

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002197/24
to the Commission
Christine Anderson (ESN), Marc Jongen (ESN)
(21 October 2024)**

Subject: Impact of school closures on children's health and education in connection with measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic

Many Member States resorted to closing schools as a way of containing the pandemic. It appears that, in the process, sufficient account was not taken of the impact on children's mental health and education. Internal Robert Koch Institute files suggest that measures were not always underpinned by sound scientific data.

1. How does the Commission support Member States in collecting and analysing scientific data in order to assess the effectiveness of school closures?
2. What studies and analyses has the Commission launched or encouraged in order to understand the long-term impact of school closures on children's mental health and education?
3. What action is the Commission planning to take in order to assume political responsibility for wrong decisions and ensure that future decisions on school closures are taken on a balanced and scientifically sound basis so as to minimise adverse impact on children?

Submitted: 21.10.2024

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(7 January 2025)**

The Commission has launched several studies to understand the possible long-term impacts on children of school closures during COVID-19.

The project RESPOND ⁽¹⁾ concluded that young people were hit hard by the pandemic measures and family functioning was disrupted by the closing of schools. PERISCOPE ⁽²⁾ found that children and young people were massively impacted by reduced face-to-face education and less social interaction. The project COVINFORM ⁽³⁾ found a negative impact on the wellbeing of vulnerable young individuals due to lack of social interaction.

Moreover, two expert networks — the European Expert Network on Economics of Education and the Network of Experts working on the social dimension of education and training — produced three studies on the topic ⁽⁴⁾, ⁽⁵⁾, ⁽⁶⁾.

These studies found that school closures had a negative impact on children's educational performance and exacerbated educational inequalities. The studies also identified types of policy interventions to help address learning losses.

Furthermore, the Commission published analyses of the impact of COVID-19 physical school closures on student performance in Europe ⁽⁷⁾ and countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development ⁽⁸⁾, both demonstrating the clear association between the length of physical school closures and children's learning losses and rising educational inequalities.

Additionally, it published reports on the likely impact of COVID-19 on education ⁽⁹⁾ and on emergency remote schooling during COVID-19 ⁽¹⁰⁾, and has investigated possible measures to counteract the negative effects of the pandemic on student outcomes and well-being.

Finally, according to Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, decisions on public health measures, including school closures, are a national competency.

⁽¹⁾ Improving the Preparedness of Health Systems to Reduce Mental Health and Psychosocial Concerns resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic (RESPOND): <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101016127>

⁽²⁾ Pan-European Response to the ImpactS of COVID-19 and future Pandemics and Epidemics (PERISCOPE): <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101016233>

⁽³⁾ COronavirus Vulnerabilities and INfOrmation dynamics Research and Modelling (COVINFORM): <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101016247>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eenee.eu/en/resources/library/policy-measures-to-monitor-and-mitigate-the-negative-impacts-of-covid-19-and-covid-19-related-policy-measures-on-education/>

⁽⁵⁾ <https://nesetweb.eu/en/resources/library/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-education-of-disadvantaged-children-and-the-socioeconomic-consequences-thereof/>

⁽⁶⁾ <https://eenee.eu/en/resources/library/covid-19-learning-deficits-in-europe-analysis-and-practical-recommendations/>

⁽⁷⁾ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/09589287221091687>

⁽⁸⁾ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC134506>

⁽⁹⁾ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121071>

⁽¹⁰⁾ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC125787>