

Press Release



Austria needs to improve conditions for people living with HIV, says new EU Index

Brussels, October 13, 2009

The care and conditions for people living with HIV/AIDS in Austria need to improve, says the Euro HIV Index (EHIVI) 2009 which was presented today in Brussels. This first survey of HIV policy and best practice ranked Austria 16th out of 29 countries, scoring 704 points from a potential 1,000. Luxembourg wins the ranking with 857 points followed by Malta (791) and Switzerland (775).

The mediocre Austrian conditions are explained foremost by weak rights and involvement of people living with HIV. Austria still has a law stipulating that people with infectious diseases (HIV among them) are not allowed to go to public places such as swimming-pools or the metro. There are also problems to access the healthcare system as an undocumented migrant.

"In Austria there is no national body or policy to coordinate what is going on with regards to HIV, so every region is doing what it wishes," states Dr. Beatriz Cebolla, the Euro HIV Index Director. "The testing and reporting system depends on the Ministry of Health."

While the number of people living with HIV (PLWH) increases in every member state of the EU, budgets in several countries are reduced. Sexual risk behaviour is becoming more and more regular practice. Criminalization of HIV is a problem in many countries, and still HIV specific legislation exists in some countries; people can get prosecuted also for unintentionally and unknowingly transmitting the virus. The access to care for marginalized groups such as undocumented migrants is not guaranteed almost anywhere in Europe. Discrimination and stigma against PLWH is frequent at work and in schools. Harm reduction strategies in prisons are still weakly implemented, especially in the Eastern European countries. There is a general lack of leadership in HIV management and no government seems to know the true number of HIV-infected inhabitants. The main conclusion of the HIV Index is that there is still a lot to do.

About the Index

The EHIVI ranks the HIV situation across 28 indicators, covering 4 areas that are key to HIV: Involvement and rights, Access, Prevention, and Outcomes. The Euro HIV Index is compiled from a combination of public statistics, patient polls and independent research conducted by the founder, the Brussels-based think tank Health Consumer Powerhouse. The EHIVI 2009 takes a patient centred position. The Index is being held in association with the Swedish EU presidency of autumn 2009. It has received an unrestricted educational grant by Gilead Research.

You are invited to a Netviewer session of the presentation at 10 a.m. You can participate in the session by clicking this link:

<https://get.netviewer.com/meet/join.php?sinr=831594&sipw=nv64>

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