

Nobody Left Outside (NLO) initiative statement on COVID-19:

## **EU and national government COVID-19 responses must reach *everyone* – including marginalised people**

Brussels, 26 March 2020

*The [Nobody Left Outside](#) (NLO) coalition calls for national governments to act urgently to protect communities facing high levels of marginalisation, social exclusion and vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

People experiencing homelessness, LGBTI people, people who use drugs, prisoners, sex workers and undocumented migrants are already at a much higher risk of poor health than the general population and are often in highly vulnerable situations. At the same time, they face significant barriers in accessing healthcare and support services.

These challenges are currently magnified in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Marginalised people in these communities face high risks of coronavirus infection, severe illness and death owing to poor underlying health and limited access to information and care, often compounded by financial hardship, hunger, destitution and homelessness.

Moreover, transmission within and from these at-risk populations is also difficult to contain, meaning that protecting marginalised groups is an important element of managing the wider public health crisis.

NLO participants are deeply grateful to the thousands of healthcare workers who are on the front lines helping their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. NLO participants support efforts by governments to control transmission of the virus. However, public health measures that do not consider the circumstances of the most marginalised groups put their overall success at risk. Most of the measures that national governments have adopted to protect the general population from COVID 19 – e.g. increased hygiene and self-isolation – are not a realistic prospect for many marginalised communities.

For example, “staying home” is not an option for people experiencing homelessness, warns [FEANTSA](#), the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. “Let us support those who have no chance to stay home – providing support to those people in hostels, in charities and in shelters helping them survive in time of COVID-19 pandemic”, says Dr Vytenis Andriukaitis, NLO Goodwill Ambassador and former European Union Commissioner for Health and Food Safety.

Moreover, in providing emergency financial measures and relief, governments must ensure that they reach individuals who are excluded from the formal economy. Individuals without alternative means of support are at risk of being forced into even more precarious and dangerous situations to survive, warns the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe ([ICRSE](#)).

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark example of the public sector’s critical role in “leaving no one behind”, and of how current gaps in national health systems leave us all vulnerable, warns [PICUM](#), the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants. In fact, in most parts of Europe, irregular migrants live in poor conditions and do not have access to primary health care services and to subsidised care, all of which increase the risk of infection. In the context of a spreading pandemic, states must ensure that preventative care, goods, services and information are available and accessible to everyone, regardless of their residence status.

[Correlation](#) – the European Harm Reduction Network – and the European AIDS Treatment Group ([EATG](#)) call for the continuity and sustainability of harm reduction and other critical services during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes specifically needle and syringe programs, consumption rooms, naloxone provision, substitution treatment, as well as essential basic services such as drop-in centers and night shelters.

Furthermore, [ILGA-Europe](#) (the European region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association) warns that transition-related medical care, which is life-saving care for trans people, may be deemed non-urgent and postponed or cancelled, which can lead to increasingly negative mental and physical health outcomes. Additionally, rainbow families still often struggle to formalise their documents and relationships legally, which as EU countries increasingly close their borders, can cause additional problems.

We welcome the EU's efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and we urge EU institutions and Member States to collaborate urgently to implement social, economic and clinical measures that target and reach **all** communities, overcoming existing disparities already facing marginalised groups.

Please follow the following links to more detailed COVID-19 statements and recommendations by NLO organisations:

- Correlation - European Harm Reduction Network: [statement](#) and [resource centre](#)
- [European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless \(FEANTSA\)](#)
- [International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe \(ICRSE\)](#)
- [Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants \(PICUM\)](#)

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### About the NLO initiative

The [Nobody Left Outside](#) (NLO) initiative is a collective of organisations representing people in some of the most marginalised communities in Europe, who are underserved with respect to healthcare. These communities include homeless people, LGTBI people, people who use drugs, prisoners, sex workers and undocumented migrants. The NLO initiative provides a European-level platform for organisations to collaborate to identify shared challenges, exchange lessons and good practice, seek innovative solutions, and speak with a unified voice to offer guidance to improve healthcare access for the communities of people they represent – on the basis that nobody should be left outside.

The following organisations are participants in the NLO initiative: Africa Advocacy Foundation ([AAF](#)); Barcelona Institute for Global Health ([ISGlobal](#)); [Correlation European Harm Reduction Network](#); European AIDS Treatment Group ([EATG](#)); European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless ([FEANTSA](#)); International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe ([ICRSE](#)); the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association ([ILGA-Europe](#)); [NPS Italia Onlus](#); The Hepatitis C Trust ([HCT](#)); and the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants ([PICUM](#)).

The NLO Goodwill Ambassador is Dr Vytenis Andriukaitis, former European Union Commissioner for Health and Food Safety.

The Nobody Left Outside (NLO) initiative is supported financially by MSD – the views expressed reflect the experience and opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of MSD. For more information, visit <https://nobodyleftoutside.eu>.