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PRESS RELEASE

SCREENING

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PRESS RELEASE ON THE EVOLUTION OF HIV INFECTION SCREENING PROGRAMMES IN FRANCE

One week from World AIDS Day, the Conseil national du sida (CNS) is going to publish its report on the evolution of HIV infection screening programmes in France. The report, which sets out the CNS's recommendations in the area of screening policy, will be presented to the press and to not-for-profit AIDS organisations at 9am on Thursday 23rd November at the CNS's headquarters at 25/27 rue d'Astorg, 75008 Paris, France.

Despite the large number of screenings and the existence of specialist structures, a significant proportion of people living with AIDS are not aware that they have been infected. Late discovery of the infection has harmful consequences as regards their life expectancy and not being aware of their status increases the probability of transmission. Given the problems with late screening in France, the Conseil national du sida recommends that the organisation of screening in the country be re-thought.

A paradigm shift needs to take place in the screening programmes. The report addresses the paradigm shifts required as regards these screening programmes. It advocates a broadening of the screening options on offer in general and the making of greater efforts in regions with high prevalence.

The report also defends the idea that screening practices – such as counselling and the use of quick tests – must evolve.

Optimisation of screening means both better use of existing structures and increased screening in priority regions and of the screening of the most exposed populations. Regarding the ways in which screening can be optimised, the report proposes that the Coordination Régionale de Lutte Contre L'Infection à VIH (COREVIHs, Regional Steering Committees on the Fight Against Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection) contribute to the development of the screening programmes while the Consultations de Dépistage Anonymes et Gratuits (CDAG, anonymous and free screening centres) direct their activities towards communities confronted with high prevalence.

Finally, the CNS notes that people with a high risk of exposure to HIV must be provided with a more appropriate service offering. All of these recommendations have been made with the concern of making French screening programmes more effective for the future.