

# European HIV response "falling behind" as Eastern European epidemic grows

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HIV diagnoses have increased by 80% in the European region since 2004, and three quarters of new HIV diagnoses in the European region are occurring in Eastern Europe, yet the scale and targeting of HIV prevention, testing and treatment in Eastern Europe are inadequate, a European meeting on standards of care for HIV and co-infections in Europe heard last week in Rome, Italy.

The meeting, organised by the European AIDS Clinical Society, preceded a high-level European Union Ministerial Meeting on HIV organised by the Italian Ministry of Health, designed to renew momentum on HIV among European Union policy makers ten years after the 2004 Dublin Declaration set out a framework for actions to tackle the growing epidemics in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

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## Tuberculosis epidemic in people living with HIV in Eastern Europe

A lack of integration of HIV and tuberculosis (TB) treatment services is also contributing to a huge burden of TB among people with HIV in Eastern Europe, and a high frequency of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB). Treatment practices in the region such as hospitalisation during the two-month intensive induction period of TB treatment – which increases the risk of nosocomial TB exposure – and lack of access to a full formulary of drugs for empiric TB treatment in people with suspected drug resistance, are the cause of the high MDR-TB burden, said Daria Podlekareva of the University of Copenhagen. Recent research led by the University of Copenhagen found that less than half of patients with HIV and suspected TB who received empiric treatment were prescribed four active TB drugs, as recommended by the World Health Organization. Death rates among people with HIV diagnosed with TB in Eastern Europe are more than twice as high as those in Western Europe or Latin America, largely as a consequence of lack of diagnosis, lack of antiretroviral therapy and the high burden of MDR-TB.