

Statement from UNAIDS on Team Joachim Franz Initiative

The AIDS epidemic in Eastern Europe and Central Asia shows no sign of abating. Some 230,000 people in the region were infected with HIV in 2003, bringing the total number of people living with HIV to 1.5 million. Meantime, AIDS claimed approximately 30,000 lives just last year. The epidemics in the region are relatively recent and could be halted if prevention efforts are targeted at those who are currently most affected, and supported by prevention work among young people generally.

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) sees the Team Joachim Franz initiative as an innovative project which combines the use of sport with AIDS education.

“Initiatives such as this one are essential to the AIDS response, especially in countries where the epidemic is still emerging and awareness is not as high as it could be,” said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “The personal commitment of the Team members and their dedication to fighting the spread of HIV and AIDS – in this case in Eastern Europe and Central Asia – should be an inspiration to sports figures and young people everywhere. This is especially important in an epidemic that has mostly taken hold among the world’s young, most productive segments of the population.”