

Czechs to close schools as central Europe widens virus fight

10 March 2020

The Czech Republic said Tuesday it will close all schools, while neighbouring Slovakia suspended church services and Poland cancelled mass events in a bid to stem the spread of the deadly new coronavirus.

"It is better to be proactive, rather than to deal with the problem later, or even too late as is the case in Italy," Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis told reporters.

Elementary and [secondary schools](#) will be closed from Wednesday until further notice, Babis said, also imposing a ban on all events over 100 people in the EU country of 10.6 million people.

Prague reported 40 cases of coronavirus as of Tuesday, while its larger northern neighbour Poland, which has a population of 38 million, put its tally of infected people at 18.

In Slovakia, outgoing Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini said Catholic bishops have called off church services until March 23 in the devout country.

With seven confirmed cases, Slovakia has banned mass gatherings for two weeks and ordered all Slovaks returning from coronavirus hotspots China, South Korea, Iran and Italy to remain in home quarantine for 14 days.

All schools, universities, kindergartens remain closed this week in the capital Bratislava.

Poland also banned mass events and expanded existing [health checks](#) on the German and Czech borders to also cover Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania.

Travellers arriving by road, rail or ferry will have their temperature taken and their details will be collected in case they need to be contacted.

Most of the COVID-19 cases in Poland have developed in people returning from Germany.

Poland's PZNP national football association also announced that fans will be banned from two friendly matches scheduled later this month with Finland and Ukraine.

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