



## **Respect! – European HIV activists call for a shift in paradigm as European AIDS Conference starts**

**London, October 26, 2021** – Respect! This is the central demand of a new HIV campaign that accompanies the 18th European AIDS Conference (EACS) in London. The biennial conference comes in a hybrid format from October 27 to 30, 2021. EACS aims to provide a hub: “for the exchange of cutting-edge science, showcasing innovations in clinical care and supporting partnership working in HIV”. Thus, EACS officials support the Respect-campaign created by HIV activists from all over the European region.

“Instead of cultivating negative prejudices about HIV, we’d rather welcome diversity”, says Alex Schneider, one of the campaign creators. Together with his colleagues from around a dozen non- governmental and civil society organisations he calls for support for the human rights of people living with HIV or at risk of acquiring the HIV-virus. “Our slogans counteract the negative experience too many of us still have. In order to end stigma and discrimination, we want to create a positive attitude towards everyone who is in some way different from the majority.”

Schneider, president of the pan-European civil society organisation Life4me.plus, points out that discrimination is an enormous obstacle in HIV prevention and therapy: “If people feel othered or stigmatised, they face difficulties in getting tested or treated.” Thus, the campaign centres around statements like “Respect my HIV status”, “Respect my rights” or “Respect my sexuality”.

The campaign will run online as well as face to face. “We started with some hashtags on websites and social media on October 13th”, Schneider explains. Many people not only share the slogans, but also personalize their messages, for example, “Respect my partner’s HIV”.

The catch phrases of the campaign will be visible at ExCeL, the conference venue, and all over London on posters, banners and flags. They will also be featured in a march on Saturday 30 October, starting from Parliament Square at 14:30 hrs and ending with speeches in Trafalgar Square at 15.15 hrs.

More about the campaign: <https://respectmyhiv.com/>

More about EACS: <https://eacs-conference2021.com/>

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