

Ukraine urged to step up AIDS fight

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(AP) -- The head of a global health fund on Monday urged Ukraine to step up its efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Europe's largest.

Michel Kazatchkine, executive director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, called on the Ukrainian authorities to expand opiate substitution therapy, ensure HIV/[AIDS treatment](#) in prison and increase government funding of anti-AIDS programs.

"This is the region of the world - the only region of the world - where the AIDS epidemic is still growing," Kazatchkine told reporters in Kiev, adding that other countries have managed to stabilize their epidemics.

The Global Fund is set disburse \$86 million for [HIV prevention](#) and treatment in Ukraine in 2012-2013, part of a massive \$305 million five-year grant. The fate of the grant came under threat last year due to the government's failure to ensure an uninterrupted supply of anti-AIDS drugs, but Tetyana Aleksandrina, a government official charged with [AIDS prevention](#) vowed that such delays will not happen again.

The United Nations says Ukraine has Europe's worst AIDS epidemic with 1.3 percent of the population above 15 infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

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