

Europe 'epicentre' of monkeypox outbreak: WHO

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The World Health Organization (WHO) said Wednesday Europe remained the epicenter of the global monkeypox outbreak, which posed a "real risk" with more than 1,500 cases reported in the region.

The UN health body already announced on Tuesday that it would hold an emergency meeting next week to determine whether to classify the outbreak as a public health emergency of international concern.

"Europe remains the epicenter of this escalating outbreak with 25 countries reporting more than 1,500 cases, or 85 percent of the global total," Hans Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, told a press conference Wednesday.

WHO's European region comprises 53 countries, including several in Central Asia.

"The magnitude of this outbreak poses a real risk. The longer the [virus](#) circulates, the more it will extend its reach, and the stronger the disease's foothold will get in non-endemic countries," Kluge said.

Until the past few months, monkeypox had generally been confined to Western and Central Africa.

Kluge said that the majority of cases reported in Europe "have been among men who have sex with men", but also warned against stigmatization.

He stressed "that the [monkeypox virus](#) is not in itself attached to any specific group."

The regional director also warned that the risk was increasing as summer had arrived with "tourism, various Pride events, [music festivals](#) and other mass gatherings planned across the region."

"These events are powerful opportunities to engage with young, sexually active and highly mobile people," Kluge said, but stressed that "monkeypox is not a reason to cancel events, but an opportunity to

leverage them to drive our engagement."

Speaking next to Kluge, Steve Taylor, director of European Pride Organizers Association, said that some 750 Pride events were planned across the European region and welcomed the WHO's recommendation not to cancel these events.

"Sadly, but entirely predictably, some of those who oppose Pride and who oppose equality and [human rights](#) have already been attempting to use monkeypox as a justification for calls for Pride to be banned," Taylor told reporters.

The EU announced Tuesday that it had purchased almost 110,000 vaccine doses to help tackle the outbreak, though the WHO does not recommend mass vaccination against monkeypox.

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