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News  
Coronavirus

# Return to lockdowns and curfews as cases keep rising in Europe

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Europe correspondent

Regions of Spain and Italy have returned to lockdown and Ireland will do so from today as countries across Europe report new Covid infection highs and governments struggle to contain the pandemic's second wave.

Navarre, in northern Spain, where there are 945 cases per 100,000 people against 312 nationally, announced a two-week lockdown from tomorrow that will be stricter than curbs imposed on Madrid by central government.

People will only be let in or out of Navarre for work, university, to care for relatives or for emergencies, the regional government said. Restaurants, cafes and bars will be closed.

The lockdown in and around the capital, the source of a bitter row between the central and regional government, is due to expire this Saturday amid media reports that Madrid is considering introducing a curfew.

The central government said yesterday it too was considering curfews to tackle a nationwide rise in daily cases that reached 38,000 on Monday.

A curfew in Madrid and beyond would require invoking a state of emergency, the health minister, Salvador Illa, said, adding that if it lasted more

than two weeks it would require the support of some opposition parties.

Ireland is set to become the first EU country to return to lockdown, the taoiseach, Micheál Martin, confirmed late on Monday, issuing a nationwide "stay at home" order but insisting schools would stay open.

The measures come into effect for six weeks from midnight tonight and will force all non-essential retail businesses to close, limit bars and restaurants to takeaways, and people are required to stay at home with a 5km travel limit for exercise.

Italy's southern region of Campania is to ask central government to allow a night-time curfew from this weekend, after the northern region of Lombardy got the green light for a similar 11pm to 5am lockdown from tomorrow.

Unlike during the first wave, the prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, wants to give towns and regions more leeway to decide their own curbs. Local officials in both regions said their health systems risked being overwhelmed, with the mayor of Naples saying

945

The number of cases per 100,000 people in the Navarre region of Spain; the national average is 312



▲ Police officers in Milan which, with the rest of Lombardy, faces an 11pm to 5am curfew amid soaring hospital admissions PHOTOGRAPH: MIGUEL MEDINA/GETTY

Campania had only 15 intensive-care beds left. Lombardy's ICU admissions could rise from 100 to 600.

Poland's parliament, meanwhile, postponed an emergency debate on new rules to boost the number of medics available to treat Covid-19 cases and make face masks in public legally binding, after opposition parties demanded clarifications. Poland reported 9,291 new infections yesterday, its second highest daily figure.

Hungary is also holding back on new measures despite growing criticism of the response of Viktor Orbán's government. During the first wave, Hungary recorded relatively few infections and deaths. This month, however, more Hungarians have died of coronavirus than in all of the previous four months.

The European Centre for Disease Control said the country had the third-highest rolling seven-day death rate per million in the bloc, behind the Czech Republic and Romania.

Germany put the Bavarian district of Berchtesgaden Land under lockdown yesterday. Schools, nurseries and restaurants closed and residents are confined to their homes unless they have a good reason to be out. The lockdown came as the district reported the highest seven-day incidence of Covid-19 in the country, with 272.8 new infections per 100,000 residents.

Russia recorded a record high of 16,319 new cases yesterday, including 4,999 in Moscow, while Greece scrapped a plan to let spectators back into sports events. The country registered 438 new infections on Monday.

Iran's daily infections passed 5,000 - a new record. There were also 322 new deaths. The president, Hassan Rouhani, said the worst-hit country in the Middle East was now "facing a larger wave" than earlier in the year.

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## Spain Grand new hotel has everything except guests

Sam Jones *Madrid*  
Stephen Burgen *Barcelona*

Madrid's first new grand hotel in almost half a century has more than enough to recommend it to even the most discerning and demanding of visitors.

As well as a presidential suite for VIPs and their bodyguards, there is a spa, a handy branch of Hermès, and a restaurant by the three Michelin-starred chef Dani García.

The only thing the Four Seasons lacks is guests. Only 50 of its 200 rooms have been made available since it opened in September.

Like the rest of Spain, the hotel is watching and waiting to see what happens next with Covid-19.

"In 2019, Spain had 84 million tourists," said Carlos Lamela, the architect whose firm spent almost a decade painstakingly converting the seven former bank buildings into a hotel, luxury shopping centre and private residences. "This year, it's about 20 million visitors. It's a question of just holding on."

Lamela compared the challenges

of the €600m Centro Canalejas project - such as excavating a car park for 400 vehicles and coming up with a way to drive corridors through different buildings on different levels - to marquetry or doing an enormous Rubik's Cube.

None of these challenges, however, has come anywhere close to the difficulties thrown up by the pandemic. "I think we're going to get through some very difficult times indeed over the coming months or even years," he said.

The figures bear out his prognosis. According to the Hotel Business Association of Madrid, the occupancy rate throughout the Madrid region is about 15%. Those hotels that have reopened after the national lockdown are running with



▲ The new Four Seasons in Madrid occupies seven restored buildings

only 20-25% of their full staff, with the rest on furlough.

A spokeswoman for the association said: "Although the government has extended the furlough scheme until 31 January, there's no doubt the hotel and tourist sector will continue to bear the brunt of this economic crisis."

Jorge Marichal, head of the Spanish hotel owners' association, Cehat, said: "In terms of demand, the sector has practically come to a halt. It needs shock measures to keep up liquidity and a rescue plan."

While the situation is looking dire for the hotel trade, Madrid's bars and restaurants are still open despite the partial lockdown, and many outside terraces have been doing a brisk trade.

In Catalonia, however, bars and restaurants are limited to takeaway and delivery services until the end of the month, as the regional government seeks to slow the second wave of the virus.

About 15% of Barcelona's 9,000 bars and restaurants have been closed since lockdown in March, and Roger Pallarols, the president of the city's restaurant association, estimated half could shut permanently within six to nine months if business did not improve.

Back in Madrid, Lamela remained phlegmatic: "Life will go on, and we'll keep on adapting just as we have during other disasters and wars," he said. "It may take a while, but this will all go away."