

# AIDS Action Europe's Mpox webinar

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# Who am I ?

- Stéphan Vernhes
- French, gay man, HIV positive for 23 years
- Coordinator of the European projects for AIDES and Coalition PLUS
- Engaged since 2013 : a « young » activist



# Mpox in France in 2022

- 20th May : 1st case of mpox in the « Paris » Region : MSM back from the pride in Maspalomas, Spain, and from the fetish week in Anvers, Belgium. In both events, clusters of mpox.
- AIDES warned the ministry of health that we had to act and act quickly.
- 30th May : minister of health said that we had 7 cases, that we had enough doses of vaccine and that everything was « under control ».
- 8th July : complete validation by MoH of pre-exposure and post-exposure vaccinations, but also calculation of the number of people to be vaccinated.
- 21st July : vaccination is generalized in the « Paris » Region with a massive center opening in Paris.
- However, nothing done for other big cities (Marseille, Nice, Montpellier...) where French MSM were due to go on their summer holidays.
- Mpox is categorised as a « war biological weapon » and therefore the number of doses is an « army secret ». It is actually controlled by the Ministry of Defense and not the Ministry of Health.



# What did AIDES do ?

- Relocation of our sexual health services to vaccination centers by involving local community NGOs (sex workers)\*
- During our Summer tour, we organized referrals for gay and bisexual men towards hospitals.
- Appointments were made for people requesting vaccination.
- Harm reduction prevention on social media, websites and telephone hotline.
- Vaccination sessions in our premises : Lille (including Belgian MSM\*\*), in Avignon for sex workers, Montpellier and Marseille in our SPOT centers.
- Harm reduction prevention in saunas, where AIDES provides vaccination support.
- Support to a “peer to peer” Telegram group with up to 800 members.
- Regular messages on “PrepDial” and “Info Chemsex by AIDES”\*\*\*



**Knowledge is a weapon !**



# What did we learn ? specific for France

- August 2022: MoH lengthened the interval between the 1st and 2nd dose, for non-immunocompromised people. The aim was to prioritise at least a first dose for as many people as possible. We, as community based NGO, questioned that decision.
- AIDES pushed so that the pharmacists could vaccinate, like they did for covid. 5 pharmacies tested the mpox vaccination then more pharmacies were allowed to do so. We thought that this should have been done earlier since the french pharmacies are used to vaccinate.
- For a few weeks the MoH didn't want to talk about mpox. Basically, they probably thought that if we said that all cases were MSM, then a wave of homophobia will begin.
- We need to encourage the doctors, nurses, to talk about mpox while doing an STI/HIV/Prep consultations and the other way around.
- On a European level, we pushed for a more coordinated response in order to accelerate the vaccination process and support countries where the vaccin was not available.



# Mpox in France in 2023 : 1/2

- Up to March 2023: **5 002** cases in France, **4 144** biologically confirmed
- Up to March 2023: **146 222** people vaccinated (1<sup>st</sup> dose or 2<sup>nd</sup> dose)
- Cluster in the « *Centre Val de Loire* » Region:
  - January to March 2023
  - 19 cases, all MSM
  - Aged 24 to 56
  - 7 with no vaccination at all
  - 2 with incomplete vaccination
  - **10 with complete vaccination scheme**
  - No deaths, no serious cases
  - No other cases since then
- We are now following WHO Europe recommendations towards mpox elimination





# Mpox in France in 2023 : 2/2

- Plan of State General health Department (“Direction générale de la Santé”)
- **Strategy to eliminate mpox:**
  - 1. Communication and community mobilization\***
  - 2. Vaccination: especially the second dose\*\***
  - 3. Raising awareness among health professionals\*\*\***
  - 4. Support people who need to isolate themselves**
  - 5. Strengthening European coordination\*\*\*\***
- Strategy with 8 axis:
  1. Axis 1 : Monitoring of the international situation
  2. Axis 2 : Monitoring of cases in France
  3. Axis 3 : Behaviour around cases to limit transmission
  4. Axis 4 : Maintenance of diagnostic capacities
  5. Axis 5 : Care and treatment support
  6. Axis 6 : Promotion of vaccination
  7. Axis 7 : Prevention and communication
  8. Axis 8 : Research and development



# Thank you very much!

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