

Polish NGO decries lack of sex education as HIV cases soar

December 1 2023



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A Polish NGO on Friday hit out at the government for restricting sex

education as the devoutly Catholic country grapples with a spike in HIV cases.

This year, Poland's Institute of Public Health (NIZP) had recorded nearly 2,600 new cases by mid-November.

That marks a considerable uptick from the 2010s, when the number of new cases each year ranged from around 1,000 to 1,600.

"We've had markedly less [sex education](#) over the past eight years. The [government](#) was pro-Catholic and pushed [education](#) in that direction," Magdalena Ankiersztejn-Bartczak, who runs the Foundation for Social Education NGO, told AFP on Friday, which coincided with World Aids Day.

Sex education is not a compulsory part of school curricula in Poland and tends to be covered only briefly.

The subject has long been neglected and even slammed by the governing conservatives who came to power in 2015.

"NGOs offering youth sex education have been progressively driven out of schools," Ankiersztejn-Bartczak told AFP earlier this week.

She stressed how important sex education is in combating HIV, which is mainly transmitted through [sexual contact](#).

Though "we've known about the means of transmission for 40 years, we're seeing a rise in new cases in Poland while there's a drop in Western Europe," she said.

The actual figures could be much higher, as many cases go unnoticed and unreported.

The National AIDS Centre estimates that only 10 percent of Polish adults have been tested and that at least 30 percent of those that are HIV-positive are unaware of their infection.

"Eighty-seven percent of Poles believe the virus doesn't concern them," said Ankiersztejn-Bartczak.

She estimated that more than half of the country's cases are diagnosed late, notably because of failures in prevention.

The National AIDS Centre says, however, that the increase in new cases is partly a result of playing catch-up after the pandemic.

"Many cases from 2021-2022 were only recorded this year because [health centers](#) were overwhelmed during COVID," the Centre's Maryla Rogalewicz said recently.

She also said the statistics were impacted by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Ukraine—where HIV is a huge problem—following Russia's invasion last year.

© 2023 AFP

Citation: Polish NGO decries lack of sex education as HIV cases soar (2023, December 1) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-12-ngo-decries-lack-sex-hiv.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.