

Reopening schools in Denmark did not worsen outbreak, data shows

Reuters Editorial



FILE PHOTO: Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen meets with students at Stolpedal school as part of her tour to different places in Jutland, eastern part of Denmark, as the country went into phase two of its reopening, amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Aalborg, Denmark May 18, 2020. Ritzau Scanpix/Henning Bagger via REUTERS/File Photo

COPENHAGEN (Reuters) - Sending children back to schools and day care centres in Denmark, the first country in Europe to do so, did not lead to an increase in coronavirus infections, according to official data, confirming similar findings from Finland on Thursday.

As countries across Europe make plans to exit months of lockdown aimed at curbing the virus outbreak, some parents worry that opening schools first might put the health of their children in danger.

Following a one-month lockdown, Denmark allowed children between two to 12 years back in day cares and schools on April 15. Based on five weeks' worth of data, health authorities are now for the first time saying the move did not make the virus proliferate.

"You cannot see any negative effects from the reopening of schools," Peter Andersen, doctor of infectious disease epidemiology and prevention at the Danish Serum Institute said on Thursday told Reuters.

In Finland, a top official announced similar findings on Wednesday, saying nothing so far suggested the coronavirus had spread faster since schools reopened in mid-May.

The number of infected children aged between one and up to 19 has declined steadily since late April, Andersen said, following a slight uptick immediately after the reopening of schools.

But this was too early to have anything to do with the reopening and could be explained by an increase in tests performed, he said.

“Based on preliminary experiences, it does not look like there has been a negative effect on the spread among school children or in the society in general,” Andersen said and called Denmark’s reopening strategy “prudent”.

A steady drop in daily infections, hospital admissions and deaths since early April has led Denmark to continue its reopening, with shopping malls, bars, restaurants allowed to reopen in May.

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