

Latvia mediocre for HIV care and support, says new EU Index

Brussels, October 13, 2009

The care and conditions for people living with HIV/AIDS in Latvia are not bad but with some changes the outcomes could improve a lot, said the Euro HIV Index (EHIVI) 2009 which was presented today in Brussels. This first survey of HIV policy and best practice ranked Latvia 19th out of 29 countries, scoring 675 points from a potential 1,000. Luxembourg wins the ranking with 857 points followed by Malta (791) and Switzerland (775).

"Latvia could make a general improvement in every sub-discipline of the HIV Index, which would improve outcomes. There are two groups of people who need to be taken care of urgently: injection drug users and prisoners. Efficient harm reduction programmes need to be implemented. Today, HIV/AIDS care is affected by a reduction in the budget which creates a significant risk for deteriorating results in the future", states Dr. Beatriz Cebolla, the Euro HIV Index Director.

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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