



Online information meeting: Plan for CERN's gradual re-start on 5 May 2020

Shortened transcript of the Q&A session

1. [Is it inappropriate to be hasty in relaxing?](#)

Fabiola Gianotti (Director-General): The health and safety of personnel is our highest priority. The situation of the pandemic in Europe and, in particular, in the Host States is improving in terms of number of infections per day and number of patients in intensive care units. Our approach has always been to take measures that are proportionate to the risk. There is no point in locking down CERN until a vaccine becomes available while the Host States and countries around us are restarting their activities and people circulate more or less freely.

2. [What would be the criteria to allow staff/users etc to be able to work again in their CERN offices, even for tasks that could in principle be done remotely?](#)

F. Gianotti: In our plan we will first restart activities that are urgent and can only be done on-site like LS2 work. A few weeks later, we will gradually bring back people who can telework. Even though telework is progressing very well, it is not always as effective as working in the office. Some people report ergonomic problems, some that they do not have the right equipment at home and they get easily distracted. We will reassess the situation every week and we will monitor the people coming on site to be ready to stop or to slow down the flux if there is any reason for doing so.

3. [Will students be allowed to continue teleworking?](#)

James Purvis (Head of Human Resources Department): At the moment, all of the measures put in place for MPAs remain viable until we return to full normality, so the students still remain capable of teleworking whether here or back in their home countries.

4. [What happens to new and expiring contracts, and will allowance be made for people on, for example, DOCT contracts who have been able to carry out their work? Will exceptional extensions be possible?](#)

J. Purvis: Any contract transition whether you are leaving or starting a new job can be stressful, so we are working with each and every individual. Where there are extensions required and possible within the framework, we are looking at those. When the person does want to return to the home country, we are providing assistance. If extension of medical coverage is required, we now have the exceptional possibility for CERN health insurance. We are working upstream with the supervisor, with the Human Resources coordinators, with the Human Resources Advisers so anybody concerned should reach out and contact HR.

There are no current extensions beyond the maximum contract duration apart from project associates, a very small number that have been unable to carry out their work mainly underground due to CERN being in safe-mode, so project associate is the only category we have exceptional extensions for.

For those arriving, we are working upstream on individual solutions with the supervisors and with those concerned. So in fact, we had 26 arrivals this week already; we had an entire virtual onboarding for them. Most of those people will be starting teleworking remotely whether it is in the region or even in their home country so again it is individual and tailor-made solutions.

5. [Will people travelling from abroad be required to self-isolate for 14 days upon their return to CERN?](#)

Friedemann Eder (Responsible for Host State Relations): According to the information published on the official French website, France will not impose quarantine on any person, whatever the nationality, coming from the European Union, the Schengen zone or the United Kingdom. For the other cases, for instance European citizens arriving from zones other than the EU, the Schengen area and the UK, the modalities will be specified by the French Ministry for European and Foreign Affairs in the coming days. In Switzerland, no quarantine is foreseen.

6. [Will CERN be revising its approach to teleworking? Will CERN be providing help to people who wish to do more of it, to set up offices at home?](#)

J. Purvis: We have to learn the positive lessons from what has happened. Previously, prior to this crisis, we had less than 200 people on regular telework and about 1000 people on ad hoc teleworking. Up until now, we have authorised more than a quarter of million days of teleworking and the feedback from a lot of people is that it has been intense, yet many have actually found certain ways of working to be more efficient. So it is important to take the positives and what we learn out of this experience and build on those, when we come back, we come back to a new normality, including taking the benefits of the lessons learned in particular on teleworking.

7. [Will special parental leave be allowed to parents of young children who are not returning to school before September?](#)

J. Purvis: If the situation continues, if colleagues can't telework, if they can't arrange childcare and if the schools remain to be closed, we will continue to keep in mind that this should be on a pro-rata basis. There is a contribution generally of two parents in the family sharing, so we are looking for a typical month of the half time for the parent on a special paid leave and if they require a full month, the other half time on annual leave. These individual situations need to be discussed with the supervisor and with HR. Certainly, we're monitoring the situation of the schools re-opening in the Host States.

Special paid leave was not foreseen to replace those times when the schools are normally closed and should be covered by annual leave anyway. But still we realise that with childcare facilities being less available in the summer, we will have to look at tailor-made solutions for those.

8. [Will people be able to carry over more than the usual amount of leave as a result of the situation?](#)

J. Purvis: The question of holidays is one of the most important. I think it's very important to disassociate that because we can't travel, it does not mean that we cannot take holidays. It is important for all of us to take a mental rest, a break from work whether we can travel or not and I would encourage people to take holidays. I myself am taking holiday later this week, even though I am still in confinement in France. It is important to be able to switch off especially during these intense periods. At the moment, and also looking at what other organisations are doing, there are no plans to increase the annual carry forward of leave. I would recommend that people, despite not being able to travel, please also use the time to take a break.

9. [What does CERN plan to do to ensure social distancing in offices and what measures are being taken to avoid having a crowd in public spaces such as restaurants and WC?](#)

Lluís Miralles (Head of Site Management and Building Department): The restaurants will be organised as distribution points of food. The layout for the access and the circulation will be adapted in order to respect the 2-meter distance when queuing and entering the distribution zone. The number of people in the distribution zone will be monitored by the personnel of the restaurant with some help of the security personnel of CERN. There will be the possibility to pre-book the meals and then to accelerate also the time in order to get those. There is a very limited number of spaces to get the meal on site so it will be preferable to pre-order through the application that will be available in such a way that even payment can be done remotely.

When the number of people will increase on site, more distribution points will be opened at the restaurants. We will start with restaurant 1 and then restaurant 2 and the cafeteria at building 40 and so on and so forth.

Regarding the toilets, the only option that has been identified and that is feasible is one single user in the toilet block at any moment in time.

With respect to the office set-up, I go back to the point that safety is the responsibility of us all; different possibilities should be analysed on a case-by-case basis by the supervisor and instructions will be given to the personnel. Offices and seating points should be rearranged in order to keep the 2-meter distance. If this cannot be respected, then work should be arranged so that people sharing the same office are rotating during the day or the week. For public spaces, barriers will be installed to respect the distances. Masks should be worn when distances cannot be respected.

10. [Why is there an age limit to access CERN?](#)

Doris Forkel-Wirth (Head of Health, Safety and Environment Unit): I fully understand the question as many of you have CERN in their heart, but at the same time we would like to protect these persons. The age limit for access was introduced before CERN entered into safe-mode in line with what had been done in the Host States. People above 65 are considered at particular risk with respect to COVID-19. Despite the fact that all age groups are infected with the same level of virus, the consequences for those above 65 are much more severe than for those that are younger. Therefore, for the time being during phase 0 and 1, we would like to keep this age limit since we first need to prepare the premises. In case you are called by your Department Head or Spokesperson to work at CERN during these phases, we will have a critical look at the protection concept, which will be provided by your Department. The only aim is to protect you. We do know that in Phase 2, we will reconsider the situation, and align with the Host States.

11. [Where can we find the COVID-19 safety course mentioned by HSE as from 18 May?](#)

D. Forkel-Wirth: It will be an e-learning course made available on the LMS pages under safety courses.

12. [How does the situation affect CERN's budget, and what can we expect for the future?](#)

F. Gianotti: Being in safe-mode for several weeks, our expenses are smaller than expected at this moment in time. We spent less in electricity, we unfortunately had to cancel some programmes like the summer student programme, much to our regret, and some of the site services have not been active. So 2020 is fine budget-wise. Concerning the future, and the contributions by the Member States and Associate Member States to CERN's budget, it is too early to tell. I must say as of today we have no sign that countries are going to reduce their financial commitment and I

really do hope that they will continue to support us as they have been doing throughout CERN's history. We appreciate very much their support.

13. [Will it be possible for families living in France to take their children to school in Switzerland?](#)

F. Eder: The Permanent Mission of Switzerland has confirmed that as from the 11 May, pupils allowed to go to school and persons accompanying them, if they are minors, will be allowed to cross the Swiss border. They will have to provide a certificate or another document establishing that they are registered in a school in Switzerland. For France, no difficulties are foreseen.

14. [What plans are being made to reopen the Jardin des Particules, and will parents be reimbursed for the whole time that it is closed?](#)

Isabelle Mardirossian (Representative of CERN Staff Association): A plan has been established by the Teaching Team and the Staff Association for the resumption of the Jardin des Particules activities during the month of May, based on the relevant regulations and recommendations. This plan has been presented on May 4 to all parents and has been positively received. It will now be presented to the Management for approval and to define the exact date of the restart. In any case, parents will be reimbursed for the period during which the Jardin des Particules will have been closed.

15. [What is the situation with COVID-19 testing?](#)

D. Forkel-Wirth: All countries have different philosophies. We enquired with our Host States, Switzerland and France. We found that antibody tests are forbidden; they are only allowed for those that are doing studies; a special permission is needed. The normal tests, where you measure if someone has COVID-19 or not, until recently it was done only for people who had developed very serious symptoms. Our medical partners in Switzerland and France state that the test on someone without symptoms is not conclusive. New test procedures and new materials are under development all over Europe, and perhaps in the next weeks/months this might change, but for the time being the philosophy in France and Switzerland is that only people who develop symptoms will be tested. In France, they have announced that as of 11 May, they will test all people with symptoms, even those that have weak symptoms.

16. [Which CERN gates will be open and when? Is the inter-site tunnel accessible? When can we expect small border crossing to be facilitate?](#)

L. Miralles: We are planning to adapt the reliability of the entrances according to the demand. We are monitoring the presence on site. As soon as we detect a risk of queues, or accumulation of cars at the entrances, we will open Gates A and C and the other entrances of Meyrin site.

Today, the site of Prévessin is fully accessible through its entrance. Access through the inter-site tunnel and entrance E are regulated by an agreement with France, Switzerland with respect to CERN. Up to now, there are no risk associated to these entrances and no need has been detected to extend the opening times. If this was the case, we would need authorization of the Host States which until now has always been granted under exceptional circumstances.

17. [People avoiding public transport would like to be informed about the bike pool. What is the situation now?](#)

L. Miralles: Bikes are there. The full stock is now available!

18. [How will CERN take into account people who are not at risk but are living with others at risk?](#)

D. Forkel-Wirth: Cases of CERN people living together with vulnerable people in their family will be treated individually on a case-by-case basis. Please contact your supervisor.

19. [Is cleaning being carried on as normal or is it reinforced?](#)

L. Miralles: During this period of lockdown, cleaning has been adapted to the frequentation. It has been reinforced in the common spaces. In the next two weeks, up to the 18th of May, a full campaign of cleaning of the full site will be conducted so that on the 18th May, we will have the same level of cleanliness we had at the time of the lockdown. Starting from that point, the strategy is that the cleaning services will apply standard cleaning plus reinforced cleaning defined by HSE in the common spaces and the circulation paths as well as the meeting rooms, amphitheatre etc.

For offices, the standard will be kept, plus cleaning sets will be distributed to each person coming on site to take care of cleaning their work space.

In order to facilitate cleaning beyond the common spaces between 18 May and mid-September, people should send a ticket to the cleaning services who will take into account the effective office occupation.

20. [Will special considerations be taken for the return of users who are in the local area?](#)

Eckhard Elsen (Director for Research and Computing): There is no special consideration in this respect. The concerns are rather from their home countries not so much from our part. The home country and institutions should decide on the policy. Of course, this is impacted in some ways by the success of the gradual restart and the demonstration that CERN is indeed a safe place which I hope we can convince you of.

21. [When will the hostels be open?](#)

L. Miralles: The hostels are open. They have never closed over this period of lockdown.

22. [The implementation of the COVID-19 health and safety measures is the responsibility of the contractor, who should monitor the compliance to the measures?](#)

D. Forkel-Wirth: It is HSE who monitors, the company (contractor) ensures that they comply, and the Department the contractor is working for will also monitor.

23. [If a contractor is working on site, is that contractor's supervisor automatically granted access to CERN site as well?](#)

D. Forkel-Wirth: In my opinion, he should be allowed since he has to supervise the contractor.

24. [Is there a plan for users to increase their presence up from 50% and request a Swiss carte de légitimation? When will people be able to recuperate/receive their Swiss and French cards?](#)

F. Eder: The Swiss deliver the cards. The French have granted a 6-month extension for the D visas, which means users don't need the card immediately, visa on the passport shows that all is correct. If there is a particular problem, it is a case-by-case basis we will find a solution. In this respect, both ministries of foreign affairs are pragmatic and helpful.

25. [Is CERN considering doing proximity tracing? For contact tracing purposes, we have a hall equipped with access control system and a turnstile, can we consider that privacy concerns will be cleared to identify contacts using access system logs?](#)

F. Gianotti: For confirmed and suspected case, we closely trace contacts and at the beginning of the pandemic we had cleared all data privacy protection issues.

Roberto Losito (Head of Engineering Department): At the moment, contact tracing is made manually by the COVID-19 Coordinator, Christophe Delamare, by contacting the persons. We are studying different options to do it with technologic means, either by using the apps the Host States are looking into or by using specific devices that we will test first. We are checking with the Legal Service the possibility to do that and with the data privacy officer to make sure privacy procedures are in place and the privacy of people is preserved. In case we decide to go for this device, the procedures will be published in order to inform of what we do with the data.

[Final words from the Director-General:](#)

F. Gianotti: Thanks to all of you for taking part in this meeting and also my colleagues, Department Heads and other people who are in this room and outside this room, who have been working very, very hard to develop this plan. I would like to ask you to commit to this plan and to help us getting it implemented in the best possible way, in order to protect the safety of all people and therefore being effective in the re-start of the on-site activities. Thank you.