

Health Security Committee/ Early Warning and Response System
Statement on School closures
13.08.09

The Health Security Committee/ Early Warning and Response System (HSC/EWRS) national contact points discussed during the last joint audio conference meeting on 31 July the issue of school closures in the context of the Influenza A(H1N1) pandemic.¹

The following operational conclusions were reached:

1. The Member States are of the view that there is presently no need to enact pre-emptive mass school closures where the conditions under 2 do not apply.
2. The Member States conclude that at present the approach to locally close schools reactively upon infection being found among students, may be beneficial to delay the transmission of the virus. The benefit of such an approach clearly depends on timely action of the intervention.
3. The Member States commit themselves to re-evaluate the situation on a regular basis and to review this statement accordingly.

Decisions on the necessity to close schools are the sole responsibility of each Member State based on the epidemiological situation in each country.

Furthermore, school closures, to be efficient, have to be accompanied by other non-health measures to ensure that alternative gatherings of children do not happen. Other types of non-health measures may be envisaged by Member States to limit the impact of parental absenteeism on business continuity and to ensure educational continuity.

Member States are asked to inform each other and the European Commission on measures related to school closures through the EWRS system according to Decision 2119/98/EC.

¹ ECDC has produced scientific advice which shows that the effects of school closure (or 'class dismissal') are very uncertain. However, such actions may - in certain situations - contribute to delaying the transmission. A major concern is that if there is any delay in appreciating that transmission has started in children, then there may be little effect, as the damage will already have been done.