



Press release
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Newly reported HIV cases on the rise in Europe New HIV/AIDS surveillance data for Europe now available

The HIV epidemic remains a major public health issue in Europe, with evidence of increasing transmission of HIV in several countries. Case reporting data from 2007 show that the number of newly reported cases in the WHO European Region continues to rise. Between 2000 and 2007, the annual rate of HIV infection has almost doubled, from 39 to 75 per million population.

Important new data submitted by countries to the new joint WHO/European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) database for HIV/AIDS surveillance, which will contribute to the work to reach the ambitious goal of universal access to prevention, treatment and care by 2010, were discussed at a recent meeting of the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the ECDC and are now available in a joint annual report on HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe.¹

The main findings of the surveillance report are as follows.

- In 2007, 48 892 newly diagnosed cases of HIV infection were reported from 49 of the 53 countries in the WHO European Region (data not available for Austria, Italy, Monaco and the Russian Federation) and 5 244 diagnosed cases of AIDS were reported in 48 countries. The highest HIV rates were reported from Estonia, Ukraine, Portugal and the Republic of Moldova. In the 44 countries that have consistently provided data since 2000, the annual number of newly diagnosed cases increased from 21 787 to 41 949.
- In 2007, 26 279 newly diagnosed cases of HIV infection were reported in the countries of the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). In the EU/EFTA, the highest rates were reported from Estonia, Portugal and Latvia; the lowest rates were reported by Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Romania.
- In EU/EFTA countries, the predominant mode of HIV transmission is sex between men, followed by heterosexual contact. Around 40% of heterosexual cases are reported among people originating from countries with generalized HIV/AIDS epidemics.
- Injecting drug use is still the main mode of HIV transmission in the eastern part of the WHO European Region, while in the central and western European countries, the predominant mode of transmission is heterosexual contact. The number of HIV cases reported among men having sex with men has also increased.

“Our main objective is to reverse the trend by increasing access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care. The number of countries that provide antiretroviral therapy (ART), one of

¹ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO Regional Office for Europe. *HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe 2007*. Stockholm, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2008.

the most cost-effective health interventions available, is increasing. Today, 38 of our 53 Member States provide ART to over 75% of the people living with HIV who need it,” said Dr Nata Menabde, Deputy Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe. “This improvement is, of course, encouraging, but there is no room for complacency. There are two issues that we should keep in mind. First, the number of new patients in central and eastern Europe is rising faster than the number of people with access to treatment. Second, strengthening the capacity of public health systems in all countries is the best defence against the HIV/AIDS epidemic,” she added.

Zsuzsanna Jakab, Director of the ECDC, stated: *“HIV/AIDS remains a major public health challenge for the whole of Europe. ECDC and the WHO Regional Office for Europe are working together closely to address this challenge. The publication of this report shows the value of our collaboration. The data show the diversity of the HIV epidemics in Europe and it shows that prevention should be targeted in different ways across countries. Nonetheless, one challenge faced by all countries is that many of the people living with HIV are unaware that they are infected. Reducing the barriers to HIV testing and counselling is a key priority for ECDC. We are currently gathering evidence on best practice in this area, with a view to developing guidance.”*

In addition to the surveillance report, detailed data and an analysis of the HIV/AIDS situation in each Member State are available on both the WHO Regional Office web site (www.euro.who.int/aids) and the ECDC website (www.ecdc.europa.eu).

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