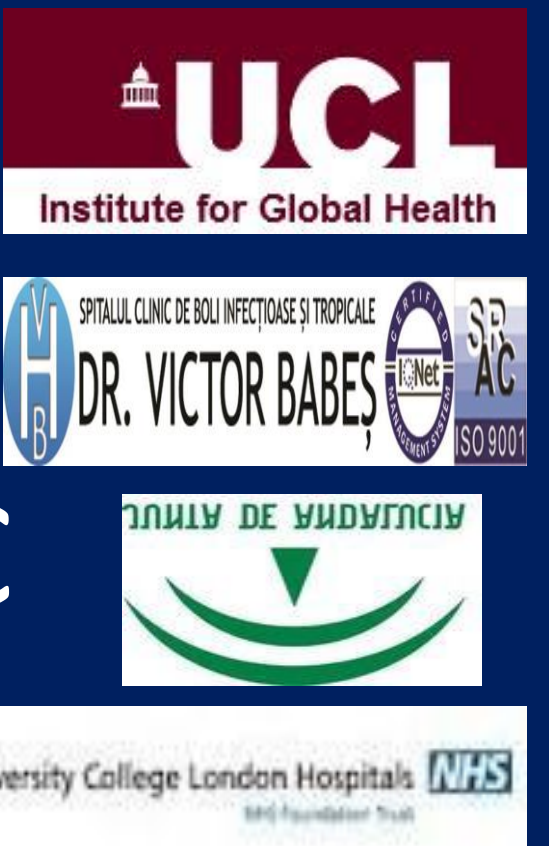


PS4/01 HEPCHECK- ENHANCING HCV IDENTIFICATION AND LINKAGE TO CARE FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS THROUGH INTENSIFIED OUTREACH SCREENING



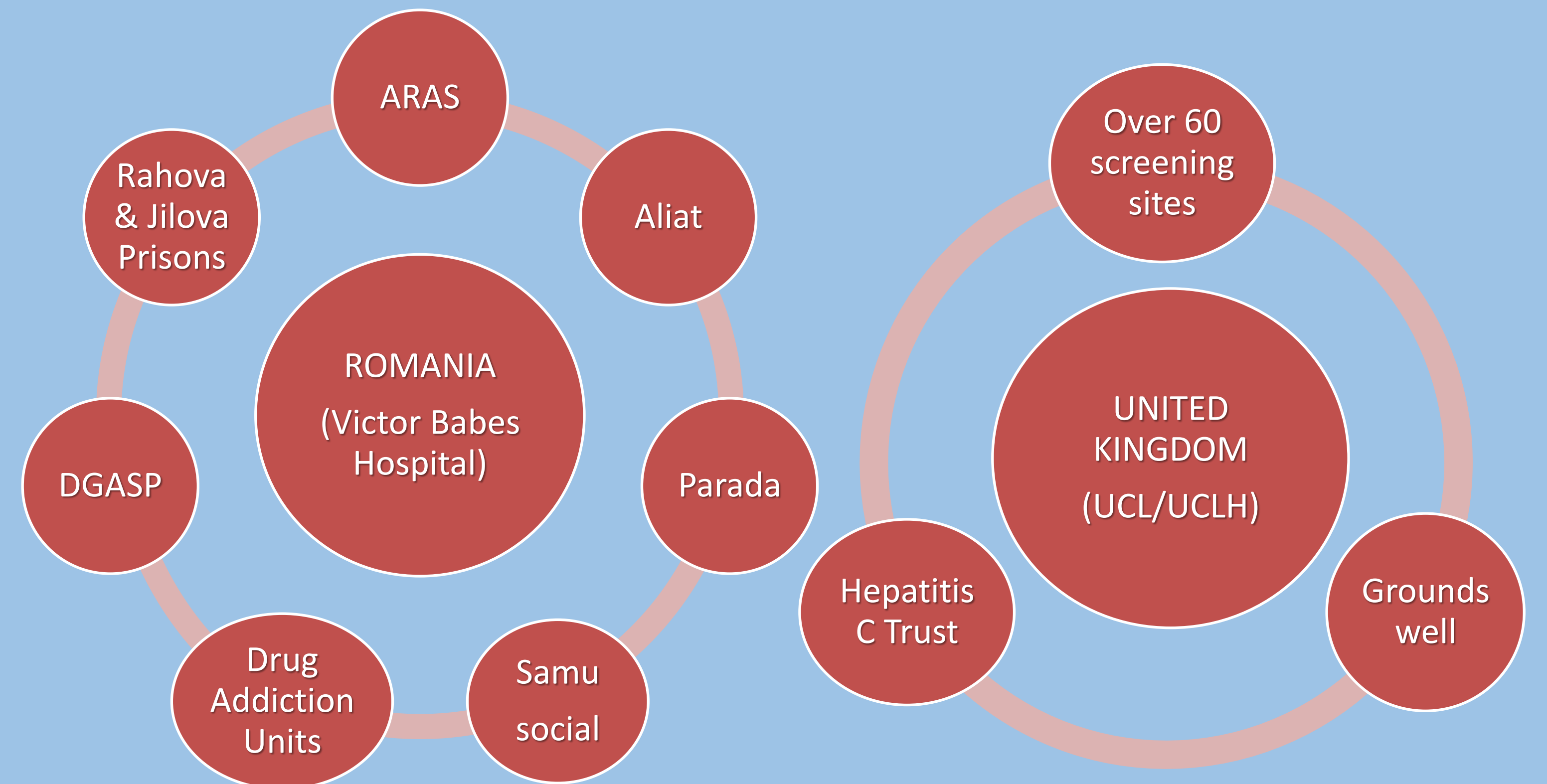
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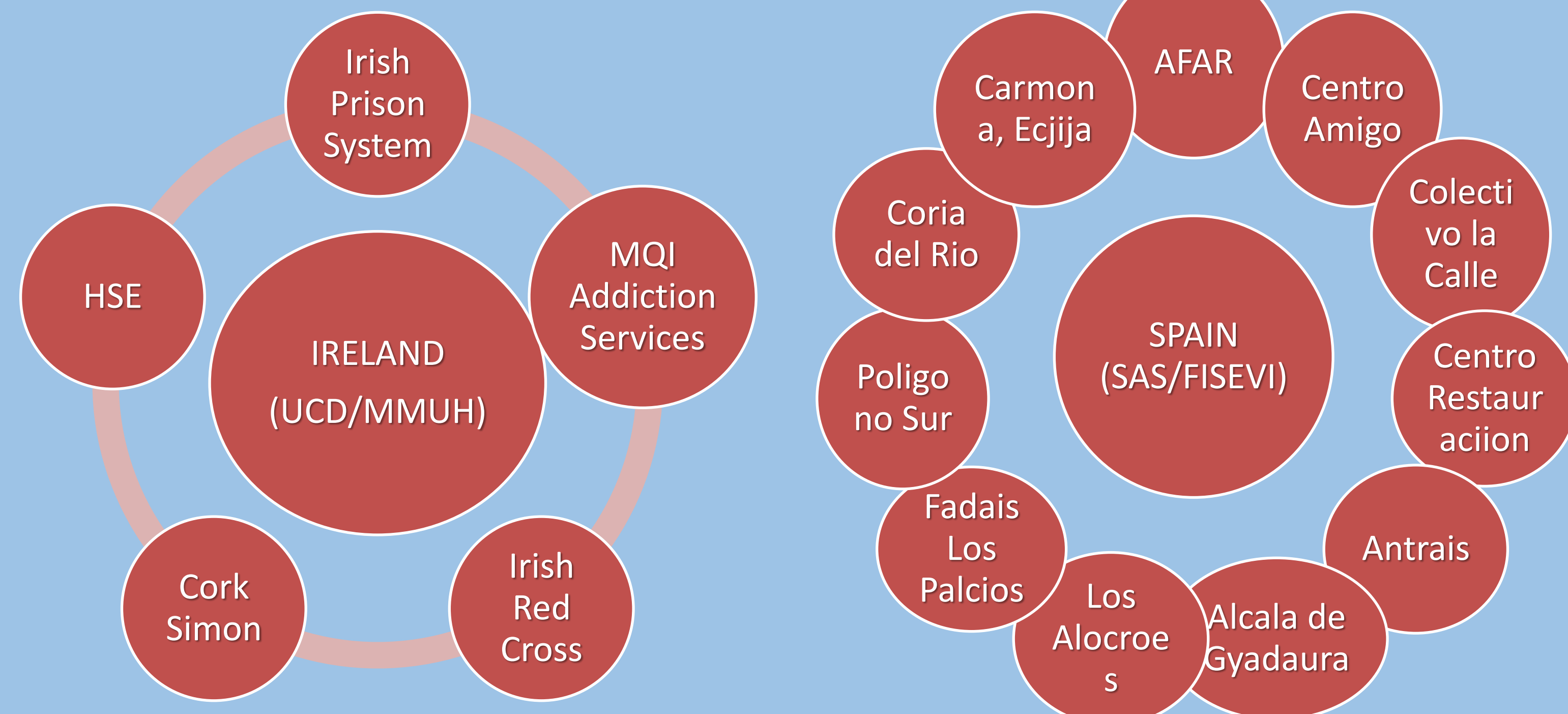
INTRODUCTION: Hepcare Europe is an EU-supported project involving collaboration between five institutions across four member states: Ireland, UK, Spain and Romania.

OBJECTIVES: The project aims to develop, implement and evaluate interventions to improve HCV diagnosis, evaluation and treatment among PWID and linked groups. The HepCheck component of HepCare focuses on screening and enhanced identification of HCV infection among vulnerable populations and linking them to care.

METHODS: Extensive community networks had to be established to enable screening at a large number of sites. Sites across four European countries were engaged in the study and utilized purposive sampling to offer screening to 2822 individuals from high-risk populations in community addiction, homeless and prisons services. Screening included a self-administered questionnaire, HCV Ab and RNA testing, fibroscanning and referral to specialist services.



HEPCHECK NETWORKS



	Ireland	UK	Romania	Spain	Total
Homeless	2	41	3	1	47
Addiction	1	17	3	8	29
Service					
Prison	1	0	2	0	3
Other	0	9	1	1	11
Total	4	67	9	10	90

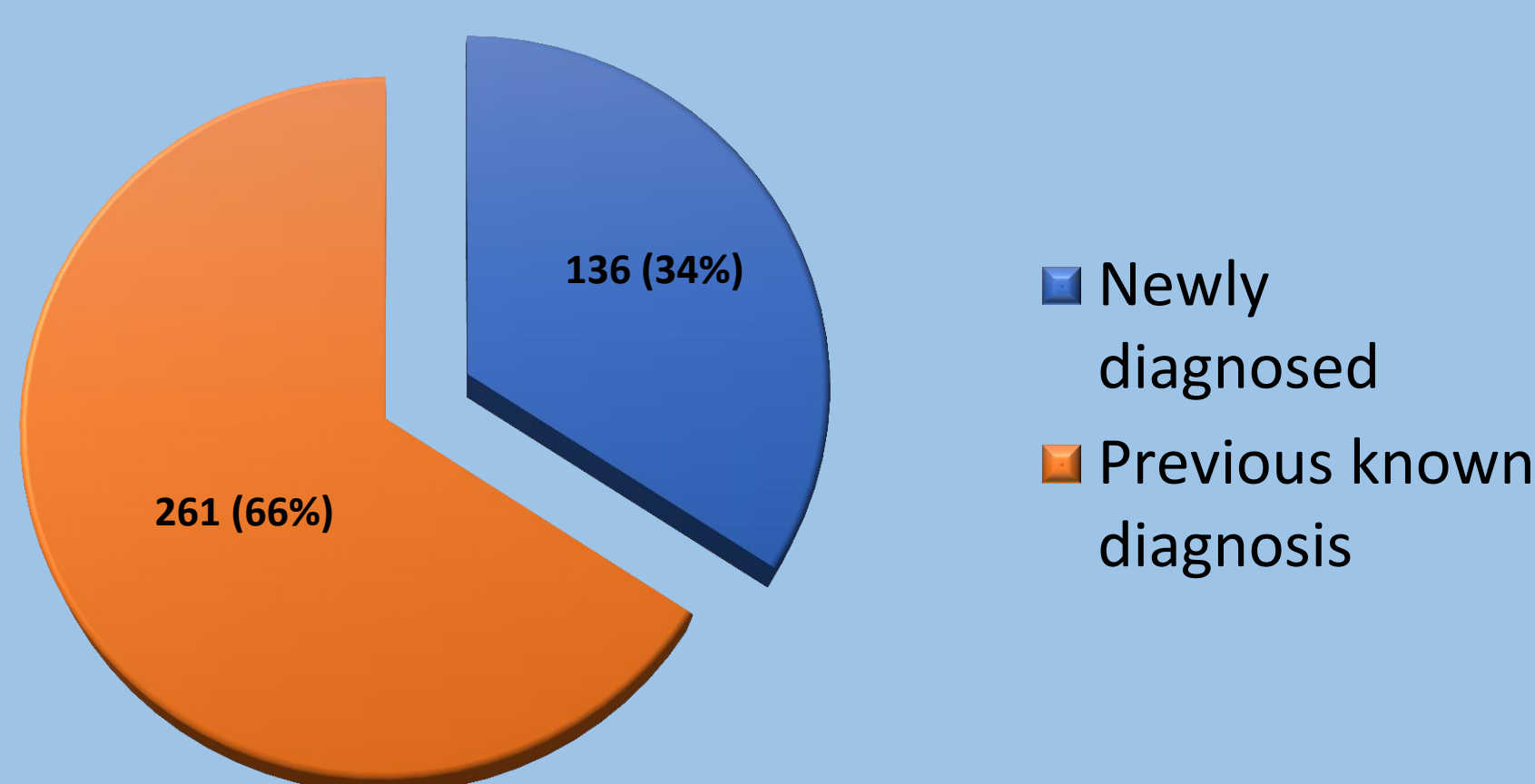
2822 Offered HCV screening

2079 (74%) Screened

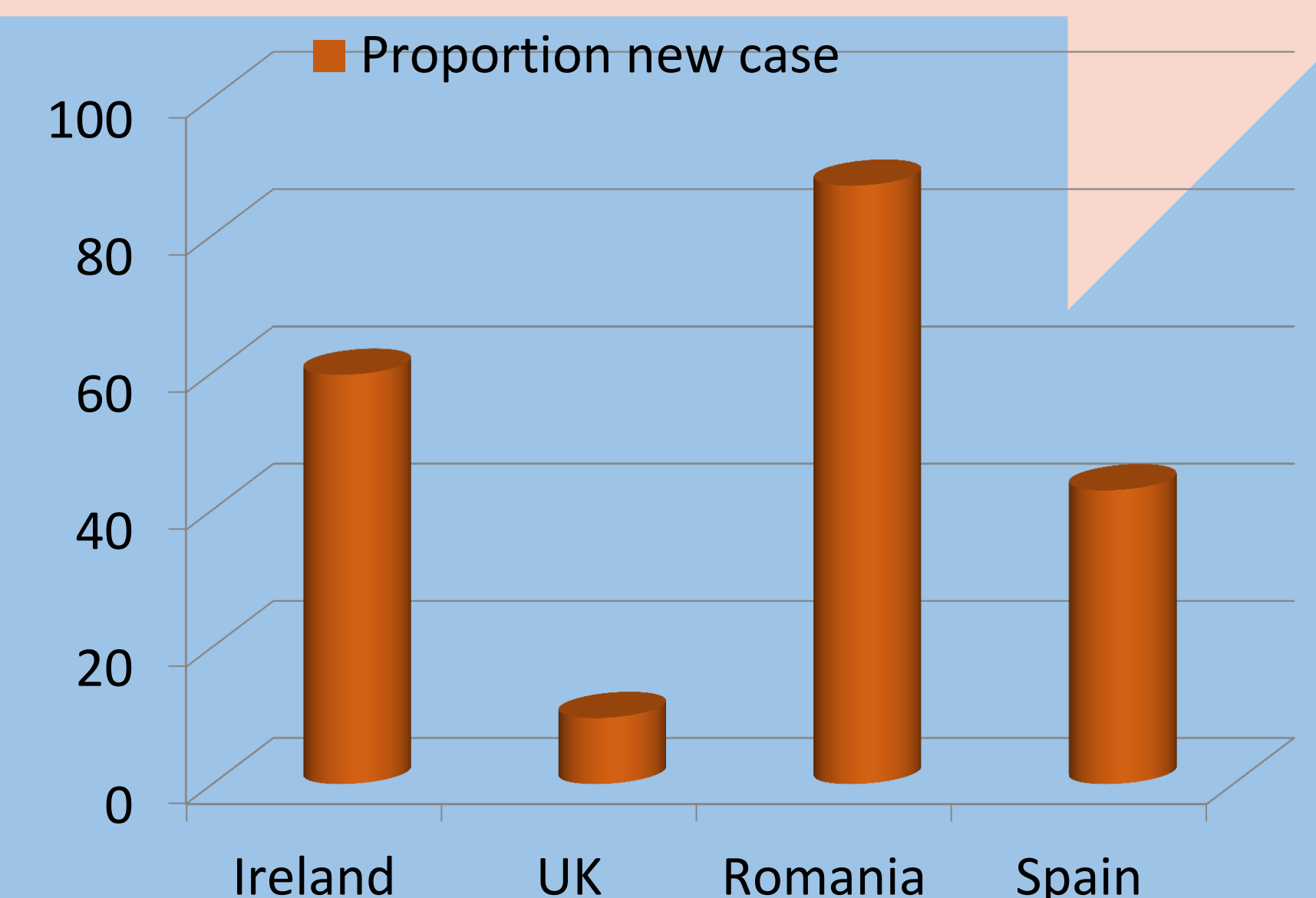
769 (37%) HCV Ab Positive

397 (19%) HCV RNA Positive

316 (80%) Linked to care



HCV RNA Positive	N=397	%
Injected Ever	340	86%
Homeless Ever	230	58%
Tattoo	168	42%
Piercing	102	26%
Blood Transfusion	33	8%
STI Test	18	5%



Results: Of the 2822 offered screening, there was a 74% (n=2079) uptake. The majority (85.8%, n=1783) of the group were male. In total 44.6% (n=927) of the sample reported ever injecting drugs, 38.4% (n=799) reported ever being homeless and 27.9% (n=581) of the sample were prisoners. In total 397 (19%) of active HCV infections were identified and 136 (7% of total sample and 34% RNA positive) were new cases. Of those RNA positive, 80% were linked to care which included fibroscanning and referral to specialist services.

Conclusion: HepCheck's screening and linkage to care strategy is a clear strategy for reaching high-risk populations including those at highest risk of transmission who are not accessing any type of care in the community. The collaborative approach with prisons, community settings, NGOs and medical institutions was key to the roll out of the large scale screening initiative. Viral elimination of HCV in the EU will only be achieved by such innovative, patient-centred approaches.

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