



European Commission - Statement

World AIDS Day 2014: "We need to keep up the momentum in the fight against HIV/AIDS", says EU Health Commissioner, Vytenis Andriukaitis

Brussels, 27 November 2014

Speaking at the Ministerial Conference "Fighting against HIV/AIDS ten years after the Dublin Declaration" organised by the Italian Presidency in Rome, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis said:

"Despite considerable progress in the fight against the HIV/AIDS, it continues to cause much suffering to people in Europe and around the world.

According to the latest figures released by the European Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control (ECDC) today, there were 29 000 new HIV infections in the European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) in 2013. In the EU, almost half (47%) of infections are diagnosed late, which reflects low testing rates often caused by fear of discrimination. Early diagnosis is of utmost importance as a person who receives antiretroviral therapy early on will have a better health outcome and be less likely to transmit HIV to others. I therefore fully support [European HIV Testing week](#) which takes place from 21 to 28 November.

In the ten years since the launch of the Dublin declaration in 2004, there have been some positive trends as well as some worrying ones. The good news is that mother to child transmission has been virtually eliminated in the EU, and the number of new infections amongst heterosexuals has been steadily declining.

However, the bad news is that the number of new infections diagnosed in certain risk groups such as men who have sex with men has increased by 33% in the EU. Indeed, within this group the infection rates in young adults have nearly doubled. Overall, Europe remains one of the few regions in the world in which the number of new infections is increasing.

These worrying figures illustrate the need for keeping up the momentum in the fight against HIV/AIDS. As Commissioner for Health, I am committed to fight HIV/AIDS and I am committed to doing everything in my power to help fight AIDS and to improve the lives of our citizens who suffer from AIDS. I will particularly focus on reaching out to the unreached, breaking down any remaining barriers to prevention and treatment and strengthening the fundamental rights of people living with HIV/AIDS."

Background

In 2005 the European Commission established an EU policy framework to fight HIV/AIDS in the EU and neighbouring countries. Two Communications and three Action Plans have since been published. Earlier this year the Commission presented a renewed Action Plan on HIV/AIDS, which extends and reinforces current EU action in this important area until 2016. This Plan seeks to foster concrete actions to eliminate all forms of stigma and discrimination directed at people living with HIV/AIDS.

Actions on HIV prevention and awareness-raising to tackle risk behaviour, as well as early treatment and care, remain key priorities. Particular importance is attached to prevention strategies and measures for priority groups – such as men who have sex with men, migrants, injecting drug users; and additional populations at risk, such as prisoners and sex workers.

Other specifically identified needs include improved cooperation with Eastern European Member States and neighbouring countries, as well as the need to address co-morbidities such as viral hepatitis and tuberculosis.

The Commission works with Member States and stakeholders to reduce the number of new infections; to improve access to prevention, treatment and care; and to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS. The Think Tank on HIV/AIDS, established by the Commission, provides a platform for exchange of information, informal consultation and coordination with Member States and neighbouring countries. The Think Tank is advised by the HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum. This Forum facilitates the participation of NGOs and networks in European policy development and implementation.

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/sti_prevention/hiv_aids/index_en.htm

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