

Europe can fight virus without lockdowns: WHO

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Europe can combat the new coronavirus without full lockdowns now that authorities are better prepared and have gained knowledge about how to fight it in recent months, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Thursday.

"With the basic nationwide and additional targeted measures, we are in a much better position to stamp out these localised [virus](#) flare-ups," the head of the WHO's European branch, Hans Kluge, told reporters.

"We can manage the virus and keep the economy running and an education system in operation," he added.

Europe has seen a steady rise in the number of cases for the past two months, he said.

In the first week of August, 40,000 more cases were reported than in the first week of June when cases were at their lowest.

"But we are not in February, we can manage the virus differently now than we did when COVID-19

first emerged," Kluge said.

In addition to calling for good hand hygiene, social distancing measures and national testing and tracing programmes, the WHO recommended that additional measures be adopted locally when clusters arise.

On average, 26,000 new cases are being reported everyday in Europe, according to the WHO. Young people, who tend to experience milder symptoms and lower mortality rates, account for a growing share of cases.

However, Kluge stressed the importance of reopening schools as countries gradually return to normal, noting the [negative consequences](#) that school closures have had on children.

The WHO's European region, which covers 55 countries, has registered almost four million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 215,000 deaths linked to the virus, according to the organisation.

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