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## ECOM IS INVITED TO SUBMIT A CONCEPT NOTE TARGETING MSM AND TG COMMUNITIES IN THE EECA

The Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM) has been invited to submit a concept note for a program on “Community Actions to Increase Access of MSM and Transgender People to HIV Services in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.”

ECOM was one of 35 applicants who submitted expressions of interest for the second round of regional proposals under the new funding model. On 12 August, ECOM received a letter stating that it could start the regional dialogue and concept note development process.

ECOM is an association of 50 organizations and activists from 12 countries in the EECA.

The regional program proposed by ECOM has a goal of contributing to an increased uptake of HIV services by MSM and transgender people in the region. The program has three objectives: (1) improving HIV programming for MSM and transgender people through advocacy and evidence building; (2) creating enabling environments for accessing HIV services for MSM and transgender people through promoting and protecting human rights and removing legal and policy barriers; and (3) increasing the capacities of MSM's and transgender people's community-based organizations for a sustainable HIV response.

If its concept note is approved, ECOM believes that its initiative will help mitigate the growing HIV epidemic in the region among the gay, bisexual, and transgender communities. ECOM said in a recent [news release](#) that “although MSM are recognized as key population in most national HIV/AIDS programs, national budgets allocate little to no resources to HIV interventions targeting them. Transgender people are effectively ignored in national HIV responses. Thus, access to HIV services for MSM and TG is disproportionately low.”

In the near future, ECOM will launch a regional dialogue involving its members, other stakeholders and technical experts to develop the concept note and determine which countries will participate in the program. Vitaly Djuma, executive director of ECOM, said that “the project structure and budget will allow only a limited number of countries to directly get involved in the program. However, the program outcomes and best practices will become available for all interested parties across the EECA region.”

Gennady Roshchupkin, co-founder and board member of ECOM, cautioned that should ECOM's concept note be approved, community organizations should not view the proposed program as a source of funding for direct local prevention and support services. “This regional program is aimed at improving community-led advocacy first of all. We believe that strong advocacy skills and mobilized communities can ensure sustainability and development of local services in future.”

The deadline for submitting the concept note to the Global Fund is February 2016.

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