

For Immediate release

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## EATG and APH launch strategic partnership to create online training platform STEP-UP MOOC

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The European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG) and Alliance for Public Health (APH) launch strategic cooperation focusing on Europe and Central Asia. The aim is to set up an online training and capacity building platform for the upcoming cycle of EATG's acclaimed STEP-UP project.

The STEP-UP Training Academy has been a flagship project of EATG since 2013. After five face-to-face cycles and one online, the new implementation of STEP-UP will be an online training platform created in collaboration with APH. Both the new format and the involvement of a partner organisation from the Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) region aim to assure a wider reach of trainees from diverse settings.

“The focus of STEP-UP has always been to bring activists from across Europe and Central Asia together in view of building their capacities in a manner tailored to local and regional needs. We have witnessed that STEP-UP helps to empower a movement of new HIV activists. Since its inception, more than 120 graduates have benefitted from STEP-UP and some of them were awarded grants to implement small projects; we are proud of their success stories and their evolution” says **Pieter Vanholder**, Executive Director of EATG. “We are glad we teamed up with APH to build and implement a new cycle of STEP-UP in the format of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), adapted to the new reality and flexible to adapt further to emerging needs.”

“We are extremely happy to announce our collaboration with EATG on STEP-UP” says **Tetiana Deshko**, Director of International Programs in Alliance for Public Health. “The gap in access to antiretroviral treatment is the major shortcoming of HIV response in EECA, with only 53% of those in need of treatment receiving it. As the war on Ukraine and migration have shown, patients' and their communities' initiative in proactively seeking treatment is the key to success in treatment initiation and adherence, wherever the patient is either stable or on the move. This collaboration with EATG makes our treatment approaches more integrated and person-centered. STEP-UP is an excellent project that not only provides comprehensive knowledge, it also supports community mobilisation and advocacy to deliver change.”

STEP-UP MOOC is a bilingual (English/Russian) training programme that combines 1) a self-paced e-learning approach using a cascade of trainings for networking, empowerment and advocacy with 2) a face-to-face *Community of Practice Workshop* and 3) a system of sub-grants. It is targeted to people living with HIV/AIDS, health care providers, civil society representatives and other professionals who work in service delivery and/or advocacy to ensure universal access to combination prevention, HIV treatment and care. The MOOC will be designed by activists for activists, will be free of charge and accessible to everyone.

"Participation in the STEP-UP MOOC will not be based on any selection process, but on willingness to participate. As the contents and languages of the training will be specifically tailored to the needs of HIV activists in WHO Europe, we expect most participants to come from the HIV sector, thus having prior knowledge of HIV and related infections" comment the organisers.

STEP-UP MOOC is planned to be available online in January 2023.

Learn more about STEP-UP: <https://www.eatg.org/projects/step-up/>

For more information, please contact:

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About the European AIDS Treatment Group:

The European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG) is a patient-led NGO that advocates for the rights and interests of people living with or affected by HIV/ AIDS and related co-infections within the WHO Europe region. Founded in 1992, the EATG is a network of more than 150 members from 45 countries in Europe. Our members are PLHIV and representatives of different communities affected by HIV/AIDS and co-infections. EATG represents the diversity of more than 2.3 million people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Europe as well as those affected by HIV/AIDS and co-infections. For more information, please visit [www.eatg.org](http://www.eatg.org)