

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Europe's HIV response falls short in curbing epidemic: 80% more new HIV cases compared to 2004

Stockholm/Copenhagen 27/11/2014

The HIV epidemic has continued to spread in Europe since 2004 despite advances in medical treatment and new prevention options. In 2013, more than 136 000 new HIV cases were diagnosed across Europe and Central Asia, [according to new data published today by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control \(ECDC\) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe](#). This represents an 80% increase compared to 2004, when almost 76 000 new cases were diagnosed.

Of the new HIV infections in the Region in 2013, more than 105 000 were reported in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA), over 29 000 in the European Union and European Economic Area (EU/EEA) and some 2 000 in other non-EU countries. Compared to 2004, the EECA countries have seen a two-fold surge in new HIV cases; and the EU/EEA countries have not seen a decline in HIV diagnoses.

“Europe has not managed to reach the 2015 Millennium Development Goal target to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, and time is running out. While we are increasingly facing emerging health threats, this reminds us that we cannot afford dropping our guard on HIV/AIDS”, says **Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe**. “In Eastern Europe, where 77% of all new infections were reported, two thirds of cases among injecting drug users were detected late. This means they are more likely to transmit HIV, their treatment is more expensive, and they are more likely to die. New WHO guidelines are available for countries to focus on those at highest risk of HIV infection; they strongly endorse proven harm reduction interventions for people who inject drugs. By targeting action, we can still turn the tide”.

“The question is why we have not seen any significant progress in reducing HIV infections during the last decade. Looking at our data, we clearly see that across Europe the populations most at-risk of HIV infection are not reached effectively enough, particularly men who have sex with men”, explains **ECDC Director Marc Sprenger**. In the EU/EEA, sex between men is still the predominant mode of HIV transmission, which accounted for 42% of newly diagnosed HIV infections in 2013. Sprenger adds: “The number of HIV diagnoses among this group has increased by 33% compared to 2004 – and has been going up in all but four EU/EEA countries. This is why prevention and control of HIV among men who have sex with men has to be a cornerstone of national HIV programmes across Europe.”

Both Directors agree that in order to successfully curb the HIV epidemic in Europe, the response needs to be strengthened and tailored to each country's specific needs.

While reported AIDS cases showed a steady decline of 48% in the EU/EEA in the last decade, the number of people newly diagnosed with AIDS increased more than three times in EECA.

-----ENDS-----

Notes to editors

World AIDS Day was introduced by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1988 and is observed annually on 1 December to raise awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by HIV infection.

HIV/AIDS

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus, which attacks the immune system and causes a lifelong severe illness with a long incubation period. The end-stage of the untreated infection, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), results from the destruction of the immune system. AIDS is defined by the presence of one or more "opportunistic" illnesses (other illnesses due to decreased immunity).

The WHO European Region comprises 53 countries, with a population of nearly 900 million people, of which around 508 million live in the **EU/EEA** (28 EU Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). The total number of 136 235 newly diagnosed infections includes more than 56 000 diagnoses in 2013 reported to ECDC and the WHO, and nearly 80 000 new cases published by the Russian Federal Scientific and Methodological Centre for Prevention and Control of AIDS.

WHO Consolidated guidelines

The new "Consolidated guidelines on HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for key populations" were released last July 2014. They outline steps for countries to reduce new HIV infections and increase access to HIV testing, treatment and care for five 'key populations' - men who have sex with men, people in prison, people who inject drugs, sex workers and transgender people.

LINKS

[ECDC-WHO report HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe 2013](#)

ECDC resources:

[World AIDS Day 2014](#)

[ECDC HIV testing guidance](#)

[ECDC-EMCDDA guidance *Prevention&control of infectious diseases among people who inject drugs*](#)

[More information on HIV/AIDS](#)

European Commission resources:

[Action Plan on HIV/AIDS in the EU and neighbouring countries: 2014-2016](#)

WHO resources:

[European Action Plan for HIV/AIDS 2012-2015](#)

[HIV/AIDS](#)

[Consolidated guidelines on HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for key populations](#)

CONTACT**ECDC press office**

Tel.: +46 (0) 8 58 60 16 78

Email: press@ecdc.europa.eu

WHO Regional Office for Europe, Cristiana Salvi

Tel.: +45 45 33 68 37

E-mail: csa@euro.who.int

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is an EU agency tasked with identifying, assessing and communicating threats to human health posed by infectious diseases.

It supports the work of public health authorities in the EU and EEA Member States.