

27 February 2020

Dear Mr Goggins,

I am writing after receiving numerous letters of concern from EEBI parents about the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and about precautions taken by the school—particularly given the imminent return of a large portion of our population from holiday abroad. I am sure that you have received the same or similar letters, and parents are grateful to you and to the Office of the Secretary General for the communications that we have received thus far (ref. 2020-02-LD-22-communication on covid-19), which have gone a long way to allaying our fear and confusion. We are particularly heartened that the approach is closely aligned with that of the Commission.

As we move forward, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the following important concerns which have not yet been addressed, and which I believe should be addressed before the start of school next week:

1. **Contradicting Advice:** The geographical area—the so-called “red zone”—identified in the letter from OSGES forwarded by the school management on 25-26 February (ref. 2020-02-LD-22-communication on covid-19 2020_02_25), corresponds exactly with the affected area listed in the Commission memo on the subject dated 24 February. Unfortunately, both the Parliament and Council have sent out memos with a broader geographical area identified: “regions in Northern Italy: Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto” (see <https://gsc.consilium.europa.eu/>). Families in the Council and Parliament are still unsure whether to follow the advice of these institutions or the school when determining whether to keep their children home. Additional guidance is needed. *Ideally, the Parliament, Council, Commission and European Schools should be in alignment; it is unclear why they are not.*
2. **Lacuna in Advice:** There has been no advice for families regarding children with mild respiratory/flu symptoms who have not visited the affected regions. Nor has there been advice for families with children who did not travel to affected regions but with other members or other close relations who have¹. It would be good to send a clear message to families in these situations also clarifying how the advice relates to the official regulations on sickness (e.g. need for medical certificate)—will these be relaxed?
3. **Preventative Measures:** The list of WHO hygiene measures sent as part of both communications was helpful; the communication suggests these should “already be introduced at the European Schools”. We wonder if/how these and other preventative measures have been or can be implemented at the school and with children—particularly young ones.

¹ In this regard there is also a contradiction in the messages circulating. The Commission and OIB garderie memos would suggest that children whose parents have travelled to affected red-zone regions should stay home; where as the OSGES and Council memos would suggest that only if the children themselves have travelled to these regions would they need to be kept home.

- Will children in class be instructed in preventative/hygiene measures and is there a plan for practically implementing/monitoring these²?
 - How will pupils be kept at a distance of one metre from each other—particularly given the crowding on campus?
 - Will outings be cancelled until the risk of infection dies down? Will the management consider imposing other limits on the movement or mixing of pupils during the school day?
4. **Emergency Measures:** We remain unclear about the plan that the school has in place in case the virus is actually found in the EEBI student body, staff or wider community. Can you give an indication of the measures envisioned in this situation? What protocol will the school nurses follow if children show up to the infirmary with flu symptoms and/or having visited an affected region? Might a quarantine be put in place under any circumstance? At what point might the school be closed?
5. **Services/OIB:** Finally, have you been in touch with the Services and OIB garderies on this issue to make sure that your approach is aligned with regard to both preventative and emergency measures?

It has been suggested that the school schedule regular communications (“repeated timely communication”) on the measures in force to contain the outbreak until such time as it has subsided—parents and pupils depend very much on such updates, even if the situation remains unchanged. In particular, we think the school should send a communication over the weekend before the start of school, giving families/pupils last minute instructions before the return to school.

We greatly appreciate your work thus far to put a plan in place and to keep parents informed. Please do not hesitate to contact the APEEE if there is anything that we can do to support you as you continue to confront this worrying situation.

Kind regards,

Katie Mathe

2 We were informed that hand sanitiser dispensers would be put in place on both EEBI campuses. We would appreciate more information including: timing/placement of installations; instruction of primary/secondary pupils in use of the hand sanitiser (and also in basic hand washing).

ANNEX

Brussels, 25th February 2020

2020-02-LD-22/KP

UPDATE 25/02/2020

Communication regarding the outbreak of COVID-19 disease

The outbreak of COVID-19 disease, caused by a novel Coronavirus, started in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The outbreak has gradually spread throughout all mainland China and has affected several other neighbouring as well distant countries.

(<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/geographical-distribution-2019-ncov-cases>)

However, the risk of infection is not the same for all affected countries - it is only countries with sustained community transmission that present a significant risk of infection. (<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/areas-presumed-ongoing-community-transmission-2019-ncov>).

It is only for these areas with sustained community transmission - as of today China, Hong Kong, Macau and the lockdown area in Italy: Bertonico, Casalpusterlengo, Castelgerundo, Castiglione d'Adda, Codogno, Fombio, Maleo, San Fiorano, Somaglia, Terranova del passerine, Vò - that precautionary measures by the European schools are to be put in place:

(I) Any children returning from such areas, should be admitted to the European schools only 14 days after their return date and on the condition that the whole family remains asymptomatic.

(II) Any member of staff working in a European school should avoid travelling to such areas and, if they do so, they should also only return to work after 14 days have passed since their return date.

IMPORTANT: The same rules will apply for any area that the Italian authorities define as a red area in the future. For regular updates on this red area please visit the link below and check 'Allegati' (attachments) on the right side of the screen for updated information.

<http://www.anci.lombardia.it/dettaglio-news/2020224166-coronavirus-%E2%80%93-chiarimenti-interpretativi-su-ordinanza-regione-lombardia-%E2%80%93-ministero-della-salute/>

Children and staff returning from other areas without sustained community transmission do not need to undergo any quarantine period. However, as the situation is evolving, the list of areas with sustained community transmission will be updated, in close cooperation with the services of the European Commission and any country-specific advice needs to be modified accordingly.

Meanwhile the appropriate hygiene measures, as recommended by WHO to fight the outbreak (see below), should already be introduced at the European schools.

Coronavirus: Communication to Commission staff in Italy - Update 25 February 24/02/2020 4 15

As the novel coronavirus COVID-19 establishes itself on European shores, rest assured that the Commission, in line with its duty of care to staff, will increase the frequency of publishing information on My IntraComm, with constant updates whenever there is new information to share.

Together with the Secretariat-General and other central services, DG HR coordinates the different measures necessary to address this situation, from health to offices or working and travel arrangements. We pledge to make these processes as speedy as possible, to minimise any delay in getting the right information to you.

With that important proviso, let's dive into today's update. More will follow.

The following information applies to staff who are, have been, or intend to go - whether for private or professional reasons - in an area classified by Italian authorities as a lockdown area (the so-called red area, or 'area rossa'), or a larger risk zone (the so-called yellow area, or 'area gialla')

Regarding the so-called red area: so far, all colleagues blocked in the red area as defined by the Italian authorities (Bertonico; Casalpusterlengo; Castelgerundo; Castiglione d'Adda; Codogno; Fombio; Maleo; San Fiorano; Somaglia; Terranova dei passerine; Vò) are requested to telework until further notice.

In case you were in this area within the last two weeks, for professional or private reasons, then you:

- need to contact the nearest Medical Service: Brussels Medical Service – HR-MAIL-D3@ec.europa.eu, tel:+32 2 2957761
Luxembourg Medical Service - HR-LUX-SERV-MEDICAL@ec.europa.eu, tel: +352 4301-32588 Ispra Medical Service – HR-ISP-MEDICAL-SERVICE@EC.EUROPA.EU and/or +39 0332789965
- need to stay at home and telework during the incubation period (14 days) or until further notice;
- need to keep your children at home for the same period, in order to avoid the risk of further contaminations.

IMPORTANT: The same rules will apply for any area that the Italian authorities define as a red area in the future.

For regular updates on this red area, please visit the following site: <http://www.anci.lombardia.it/dettaglio-news/20202232049-corona-virus-il-dpcm-per-i-comuni-della-zona-rossa/>

Regarding the so-called yellow area, extending essentially to the rest of the Lombardy region: at this stage, national instructions from the Italian authorities need to be followed with regard to gatherings or events (including large meetings). Videoconferences instead of missions should be prioritised for any contact with colleagues in the yellow area. Colleagues with children in areas where child-care establishments are closed can request teleworking if they are unable to find an alternative solution.

Please read the communication to all staff as published on My IntraComm with information about the virus and how to protect yourself:

<https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/EN/NewsPortal/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?itemid=1a34bc53-56c4-48ca-95ca-7fd15011e8e2>

For information from the Italian authorities, please see the following link: (Nuovo coronavirus).

Nuovo coronavirus

Ministero della Salute

Sito tematico del Ministero della Salute dedicato al Nuovo coronavirus

The situation is being closely monitored by the Italian authorities and by the Commission in its institutional role. This communication will be updated immediately in case of new developments.

Communication to GSC [Council] staff : Important coronavirus update - Travel to/from affected areas

Last updated: 25 Feb 2020 | 14:47

Dear colleagues,

As you are probably aware, the novel coronavirus COVID-19 has now reached Europe.

In line with our duty of care, the GSC has taken various measures to better protect staff and delegates and we will provide constant updates whenever there is new information to share. We are working with the other institutions and we are relying on advice from the European Centre for Disease Control, the WHO and the Inter-institutional Medical Board.

You will find below updated information on new measures taken by the GSC as a response to COVID-19.

For now, the following areas have reported large clusters of COVID-19:

- China (Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao)
- Singapore
- South Korea
- **The following regions in Northern Italy: Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto**

A. Planned missions in these areas are suspended until further notice.

B. If you have travelled to one of these areas within the last 14 days, for personal or professional reasons, you should observe the following measures:

1. You should inform your manager and the Medical Service, preferably by email (medical.secretariat@consilium.europa.eu).
2. If you are feeling well and you had no (suspected) contact with a person infected with the novel coronavirus, COVID-19:
 - do not come to work (also not to the medical service); you are asked to telework for a period of 14 days. If your job does not usually enable you to do telework, please discuss with your manager to agree on possible tasks to do from home
 - monitor your health/take your temperature twice daily for 14 days; if you develop any symptoms, please refer to section 3 below
 - if after 14 days of your return, you have no symptoms, you may return to work after having received a green light from your General Practitioner (GP)
3. In case you had any known or suspected contact with a person infected with the novel Corona virus COVID-19, or if you develop any symptoms:
 - please contact your general practitioner by phone for urgent advice and care. If you are in Brussels and you do not have a GP here, please find one by calling 02/212 22 22. Doctors on call: <http://www.gbbw.be/index.php/en/>
 - in case of medical emergency, call 112. Always inform the caregiver about your recent travel history and do not go the clinic without prior telephone contact. (When in a clinic, ask to wait in a separate room; do not stay in a waiting room with other people.)
 - do not come to the office until you have received a green light from your doctor and the GSC Medical Service.

If your children have been in an affected area, with or without you, you should keep them at home for the same 14 days period. Managers are asked to show flexibility in dealing with any teleworking requests related to such a situation.

The symptoms may vary from asymptomatic or mild flu-like symptoms to severe respiratory illness with high fever and difficulty in breathing. The incubation period, during which a person has the disease but no symptoms yet, ranges from one to 14 days.

For general advice on how to protect yourself from the virus, please consult our Frequently asked questions on Domus.

We will keep you updated as regularly as necessary.

William SHAPCOTT

Director-General for Organisation development and Services

Subject: INFORMATION IMPORTANTE CONCERNANT LE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) - IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) - GPS BERKENDAEL

Dear parents,

In view of the recent developments in Italy in relation to Coronavirus (COVID-19), DG HR created an information page on My IntraComm :

à "Coronavirus: Communication to Commission staff in relation to Italy" à

<https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/EN/NewsPortal/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?itemid=adfc8461-a66e-4784-a709-d2e3ca376749>

If you or your child have stayed during the last 2 weeks in the "red" zone defined by the Italian authorities (namely Bertinico; Casalpusterlengo; Castelgerundo; Castiglione d'Adda; Codogno; Fombio; Maleo; San Fiorano; Somaglia; Terranova dei passierine; Vò), we invite you to respect the communicated rules: stay at home for 14 days (which covers the maximum incubation period of the virus) and contact the Medical Service.

As far as children are concerned, the same rules apply: if they return from the "red" zone or if they have had contact with people returning from the "red" zone, they should under no circumstances attend the crèche, kindergarten or after-school childcare facilities, in accordance with the given instructions. They should be admitted to the facilities only 14 days after their return date and on the condition that the whole family remains asymptomatic.

These instructions apply both to internal structures and to our partner crèches / after-school childcare facilities.

As indicated on MyIntracomm, where information will be regularly updated, these rules will apply for all regions that the Italian authorities will define as "red zone" in the future.

Previously published recommendations remain applicable à <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/EN/NewsPortal/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?itemid=1a34bc53-56c4-48ca-95ca-7fd15011e8e2>

We remind you that strict hand hygiene, as well as a clean way to cough, sneeze or blow your nose, are essential to limit the spread of viral infections.

The Belgian website <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/fr/> also contains useful information and recommendations.

At the Early Childhood Centre, we also remain in close contact with Sciensano (Belgian institution in charge of public health and disease surveillance <https://www.sciensano.be/fr>).

We thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Best regards.

Graziano SCATOZZA
pour Philippe LOOP
Chef de département ff
OIB.CPE "Centres Petite Enfance"