

Paris goes under curfew as Europe ramps up virus restrictions

15 October 2020, by Jürgen Hecker With Afp Bureaus



The clock is ticking for France to get the coronavirus pandemic under control

France on Wednesday became the latest European country to toughen anti-coronavirus measures, imposing a curfew in Paris and eight other cities from Saturday, while Germany and Ireland also ramped up restrictions.

"We have to act. We need to put a brake on the spread of the virus," President Emmanuel Macron told public television, announcing a shutdown between 9:00 pm and 6:00 am that will remain in force for as long as six weeks.

Other major French cities such as Lyon, the Mediterranean port Marseille and southwestern Toulouse will similarly impose curfews, with around 20 million people affected in all, out of a total population of some 67 million.

Just minutes before Macron's announcement, his government had said it would prolong a state of health emergency.

With over one million coronavirus deaths and nearly 40 million cases worldwide, regions like

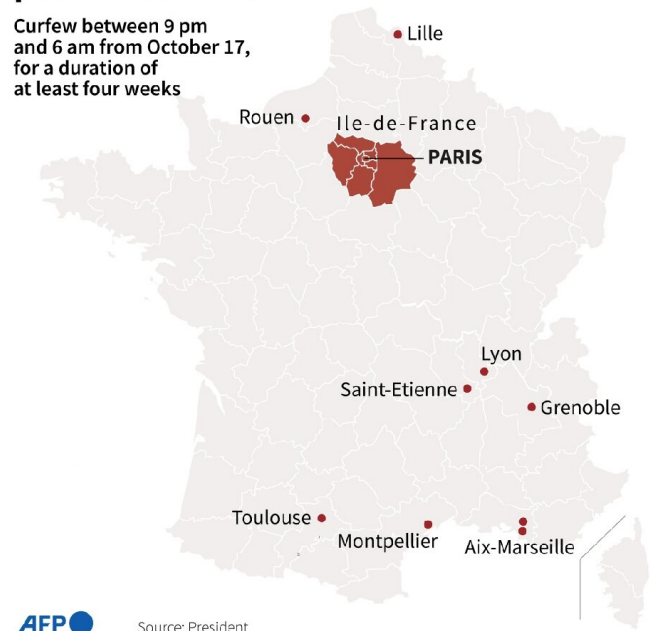
Europe that suppressed the first outbreak are again facing tough choices on how to control a new wave without the economic devastation wrought by nationwide lockdowns.

In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced tougher measures on gatherings and mask-wearing.

"I am convinced that what we do now will be decisive for how we come through this pandemic," the leader said.

Covid-19: Paris, 8 other French cities placed under curfew

Curfew between 9 pm and 6 am from October 17, for a duration of at least four weeks



Map of France showing Paris region and eight other cities placed under curfew between 9 pm and 6 am, starting October 17 and will last for four weeks

New infections in Germany continued to rise Wednesday, pushing past 5,000 cases in 24

hours—a level not seen since a lockdown imposed on Europe's biggest economy in the spring.

"We're in a situation where I think we can still flatten the exponential growth," said Lothar Wieler, head of Germany's disease control agency. "But for that we all need to make an effort."

Worsening situation

In Spain, bars and restaurants will close across the northeastern region of Catalonia for the next 15 days as the country tackles one of the highest rates of infection in the European Union, with nearly 900,000 cases and more than 33,000 deaths.

In the Netherlands, where new measures also came into force, including restrictions on alcohol sales and new mask requirements, people drank and danced to pumping techno music in the final minutes before all bars, restaurants and cannabis "coffeeshops" closed down.

Ireland's prime minister Micheal Martin announced a raft of new curbs along the border with the British province of Northern Ireland, including the closure of non-essential retail outlets, gyms, pools and leisure centres.



Iranians in five major cities including capital Tehran face travel restrictions

Earlier on Wednesday Northern Ireland's devolved government announced plans to shut pubs and

restaurants for four weeks, tighten restrictions on social gatherings and extend the mid-term school break to counter soaring case numbers there.

Infection rates "must be turned down now or we will be in a very difficult place very soon indeed," First Minister Arlene Foster told lawmakers in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Lockdown 'disaster'

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is also under increasing pressure to impose more stringent measures to cut spiralling rates in England, including a two-week "circuit-breaker" lockdown.

Johnson said a new UK-wide lockdown would be a "disaster" but refused to rule it out as the government's science advisory committee endorsed a temporary shutdown.

And in Italy, authorities recorded 7,332 new cases on Wednesday—the highest daily count the hard-hit country has yet seen.



Angela Merkel also announced tougher measures on mask-wearing

Rome has already imposed new, tougher rules to control the virus' resurgence, including an end to parties, amateur football matches and snacking at bars at night.

Beyond Europe, the US death toll rose by 794 in a day to 216,597, according to Johns Hopkins University, with just three weeks before a crucial election in which the pandemic plays a central role.

Another 52,160 had become infected in the past 24 hours, an increase of 0.7 percent.

Iran on Wednesday announced new travel restrictions affecting the capital Tehran and four other major cities, as well as new single-day records in both Covid-19 deaths and new infections.

And neighbouring Iraq's death toll since the start of the pandemic passed 10,000 people.

At least 1,089,039 people worldwide have died of the coronavirus since it emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan late in 2019, according to an AFP tally using official figures. At least 38.3 million cases have been recorded around the world.

Saudi Arabia, came a day after the International Monetary Fund warned that global GDP would contract 4.4 percent in 2020 and the damage inflicted by the pandemic would be felt for years.

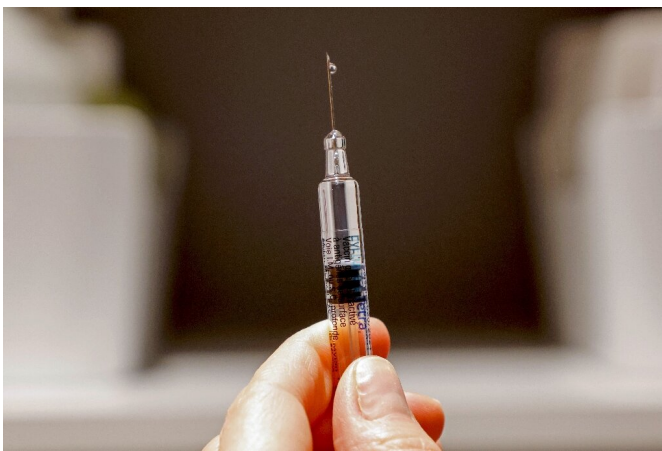
Drug setbacks

As Europe imposed new restrictions, hopes for vaccines or treatment to provide relief suffered a blow with the suspension of two [clinical trials](#) in the United States.

US pharmaceutical firm Eli Lilly said Tuesday it had suspended the Phase 3 trial of its antibody treatment over an unspecified incident, the second in less than 24 hours after Johnson & Johnson ran into a similar problem with its vaccine candidate.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow had registered a second vaccine dubbed "EpiVacCorona", developed by a top-secret Siberian laboratory, to follow its first "Sputnik" jab.

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Hopes for a rapid vaccine faced a setback by the suspension of trials for two candidates

In online talks, G20 finance ministers and central bankers agreed to extend a moratorium on debt repayments by the world's poorest countries for a further six months and trailed another prolongation in spring.

The virtual talks, hosted by current G20 president

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