidance to European CBVCT services are paramount to minimize testing interruptions and ensure provision of COVID-secure services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Acknowledgments:

- *The Consortium of partners: AAE, AFEW, COBATEST network, EACS, EATG, EASL, ECDC, EuroTEST, IUSTI, WHA, WHO Europe, Independent experts from Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom.*
- *All CBOs that have participated in the survey*

