

Dear colleagues,

Following on from the communication of 29/04/2009 on the novel influenza virus (H1N1), the Commission would like to clarify the situation as of today, 30/04/2009.

Last night the World Health Organisation raised the pandemic alert phase from level 4 to 5.

This means that there are: "larger clusters, but human-to-human spread is still localised, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted."

The WHO has raised its alert level because several human-to-human transmission cases have been confirmed outside of Mexico.

However, at the present time no confirmed cases have been found in Belgium, Luxembourg or Italy.

What does this mean for Commission staff and their families?

For personnel in Brussels, Luxembourg and Ispra:

At this stage there are no new instructions and the news should not affect your daily lives. We would remind you to continue paying special attention to good daily hygiene habits, such as:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, and especially before eating, after coughing and sneezing, and after using public transport.
- When you cough, do so into a tissue or into your upper sleeve and throw away the tissue.
- Stay at home if you feel ill and contact your doctor.

For personnel going on mission or travelling:

We would remind you that the Commission recommends avoiding any non-essential travel to regions where there have been confirmed cases of human-to-human clusters.

If travelling for work reasons to the concerned regions is unavoidable, the Medical Service can provide you with masks and antiviral drugs. You may go directly to the dispensary of the Medical Service (Brussels - BRE 2 6/403, Lux DRB-B-1/027; Ispra IPR 400/008).

For staff coming back from concerned regions - if you feel ill with flu-like symptoms such as high fever, muscle pain, sore throat or cough, please stay at home and contact your family doctor or an emergency service and make them aware of your recent trip.

Please note that the Medical Service is not able to provide appropriate care.

How is the Commission prepared to protect its staff?

The Commission Medical Service has stockpiled antivirals and masks to protect its staff. In the event of escalation of the situation, i.e. WHO pandemic alert level 6 and/or if the

Commission's Business Continuity Plan is launched, appropriate information and instructions will be given to staff.

Further updates

Please be aware that Health Ministers are holding an extraordinary meeting today. If any additional measures are decided, and in view of the long weekend, staff will be informed via IntraComm. Please check IntraComm over the weekend if you have access from home via the following link: <https://intracomm.ec.europa.eu/> - personal login + internet password.

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