I AM HIV POSITIVE.
I AM ON TREATMENT.
I AM NOT INFECTIOUS.

U = U  UNDETECTABLE = UNTRANSMITTABLE

PRESS CONFERENCE
LE MÉRIDIEN VIENNA
20 MAY 2019
CONTENTS

Background and objectives ................................................................. 5
An overview of three years of the Know Your Status campaign ................. 8
U equals U – Know Your Status Campaign 2019 .................................. 10
Know Your Status campaign 2018 ...................................................... 16
Know Your Status campaign 2017 ...................................................... 17
Free HIV and Hepatitis C tests at the Life Ball and Euro Pride 2019 ............. 18
Hepatitis C and co-infection with HIV ............................................... 19
Partners & ambassadors of the campaign ......................................... 20
Sponsors and partners of the campaign Know Your Status 2019 ................. 22
My story won't hurt you.
Taking an HIV test and knowing your own immune status is the first step towards stopping HIV/AIDS in its tracks. Worldwide transmission rates of HIV remain very high.

The Know Your Status campaign focuses on the following objectives:

- Reducing the stigmatisation and discrimination associated with the HIV virus.
- Lowering the barriers to accessing HIV-related healthcare facilities
- Raising awareness of prevention and treatment programmes

„Despite the advances made in the fight against HIV and AIDS, stigmatisation and discrimination continue to hinder the further progress required to end the epidemic. The goal is and remains to raise awareness of sexuality, prevention and the importance of medication with the clear message behind our Know Your Status campaign. Only people who know they are HIV positive can seek treatment and prevent the virus from being passed on to others and finally bring about an end to HIV/AIDS."

- Gery Keszler
  LIFE+ chairman and organiser of the Life Ball
This international initiative was launched World AIDS Day, 1 December 2014, in Paris by the following organisations:

- City of Paris
- International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC)

Cities join this initiative by singing the Paris Fast-Track Cities Declaration for ending AIDS, and by doing so undertake to achieve the 90-90-90 targets as well as the zero discrimination and zero stigmatisation objectives by 2020.

IAPAC, UNAIDS, UN-Habitat and the City of Paris work with local, national, regional and international partners and stakeholders to support these cities with expanding their existing HIV programmes and strengthening their activities in the fight against the AIDS epidemic.

Each member of the Fast-Track Cities should achieve the 90-90-90 targets and the objectives for zero discrimination and zero stigmatisation by 2020, so that AIDS no longer poses a threat to public health by 2030.

Of the 36.9 million people living with HIV worldwide in 2017:

- 75 percent (around 27.5 million people) know their status. This is an increase of five percentage points over the figure for the previous year (2016: 70 percent). (Target 1)
- 59 percent (around 27.1 million) of the people who know their status are receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART). This is an increase of six percentage points over the figure for the previous year (2016: 53 percent). (Target 2)
- 81 percent of people undergoing treatment have a viral load below the detectable limit and are thus virally suppressed. This is an increase of one percentage point over the figure for the previous year (2016: 80 percent). (Target 3)
21.7 million people worldwide were receiving an antiretroviral therapy in 2017 (2016: 19.5 million).

1.8 million people worldwide became infected with HIV in 2017 – that means around 5,000 new infections worldwide every day (2016: 1.8 million)

940,000 people died from the consequences of AIDS in 2017 (2016: 1 million)

Only people who regularly check their immune status can be promptly treated or receive preventive measures and thus no longer pass the virus on to others without noticing it themselves.

In order to be able to reach these targets, representatives of city governments, health authorities, civil society, non-profit organisations and the affected communities come together with the support of IAPAC² in order to improve and develop the AIDS facilities and programmes of the city. As at June 2018, there were 99 Fast-Track cities worldwide³.

Vienna joined the FTC initiative in May 2017 as one of nineteen European cities in the partnership. Joining the FTC initiative and the activities for achieving the targets show just how important the improvement of healthcare provision, the quality of life and the human rights of citizens are to the City of Vienna.

Even if the FTC initiative focuses on the development of the city’s resources and services for fighting the AIDS epidemic, other areas of the Viennese health system are being improved and expanded under these activities to the benefit of the population as a whole.

**What FTC means for Vienna**
The Know Your Status campaign of LIFE+, the sponsoring organisation of the Life Ball, was created three years ago. The campaign focuses on one of the UNAIDS 90–90–90 targets each year. To stop people having to contract AIDS by 2030, the United Nations want to achieve the 90–90–90 targets by 2020.

The campaign activities of LIFE+ are scalable, reproducible and relevant both for Europe and the world as a whole. The campaign is based on four key pillars:

Projects with international partner organisations - financial support of community-based and government-funded programmes that focus on the issue of HIV testing for high-risk groups and also deal with the subsequent need for preventive care or treatment.

LIFE+ is in a multi-year cooperation with the international partner organisations listed below:

• amfAR – The Foundation for AIDS Research
• Elton John AIDS Foundation
• Broadway Cares/Equity Fight AIDS
• Charlize Theron Africa Outreach Project (CTAOP)
• MTV Staying Alive Foundation
• Malteser-AIDS-Hospiz

Austria’s AIDS charities were very heavily involved in the Know Your Status campaign. The poster campaign resulted in a big increase in the demand for testing. There was thus a 10 percent increase in HIV tests at Aids Hilfe Wien alone in the period from January to April 2019, compared to the previous year.
Large-scale testimonial campaign in social media and PR campaign:

2019 François Sagat, a French model and porn actor, stood in front of the lens of photographer Elfie Semotan, who is renowned in Austria and abroad, for the poster campaign.

2018 The world-famous photographer RANKIN shot the poster campaign of LIFE+ with Eva Herzigová and Aiden Brady. In the same year, Paris Jackson and Philip Vir faced the camera of Austrian star photographer Andreas H. Bitesnich for a good purpose.

2017 The internationally renowned photographer Peter Lindbergh photographed the poster campaign. Tatjana Patitz, Uma Thurman and Kate Winslet posed in front of the lens as models.

From the beginning, the campaign has been supported by Gilead and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection.

As an international pharmaceutical company, Gilead is amongst the driving forces in the fight against HIV/AIDS, efficiently pursuing a common goal for the Know Your Status campaign on another front with awareness and information.

“For more than 30 years, Gilead Sciences has been a pioneer in developing medicines that have transformed the treatment and care of people living with HIV, however, we know that it takes more than science to improve health and quality of life.

We believe that actively working with partners and organisations that share the same goal of ending the epidemic is important; that’s why we are pleased to be continuing our partnership on the Life Ball and “Know Your Status” campaign.

By reaching more people, dispelling myths about HIV and spreading facts not fear, we believe that Together we can stop the virus.”

- Clemens Schödl
General Manager of Gilead Sciences GmbH in Austria
The objective of the Know Your Status Campaign 2019 – with the title “U = U” (Undetectable = Untransmittable) – is to explain how an HIV-positive person who receives the right treatment can achieve viral suppression and is therefore no longer able to pass on the HIV virus to others. At the same time, however, societal taboos on the subject of HIV/AIDS should be broken down, young people in particular sensitised to the dangers of HIV infection and their awareness of preventive measures raised. The U = U campaign for 2019 therefore aims at the third and final objective of the UNAIDS 90–90–90 targets.

"HIV no longer has to be infectious. When you become aware of your story and take responsibility for rewriting it." – In order to implement this year’s LIFE+ campaign, an impressive metaphor was found for a complex topic, as U = U clearly is. François Sagat steps courageously out of his background story. Courageously summarised with the words: “My story won’t hurt you. I am HIV-positive. I am on treatment. I am not infectious.” This consciously addresses the stigma faced by many HIV-positive people and at the same time gets the wider public to rethink its attitudes. And do so without trivialising HIV.

Because U=U – expressed as “My story won’t hurt you” – means nothing other than I don’t want to infect you. It is my personal story. And luckily I have the chance to undergo antiretroviral therapy, the success of which is greater the earlier you start on it. Which is why the hashtag #knowyourstatus continues to have a permanent place in all advertising media of the LIFE+ campaign.

Getting yourself tested and undergoing treatment so that you stop being infectious remains the basic approach in the fight against AIDS. “Rewrite your story with the invisible ink of responsibility.” And – when a personality like François Sagat throws down the challenge – then it has a credibility that can make a difference.
“Let’s close the book of madness. Now I know. Never get lost, in whatever keeps you in the flow.”

The design and execution of the campaign was supported by the agency Merlicek & Partner – in cooperation with No Pitch Content House (film production), Soundfeiler (sound studio) und Mladen Penev (picture editing) – together with photographer Elfie Semotan, François Sagat was staged in a symbolically significant crowd.

In addition, a song was written and composed, in which notable Austrian artists between poetry and pornography set an example against prejudice and for the responsible handling of HIV.

In the public domain, the Know Your Status Campaign 2019 will be implemented with the support of strong media partners. For example, ORF „Social Spots“ on TV, while Ö3 and Durex are supporting the campaign’s impact with radio spots. The informative photos were transformed into a poster campaign by the agency Merlicek & Partner, which will be extensively implemented in cooperation with KULTUR-FORMAT, a 100 percent subsidiary of Gewista, and will decorate half of all advertising pillars in Vienna – 400 in total! – from 22 May to 18 June 2019.

„I think the subject of HIV/AIDS has become less visible, especially in the media, because, unlike in the early days, we no longer see people dying. I was a teenager in the 1990s, when people were worried and prevention was a huge issue. The less people worry, the more unconcerned they become. That’s how I see it. That’s why I’m so actively engaged in raising awareness – it’s not just about HIV but about the transmission of other sexually transmitted diseases.“

– François Sagat
In addition to the poster campaign, a song was composed that conveys the campaign topic U=U on an emotional level. “My story won’t hurt you” — means nothing other than “I don’t want to infect you”.

“A message packaged in song is received quite differently than when it is presented as rational facts, which could be met with resistance with a subject as complex as this.”

— Rosa Merlicek
lyricist
Wet the brush,
put it down,
write it on my body
like a map of its own
some code in black
on every muscle and bone

like a map of my story
to not get lost in worries
that’s my map with no gap
of memories

who I am, good or bad,
stupid or clever
who I talk with, who I walk with,
whom I hire or seduce to share the juice
on the backseat in street named desire

now I know
never get lost
in whatever keeps you in the flow
now I know
now I know
never get lost
in whatever keeps you in the flow

now I know
it’s time to close
the book of madness
responsibility is the sign
of real badass

now I know
now I know
never get lost
in whatever keeps you in the flow

now I know
now I know
never get lost
in whatever keeps you in the flow

now I know
rewrite your story
with the invisible ink
of responsibility
U = U
my story won’t hurt you

Lyrics Rosa Merliceck
Music Soundfeiler GmbH
It has been possible to measure the viral load in the body since 1996. This was a groundbreaking development because it revealed that the speed at which the immune system is destroyed depends on the viral load in the body. It also revealed that the probability of HIV transmission also depends on the viral load in the body.

In 1998, the results of a study into HIV-positive women was published which showed that the risk of HIV transmission approached zero when the pregnant woman was treated with an effective antiretroviral therapy that made her viral load impossible to detect (a so-called negative viral load – undetectable). In the years that followed, these initial results were confirmed in several studies and follow-up observations.

In 2008, the so-called EKAF statement (Federal Commission for AIDS Issues) by Prof. Pietro Vernazza was published on the basis of expert opinions and reviews of more than 25 smaller studies into the effect of ART on risk factors for HIV transmissions: No HIV transmission with an undetectable viral load.

In 2011, a study was published that dealt with serodiscordant heterosexual couples (HPTN 052, Cohen M et al). The central result was that all participants became infected when a viral load was detectable.

2014 and 2018: Publication of partner studies 1+2. These were international prospective studies on predominantly heterosexual (partner 1) or homosexual couples (partner 2). Here, too, a negative viral load resulted in no infection.

These were the key results, the basis for the U=U campaign. Statistically, there is a theoretical “residual risk” (one infection in 433 years for “condomless sex” in heterosexual contacts; one infection in 177 years for “condomless sex” in homosexual anal sex). Some therefore hesitated to speak of a “zero risk” and preferred to speak of a negligible risk – even if this theoretical risk became increasingly tiny.

In 2016, countless HIV organizations, including the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), joined the U=U campaign to support the statement that HIV transmission does not occur if the viral load is below the detection limit due to antiretroviral therapy (ART).
Meanwhile, there has been a significant change: leading HIV scientists now clearly state that a “negligible theoretical risk” is effectively a zero risk.

Because purely theoretical risks have no justification for maintaining the stigmatisation and discrimination of HIV-positive people.

**SUMMARY:**

There is a great deal of evidence to support the U=U statement. It ranges from early clinical and theoretical studies to small observational studies to randomised trials and large prospective investigations.

Since the publication of the Swiss statement, not a single HIV transmission has been reported with a viral load below the detection limit.

Even given the risk that there will eventually be a report of an infection having occurred under a so-called negative viral load, the U=U campaign will still be justified because purely theoretical risks are no justification for maintaining the stigmatisation and discrimination of HIV-positive people.

The fear of discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion is still causing people to shy away from taking an HIV test. 25-40 percent of the people living in Austria (and globally) who are infected with the HIV virus are only diagnosed as HIV-positive 5-10 years after infection, are therefore not treated during this period, and are thus infectious. These undetected HIV infections cause 90 percent of all new infections.

— Dr. Brigitte Schmied  
Senior Physician II Internal Department SMZ  
Baumgartner Höhe & LIFE+ Board Member
During the Know Your Status campaign that accompanied the 25th anniversary of the Life Ball in 2018, the focus was on the second UNAIDS 90-90-90 target: 90 percent of people with HIV who know their status should be undergoing antiretroviral treatment.

The Know Your Status campaign 2018 thus dealt with the question “What happens after getting tested?” The aim was to raise awareness of the personal, social and medical significance of an HIV-positive diagnosis for those affected. But also to explain what information is necessary to be able to take the right preventive measures after receiving a negative diagnosis in order to remain HIV-negative. A further concern was to support the goal communicated in the previous year, to normalise HIV facilities accordingly, and to make them part of a comprehensive healthcare system.

For the Know Your Status campaign 2018, the models wrote the texts themselves, which were then painted onto their bodies. The texts were intended to reflect the respective experiences of what they described. Thoughts about their status, the story of a friend, what the HIV test means to them are just a few of the suggestions given to the models. In the new campaign, the individual statements get very close in the truest sense of the word and give the respective personality a specific meaning that inseparably connects the person with his or her experiences. This direct link between the individual and how they deal with HIV/AIDS cannot be made digitally, even with the most modern computer technology. Bodypainting, which has a history going back to the beginning of humanity, brings this connection fully to bear, raises the campaign photos far above the attention threshold and helps the Know Your Status campaign 2018 achieve its strong visual impact.
In 2017, the Know Your Status campaign concentrated on the first of the UNAIDS 90–90–90 targets: 90 percent of people with HIV should know their status by 2020. The goal behind this was to normalise HIV tests to the extent that they become a part of routine healthcare. The campaign was launched on World AIDS Day, 1 December 2016. Its clear message: Only people who regularly have their immune status tested can be promptly treated or take the necessary preventive measures to prevent them unknowingly passing on the virus. Even though today’s diagnoses can take place earlier and have become easier, the discrimination and stigmatisation associated with the virus is still a reason people give for avoiding having HIV tests done.
FREE HIV AND HEPATITIS C TESTS AT THE LIFE BALL & EURO PRIDE 2019

HIV and Hepatitis C tests – Collaboration with our non-profit partner organisations locally, the authorities, our partner Labor Vidotto, AbbVie and our sponsors from the world of business, in order to increase the number of testing locations in Austria and to simplify access to HIV tests.

The mobile test station of LIFE+, Aids Hilfe Wien and AbbVie will be deployed at the Life Ball 2019 and at the following EuroPride eingesetzt. In addition to the free HIV test, free Hepatitis C tests will be offered by AbbVie this year.

OPENING TIMES OF THE MOBILE TEST STATION ON 7 AND 8 JUNE 2019 AT CITY HALL SQUARE:

- from 5.00 pm to 10.00 pm on City Hall Square.

OPENING TIMES OF THE MOBILE TEST STATION ON 8 JUNE 2019 AT CITY HALL:

- from 10.00 pm to 2.00 am

FREE HIV AND HEPATITIS C TESTS CAN ALSO BE PERFORMED DURING EUROPRIIDE:

- 12 June 2019: 4.00 pm to 10.00 pm
- 13 June 2019: 1.00 pm to 10.00 pm
- 14 June 2019: 1.00 pm to 11.00 pm
- 15 June 2019: 10.00 am to 11.00 pm

During the Spring Testing Week Week – from 17 to 24 May 2019 – Labor Vidotto – www.labor-vidotto.at – will offer free HIV tests, anonymously if required. It is not essential to make an appointment, but to avoid long waiting times, it recommended to have bloods taken around noon. The result of the HIV test can be requested after just a few hours over the phone or accessed online via the Labor Vidotto app. HIV tests can also be performed at Labor Vidotto for a fee at any time before or after the Spring Testing Week. During this period, Aids Hilfe Wien, Hepatitis Hilfe and AbbVie will again offer testing with a focus on HIV and Hepatitis C.
A “Hepatitis C” diagnosis no longer means a life-long ordeal. Advances in therapy in recent years have made it possible for almost all patients to eliminate the Hepatitis C virus from their bodies within 8 to 16 weeks. However, knowledge of Hepatitis C and its cause, the Hepatitis C virus (HCV), is the decisive key for avoiding new infections and re-infections. Dual infection with HIV and HCV must be taken particularly seriously. The rise in Hepatitis infections amongst men who have sexual contact with men can be stopped.

Hepatitis C is a chronic life-long condition that is caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV). The virus is transmitted by blood-to-blood contact. Even the smallest quantities of infected blood (i.e. containing the Hepatitis C virus) is enough to cause infection, such as microscope injuries during unprotected sex. Intravenous or nasal drug consumption as well as a lack of hygiene during tattooing/piercing also pose infection risks.

Nevertheless, a Hepatitis C diagnosis often comes as a surprise to many people infected with the virus. Three quarters of all infections go unnoticed or exhibit only flu-like symptoms, such as fatigue and fever. That makes the disease difficult to diagnose and often prevents prompt treatment. Carriers of the virus who are unaware of their illness can naturally infect other people, too. Unlike for Hepatitis A and B, there is no vaccine against Hepatitis C and it is possible to become reinfected with HCV.

**HEPATITIS C AND CO-INFECTION WITH HIV**

“Dual infections with HIV and HCV are frequent due to their similar transmission paths. At the same time, they also influence progression of the disease and the respective treatment strategy. It is therefore important for HIV positive individuals to also know their HCV status. The proportion of patients co-infected with HCV amongst HIV-positive patients in Western Europe is about 30 percent. Compared to HCV monoinfection, HIV/HCV co-infection causes a more aggressive progression of the disease and thus a higher risk for liver cirrhosis and further complications. Liver diseases also represent the second most common cause of death in HIV-infected patients”

- Hepatology Assoc. Prof. Doz. Dr. Thomas Reiberger who heads up a special outpatient ward for liver diseases in HIV patients at the AKH

“We are observing how increasing numbers of HIV-negative men who have sex with men are becoming infected with HCV. On the one hand, we attribute this to a decline in safer sex behaviour, as HIV no longer scares many people, and on the other to the trend of chemsex, which has changed how drugs are used on the scene”.

- Dr. Horst Schalk a general practitioner based in Vienna and known as the doctor of the gay community

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- Mag. Michael Leitner, MAS Geschäftsführung Public Health PR GmbH
PARTNERS & AMBASSADORS OF THE CAMPAIGN

Gilead
For the third time in the 26-year history of the Life Ball, LIFE+ is cooperating with the pharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences on the Life Ball and the Know Your Status campaign. For the American company, in which Norbert W. Bischofberger, an expat Austrian, is the head of research, this is part of the company’s social responsibility.

Absolut – Pride in Diversity
For the second time, the Swedish vodka is presenting a limited Life Ball edition and is proud to support the Life Ball, one of the world’s largest charity events, in the fight against HIV/AIDS. While last year’s bottle shone in the rainbow colours and was adorned with the Red Ribbon symbol, the “Absolut Life Ball Edition 2019” impresses with colourful, expressive pictures by the Swedish artist Kari Modén, whose abstract art is known far beyond the borders of Sweden. The heart emblem shines in vibrant rainbow colours, symbolising diversity, acceptance and tolerance, and reflecting the values of Absolut Vodka as a global brand. The heart is surrounded by the slogan “Pride in Diversity”, which stands for love on the one hand and thematically complements this year’s Life Ball motto “United in Diversity” on the other.

Vöslauer
Prevention and education are important steps in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In its third year, the LIFE+ campaign Know Your Status addresses the core of this issue, since many people have either not been tested or do not know what steps to take after a diagnosis. Vöslauer supports the initiative out of conviction, because those who are treated correctly and early will fall below the detection limit of the HIV virus and no longer be able to pass it on to others. U=U Know Your Status actively contributes to the worldwide containment of HIV/AIDS and fights against prejudice and stigmatisation. The Limited Edition will therefore be available from December 1, 2019 – World AIDS Day.
ING Austria
As a bank partner, ING is managing the LIFE+ donation account again this year. Donations to IBAN AT15 1936 0004 5443 0025 (BIC INGBATWW) will benefit renowned aid organisations that support people with HIV and AIDS at home and abroad, and thus support the common goal of “Fighting AIDS & Celebrating Life”.

Durex
As an established expert on fulfilled sexuality, Durex has been developing products that help make the world’s most beautiful minor matter even more beautiful since 1929. With a large sampling campaign of the ultrasensitive condoms, Durex wants to encourage the guests of the Life Ball to consciously deal with condoms and to sensitise them to the topic. “We see it as our duty to work against HIV and AIDS and to promote the use of condoms. We have been supporting Europe’s largest charity event for many years. We also want to encourage people to change the way they think, spread knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases even more widely, and raise awareness of condoms as an indispensable method of protection.”
- Daniel Rotta, Sales Director of CHAT Health RB

Suzuki
As a mobility partner of the Life Ball 2019, Suzuki will provide 20 exclusive vehicles designed in the style of the campaign. Prominent performers and representatives will be stylishly and comfortably presented in models of the Suzuki VITARA and Suzuki SX4 S-CROSS lines for the opening event at City Hall Square on June 8, 2019.
OUR THANKS GO OUT TO

Absolut
AbbVie
Birgit Mörtl Design
Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz
druck.at
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Fotostudio Wasserbauer
Gilead
Hilton Hotels Vienna
Hitradio Ö3
ING Austria
KULTURFORMAT
Labor Vidotto
L’ORÉAL
MAC Cosmetics
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