

***BELARUS, MOLDOVA,
RUSSIAN FEDERATION &
UKRAINE: TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs***

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The TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs programme, launched on 12 March in response to the rapid spread of these diseases in Russia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, has not yet attracted significant funding and therefore has been slow in implementation. Despite the delayed start, the preparatory work in terms of information and organisational meetings is well underway, as well as co-ordination and training workshops in Moscow and Kiev.

The Context

Tuberculosis (TB) is spreading rapidly in the Russian Federation, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine. In Russia, over 111,000 cases were reported in 1996 - double the number of cases registered in 1991. The rate of incidence is at about the same level in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. TB afflicts the most vulnerable and their families, including homeless, alcoholics, ex-prisoners and the malnourished. In prisons, incidence rates are dramatically higher than among the general population.

Poor TB control measures and inappropriate treatment schedules have led to a rise in resistance to standard TB drugs. Drug resistant TB is difficult and expensive to treat and at the moment health authorities in the four countries cannot afford this treatment, resulting in a dangerous spread of this strain of the disease. Depending on their immune status, people can become infected without developing the disease. Immunity depends largely on nutrition, alcohol intake, drug use, and the HIV/AIDS infection.