

Czechs, Slovaks to ease coronavirus measures

4 May 2020

The Czech government said Monday it would lift restrictions on international passenger road and rail transport on May 11, while neighbouring Slovakia also announced it would ease measures taken to contain the coronavirus.

"It will be possible to use buses and trains to cross the border," Czech Transport Minister Karel Havlicek said in a tweet.

The EU member state of 10.7 million people, which has registered more than 7,700 confirmed cases of the virus including 251 deaths, banned international passenger transport on March 14.

The [government](#) closed its borders two days later, only reopening them in mid-April for some Czechs with the caveat that they must undergo two weeks of quarantine upon return.

With EU business travellers allowed to enter since April 27, the Czech government said Monday it would also let in non-EU travellers as of next week to ensure seasonal jobs. All incoming foreigners will need a negative virus test.

The central European nation and neighbour Slovakia will both also reopen all shops and most service providers, restaurants—for outdoor seating only—as well as museums and galleries.

Slovakia, an EU member of 5.4 million people, has scheduled the grand opening for Wednesday, while the Czech Republic will follow suit next week.

Slovak Prime Minister Igor Matovic told reporters the government was easing restrictions because of the low number of new coronavirus cases.

His country recorded only five new infections and one new death on Sunday, putting the total tally at 1,413 cases including 25 deaths.

According to the EU's health agency ECDC, Slovakia has Europe's lowest [coronavirus](#) death rate, at 0.4 per 100,000 inhabitants.

Matovic said church mass and weddings would be allowed again, but under strict conditions. Other group gatherings are still off-limits unless the individuals share a household.

Kindergartens and schools will remain closed for now, said Matovic—unlike in the Czech Republic, where some students will be able to return to school next week.

The Czech government added that it would extend the cap on public events to 100 people and allow sports competitions with the same attendance limit.

Wearing masks has been mandatory in both countries since March, and that restriction remains in place.

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