

Press Release

Successful Bridging of East and West at the International AIDS Conference

Cologne, 03.08.2010. Ten women became five East-West-Twinpairs at the 18th International AIDS Conference (IAC). From 18th July until 23rd July they experienced the conference in Vienna as part of the Twinning Project of the German Foundation Sexuality and Health (GSSG) together. The venue for the nearly 20.000 delegates was chosen to point out the partly dramatic situation of living with HIV in Eastern European and Central Asian countries.

The participants of the Twinning Project come from Germany, Russia, Ukraine, Tajikistan, Lithuania and Azerbaijan. In the Women's Networking Zone, which was a public area during the IAC the Twins presented the AIDS work and the living conditions in their home countries. „In Tajikistan it is difficult for people with HIV to get a job, because often health certificates are required“, reports Parvina Achmedowa from Dushanbe about marginalisation. Marina Khalidowa from Ekaterinburg in Russia demands more support of the government and the global public: „Although more than 40.000 people with HIV are living in my region Sverdlovsk, only a few people talk about it. Therefore we do not have the possibilities to care for children with HIV and their families“. Tamila Kotliarevska from Kiew in the Ukraine reports about similar problems: „ As of today, more than 100.000 people with HIV are officially registered in Ukraine, and of them 40 per cent are women. Too little services have been provided to those women who have contracted HIV through sex. In addition to this, there is a lack of medications for children.“

Aygün Achmedowa from Baku attended the conference as a Twin too. „Azerbaijan is a country with many borders and a lot of migration. Therefore it is very important to talk about HIV prevention and advocacy with mobile population and their communities in their original and destination countries.“ Irena Andrijevska from Vilnius in Lithuania summarizes her first results: „I got a lot of new ideas for my work with sex workers. For example how women can advance their attractiveness to enhance the use of condoms with their clients more easily.“

The Twin partners from Germany learned a lot about their colleagues and the life with HIV in the different countries in the East: „Because of the time together at the conference, we are able to support each other across all country and language borders“, Andrea von Lieven from Berlin states enthusiastically. „To be a part of this project was a unique experience. We want to continue this experience with the network WECARe+, which was presented in Vienna, too.“ WECARe+ stands for „Women in Europe and Central Asian Regions plus“. Women from Europe and Central Asia are uniting through this new network.

„The Twinning Project will continue after the conference“, affirms Harriet Langanke, director of the project at the GSSG. „We will continue to work together with the participants even in the future and we will evaluate our experiences with this pilot project.“

The Twinning was mostly financed by private donations. Among the sponsors are the pharmaceutical enterprises Abbott, Boehringer Ingelheim and Gilead, but also international networks like Athena and Women Arise, the German section All Around Women Special, the Centre for Women's Health in Munich and the working group Female Physicians and AIDS (3A) from Germany supported the Twinning Project.

For more information:

Harriet Langanke
Telefon: + 49 (0) 221 / 3 40 80 40
E-Mail: harriet.langanke@stiftung-gssg.org