

# #WorldHepatitisDay: Supporting the HCV elimination agenda — an EMCDDA initiative to increase access to hepatitis C care in drug services

Every year, on 28 July, the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners mark [World Hepatitis Day](#). Its aim is to increase awareness and understanding of viral hepatitis and the diseases it causes. The introduction of direct-acting antiviral (DAA) therapy has profoundly changed and improved the clinical management of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection and given impetus to the WHO goal of eliminating HCV infection as a public health threat by 2030. Although DAA therapy has provided the tools to achieve this, HCV elimination is dependent on substantially increasing the number of people tested, diagnosed, linked to care and treated. Improving the HCV care cascade among marginalised, high-risk populations — such as people who inject drugs — is paramount in these efforts.

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel says: ‘The EMCDDA is fully subscribed to helping European countries prevent and reduce HCV infection among people who inject drugs. Treatments are available that can make the global elimination goal attainable, and national hepatitis policies are increasingly aligned. We must now focus on ensuring those who need care can obtain it. With our hepatitis C initiative we highlight the great potential of drugs services to provide HCV testing, treatment and care. With the help of our tools, countries can systematically assess barriers and facilitators to HCV testing and improve existing practice by applying new models of care, in active cooperation with people who inject drugs. This initiative provides a practical basis to improve the quality and delivery of responses to drug use and contribute to a healthier Europe.’

In 2018, the EMCDDA launched an initiative to support countries in increasing access to hepatitis care through drug services, providing tools to assess the need for services; identify barriers to care; and develop a plan of action to improve the response to the virus. To mark World Hepatitis Day 2019, the EMCDDA is launching a new set of hepatitis resources:

- an outline of the [EMCDDA initiative](#) and results of pilot tests conducted in the first half of 2019;
- a compilation of [11 case studies](#) from eight European countries, illustrating new approaches to enhance the HCV care cascade among people who inject drugs, containing findings about effectiveness, sustainability and transferability of these new models of care; and,
- a [knowledge questionnaire](#) designed to refresh knowledge and identify training needs around hepatitis C among practitioners working in drug services (currently available in English, German and Polish).