

## **Press release – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **#NoHIVstigma campaign & events launched at European AIDS Congress (EACS) by community organisation Life4me+**

Lenzburg/CH, October 10, 2019 - *"People with HIV still fear being marginalized or stigmatized because of their HIV status,"* says Alex Schneider, Chair of **Life4me+**. The scientist wants to use the upcoming European AIDS Congress (EACS) in Switzerland to educate the general public about life with HIV.

In November 2019, about 3,000 researchers and community members will meet in Basel for the 17th EACS conference. According to Schneider, much of what's discussed at events like EACS never reaches the general public: *"People with HIV who receive successful therapy can not pass it on to other people. Not even via sex without a condom."*

It has been known for many years that when there is no virus, often called 'undetectable' it can not be transmitted. *"The modern drugs can reduce the viral load so much that no viruses are found in the blood of people living with HIV,"* explains the PhD chemist. Schneider, who has lived in Lenzburg in the Swiss canton of Aargau for five years, founded the international organization **Life4me+**. Through his work with **Life4me+** he has been organizing awareness-raising campaigns since 2017, including the attention-grabbing formula 'U=U' which is short for 'undetectable equals untransmittable'.

**Life4me+**'s agenda at EACS in Basel will focus on equally attention-grabbing measures: *"For example, there will be a great party over the rooftops of the city,"* reveals Schneider. *"In addition, we are planning a #NoHIVstigma march through the city which will provide a lot of visibility for our cause."* Prevention is better than cure, but this only works if everyone has the both the information and ability to make the right choices for themselves. By improving people's knowledge around HIV, the group hopes to tackle the exclusion and stigmatization that stand in the way of people accessing HIV prevention and treatment.

The first event of **Life4me+**'s **#NoHIVstigma** campaign will be the "Think Positive" party at Bar Rouge above the rooftops of Basel. Everyone is invited, regardless of their cultural background, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, or indeed HIV status.

**Life4me+** invite all committed and interested individuals to join them in solidarity against HIV stigma. The guest list includes activists from backgrounds including HIV, human rights, LGB rights, trans rights, sex workers rights as well as politicians, physicians, researches and public health experts – both from home and abroad.

Their common message: *"We celebrate life, no matter what the diagnosis is it's important to live life to the fullest!"*

The **#NoHIVstigma** campaign includes posters, radio spots and public transport adverts that promote **Life4me+**'s message as well as promote events throughout the week. During the first week of November the group is pleased to have the support of both Radio Energy and RadioX as media partners for the campaign.

One highlight of the campaign will be a demonstration with a protest march through the city of Basel. Many partners, including the Social Democratic Party Basel-Stadt, Green Party Basel-Stadt, Basel's strong alternative (BastA), and Young Socialists Baselland support the demonstration. They will also share the **#NoHIVstigma** message to both raise awareness of, and tackle, stigmatization and discrimination of people living with HIV. The message aims to embrace those who feel affected or in solidarity, whether LGBTI+, sex workers, or migrants.

Throughout the week dedicated drag queens will entertain guests at several parties using humour to tackle subjects that are sometimes difficult to discuss. *“Often it helps to make fun of stereotypes. Humour connects and frees and helps to better understand other people. With humor, destigmatization can succeed faster and easier,”* said Schneider.

Basel's annual drag queen contest, "Drag Roy-lälle-ty", will also be supporting the **#NoHIVstigma** campaign this year. Invited guests will perform skits and contest participants can answer questions about HIV. This novel approach to HIV education will hopefully both entertain and educate the audience about life with HIV in 2019.

The campaign concludes with a big afterparty at Heaven Club in Zurich, who will also be supporting **Life4me+**'s **#NoHIVstigma** initiative.

The campaign is supported by the European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS), the European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG), the AIDS-Hilfe of Basel, the Positivrat, the Charitable Foundation for Sexuality and Health, the Gaybasel.ch, Prevention Access Campaign, Gilead and ViiV Healthcare.

The dedicated website <https://nostigma.ch> will be updated frequently to keep people informed about the events of **Life4me+** during the EACS and the rest of the **#NoHIVstigma** campaign.

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