

Tarragona, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Good morning to all,

During the summer, we established measures to address COVID-19 in IPHES valid until September 30th. We wish we could have relaxed after this period and once the schools reopened.

But the current reality advises against going too fast in the reopening plans. A consequence of this scenario is the last week e-mail sent by the HR Manager communicating the mandatory use of the FFP2 mask inside the IPHES building as has agreed the IPHES Direction Committee, as a result of the increase in COVID-19 cases in the province of Tarragona and as a measure preventive against a possible new outbreaks.

In addition, many of the IPHES' community have also received information about the Universitat Rovira i Virgili reopening campuses and the begin of classes and other academic activities. The URV Executive Council advised by two experts from the university itself, has been decided to implement the most restrictive scenario and the classes will begin with classes exclusively online, and the state of the alert will be periodically evaluated to reverse the decision as soon as possible. But for now the first months of the reopening plans will be restrictive.

However, the fact that makes us more alert is that we have had two cases among IPHES staff: two people who, outside IPHES and in the area of their private life, have had a contact situation with the virus. One with a positive PCR result and the other with a negative PCR. On the part of the IPHES we have followed the protocol established in each case by the health authorities: send people home and contact O61. Public health has already analyzed, for each of the cases mentioned, the chain of possible infections, and the identification of what are called close contacts. There has been no close contact with these people at IPHES. I want to emphasize the fact that contact with the virus took place in their private lives outside of IPHES. However, these cases force us to be vigilant.

I would also like to inform you that the IPHES Managing Director has carried out other preventive actions related to the pandemic and to these particular cases:

- we have carried out a personalized monitoring of people directly affected, giving them and additional support and information to preserve their well-being and the peace of mind needed in these cases, in which logical fears and concerns arise
- people who asked were immediately informed what kind of action had been taken;

- we have contacted the external IPHES' Occupational Risk Prevention service explaining them the situation and they have informed us that we have dealt with it correctly, in accordance with the health regulations.
- we have contacted the Legal Advice which has also confirmed to us that the actions taken are the right ones;
- it should be remembered that since the beginning of the health alert we have applied daily cleaning and ventilation measures, which include the use of viricides in cleaning products.

Given the general situation of the country, the closest and our own, we see the need to maintain restrictive criteria, while maintaining the preventive policy, with the use of the mask, as we have requested, the constant cleaning of hands and avoid social contact as much as possible. We have proposed at IPHES to move to a mask that, although not mandatory by law, the FFP2, is recommended so that in an enclosed space, such as the IPHES building, no close contact occurs in the case that a person can be positive.

To comply with social distance measures, we will continue to hold meetings online. We will do the same with the public presentations of doctoral and master's theses, and the own lectures on Thursdays that we will start in October, with a very limited capacity in the Abric Romaní meeting room and remote connection.

Another point of fragility is the office. I know of interest and requests to reopen it. I must remind you, however, that it is a small space, with a high proximity and contact that makes it impossible to maintain the established protocols of social distance and health precautions. So I have to ask to keep it closed until we can relax the measures.

In short, we must continue to invite telework, combined with a limited presence in the center to comply with basic services and maintaining the pace of research, scientific services and management. Whenever you are at the center, you must follow the rules of prevention, cleaning and distance.

Schools are now reopen, which opens up new scenarios. In this concern I would like to express to you that IPHES will be very aware and receptive to the cases that may occur in schools, affecting parents quarantines, allowing to work-life and personal balance.

I would like to end by reminding you of the initiatives taken, which go in the direction of dealing with the health alert and which are already in place:

- daily monitoring of people entering the building using the Outside Works app installed on phones; this helps us to identify the chain of close contacts in case of contagion while avoiding machine sharing; those people who do not have the mobile application installed have a daily registration sheet at their disposal for the same purpose;

- daily manual ventilation control
- daily scrupulous cleaning with viricides
- safe ventilation of the building following the prevention guidelines of the COVID-19 established by the Generalitat de Catalunya.
- use of hydrogels
- application of the protocols that were defined in laboratories and collections developed by the IPHES' Scientific Services
- maintaining distances in the workplace
- permanent use of the FFP2 mask inside the building
- COVID-19 tests for IPHES staff and other excavation participants
- COVID-19 protocol applicable to excavations, under the coordination of the person / s director / s of the excavations
- staff training (everyone has made a COVID-19 training pill)
- information to staff (signs in the building, emails ...)

Thank you all for your involvement. We are at your disposal for any additional queries.  
Good health.

Robert Sala Ramos

Director

