

Strong leadership, late diagnoses: new ECDC reports show Europe's response to HIV.

Stockholm, 27 May 2013

Since the beginning of the HIV epidemic, a total of almost 780 000 HIV infections have been reported across Europe. Recent surveillance data show that the number of people living with HIV in Europe is increasing¹. So how do countries and governments address this public health issue, both financially and politically? Who are the key players in the fight against HIV and how do they address key populations affected by the epidemic?

ECDC today publishes a first set of reports illustrating how countries have been responding to HIV up till 2012 based on their commitment outlined in the *Dublin Declaration on Partnership to Fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia*. The ECDC reports find that, on balance, political leadership in response to HIV is rather strong in the countries of the region. Given the concentrated nature of the epidemic in Europe and Central Asia - where HIV primarily affects specific and often marginalised populations - the need for strong, focused leadership is particularly important.

ECDC Director Marc Sprenger stressed: "We know that the combination of political leadership and financial resources is the foundation of an effective HIV response and we see the achievements of that in Europe." The ECDC reports show that total spending continues to increase in most countries. But more than 95% of all HIV spending is going to HIV treatment and care, which reduces the percentage of funding for vital prevention activities. Sprenger adds: "Especially in the current economic crisis we need to ensure both value for money in national HIV responses and that those who need treatment will be treated appropriately. In this scenario, investment in HIV prevention makes sound economic sense: to prevent HIV transmission is significantly cheaper than treating HIV infection."

Director-General of the Directorate-General Health and Consumers, Paola Testori Coggi, said: "It is encouraging that the report published today reveals strong political leadership in the fight against HIV in the European region. This ensures that the required services are delivered to those who need them, and particularly, that anti-retroviral therapy is readily available to key populations."

While the number of people receiving anti-retroviral therapy (ART) has increased considerably since 2009, overall rates of late diagnosis of HIV remain high across the region. Almost half of those diagnosed with HIV present with an already failing immune system (indicated by a low number of T/CD4 cells). They are thus instantly eligible for ART in order to suppress the HI virus and stop the disease from progressing. This high proportion of late diagnoses indicates a need to scale up HIV testing services. Earlier diagnosis of HIV ensures a better treatment outcome for the patient and helps to prevent further transmission of the disease: only those who know about their HIV infection can actively prevent onward transmission.

ECDC used information provided by countries in 2012 to produce a series of 10 reports covering key topics in the response to the epidemic: leadership and resources, treatment care and support, stigma and discrimination; specifically affected groups like people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, sex workers, migrants, prisoners and the role of civil society. Today, the reports *Leadership and Resources in the HIV response*, *HIV treatment, care and support* and *Sex workers* are published together with a background document.

Notes to editors:

The [Dublin Declaration on Partnership to Fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia](#), adopted in 2004, was the first in a series of regional declarations which emphasised HIV as an important political priority for the countries of Europe and Central Asia. Monitoring of progress in implementing this declaration began in 2007 and [ECDC's 2010 progress report](#) described the progress in implementing the Dublin Declaration and the extent to which countries had met the commitments made in 2004. For the 2012 data collection, ECDC harmonised the process with UNAIDS, WHO, UNICEF and EMCDDA in an attempt to minimise the reporting burden on countries.

The series of 10 reports presents the main findings, discusses key issues, assesses progress since 2010 and provides a summary of issues for future action. Following the first set of reports, ECDC will publish the other thematic reports in the upcoming months. Along with these thematic reports, ECDC will be publishing the accompanying evidence briefs relating to leadership and resources and HIV treatment.

The ECDC reports also inform the High-level meeting "HIV and human rights in the European Union and its neighbouring countries", organised jointly by the European Commission and UNAIDS on 27-28 May 2013.

[ECDC special reports: Monitoring implementation of the Dublin Declaration on Partnership to Fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia: 2012 Progress Report](#)

- [Background and methods](#)
 - [Thematic report: Leadership and Resources in the HIV response \(also available as evidence brief\)](#)
 - [Thematic report: HIV treatment, care and support \(also available as evidence brief\)](#)
 - [Thematic report: Sex workers](#)
- > [HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe 2011](#)
- > [ECDC report Evaluating HIV treatment as prevention in the European context](#)
- > [STI and HIV prevention in men who have sex with men in Europe - Technical report](#)
- > [HIV testing: increasing uptake and effectiveness in the European Union](#)
- > [Prevention and control of infectious diseases among people who inject drugs](#)
- > The [ECDC Programme on Sexually Transmitted Infections, including HIV and blood-borne viruses](#)

ECDC PRESS OFFICE

Tel: +46 (0) 8 586 01 678

E-mail: press@ecdc.europa.eu

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/EEA Member States.

¹ In 2011, 53 974 new HIV diagnoses were reported by 50 of the 53 countries in the WHO European Region, of which 28 038 were reported by the countries in the European Union and European Economic Area (EU/EEA). See [HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe 2011](#)