

Spain looks at Italy for clues to deal with new coronavirus

March 13 2020



A couple kiss, at the Barcelona airport, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. President Donald Trump, who had downplayed the coronavirus for weeks, suddenly struck a different tone, announcing strict rules on restricting travel from much of Europe to begin this weekend. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

Over 60,000 people have been confined to four towns in Spain's first mandatory lockdown as infections for the new coronavirus increase sharply, putting a strain on health services and pressure on the government for more action.

The situation in and around the Spanish capital, Madrid, with nearly 2,000 positive cases of the new virus and hospitals rapidly filling up, is a source of particular concern for authorities, as Spain follows hot on the heels of Italy in the coronavirus pandemic.

The country had more than 3,800 cases by Friday morning and at least 84 deaths.

The government has closed museums and sports centers, sent home nearly 10 million students and has asked people to work remotely, while limiting crowds at public events in high risk areas in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19.

But questions are being asked about whether the measures are enough in the light of the experience in Italy, where authorities have acknowledged that escalating restrictions have been unable to contain the virus.

The Madrid vice president said Friday that the region is in dire need of medical supplies, despite announcing an unprecedented plan to reshuffle the region's health system that included pooling intensive care units from both public and [private hospitals](#), and even considering creating additional [hospital](#) rooms in hotels. At least two hotel chains have offered their premises.



Passengers wearing masks arrive at Adolfo Suarez-Barajas international airport, outskirts Madrid, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The vast majority of people recover from the new coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization, most people recover in about two to six weeks, depending on the severity of the illness. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)



A customer buy meat at the market of La Boqueria in Barcelona, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. Spain's Ibex 35, the benchmark stock market index, registered it's worst day in 28 years of trading Thursday with stocks dropping by 14.06 percent as jitters over the economic impact of the virus outbreak intensified. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)



View of an empty gallery at El Prado Museum in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The spread of the new coronavirus continues disrupting normal life in parts of Spain, and it's also affecting sports, cultural and all sorts of leisure events after the government imposed a ban on gatherings of more than 1,000 people and to cut to a third the maximum audience of all venues holding indoor sports or cultural events. Exhibitions, conferences, sports centers and museums are closing in Madrid, including the Spanish capital's Prado Museum for the first time in eight decades. The museum, which hosts works by Francisco de Goya and Diego de Velázquez, among other Spanish and European artists, was forced to shut down last during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). The vast majority of people recover from the new coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization, most people recover in about two to six weeks, depending on the severity of the illness. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)



A tourists wearing a face mask, visits the Sagrada Familia basilica in Barcelona, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The basilica announced it will close its doors to visitors and suspend construction from Friday March 13 to prevent the spread of the new COVID-19 coronavirus. Spain, along with Italy and France, is among the countries worst hit by the virus so far in Europe. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Renata Brito)



People look on as a man puts a notice informing costumers the bar is closing to prevent coronavirus, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. For most people, the new COVID-19 coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



Passengers, some of them wearing masks, check flight status at Adolfo Suarez-Barajas international airport, outskirts Madrid, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The vast majority of people recover from the new coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization, most people recover in about two to six weeks, depending on the severity of the illness. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)



A woman wears a face mask at La Paz hospital in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. Exhibitions, conferences, sports centers and museums are closing in Madrid, including the Spanish capital's Prado Museum for the first time in eight decades. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



A woman wears a mask to face costumers to prevent coronavirus, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. For most people, the new COVID-19 coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



A highway toll station worker wears protective gloves while handing over a receipt, outskirts Madrid, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The vast majority of people recover from the new coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization, most people recover in about two to six weeks, depending on the severity of the illness. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)



People wear face masks in a tourist bus in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. Exhibitions, conferences, sports centers and museums are closing in Madrid, including the Spanish capital's Prado Museum for the first time in eight decades. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



View of empty galleries at El Prado Museum in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The spread of the new coronavirus continues disrupting normal life in parts of Spain, and it's also affecting sports, cultural and all sorts of leisure events after the government imposed a ban on gatherings of more than 1,000 people and to cut to a third the maximum audience of all venues holding indoor sports or cultural events. Exhibitions, conferences, sports centers and museums are closing in Madrid, including the Spanish capital's Prado Museum for the first time in eight decades. The museum, which hosts works by Francisco de Goya and Diego de Velazquez, among other Spanish and European artists, was forced to shut down last during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). The vast majority of people recover from the new coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization, most people recover in about two to six weeks, depending on the severity of the illness. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)



Passengers rest at the Barcelona airport, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. President Donald Trump, who had downplayed the coronavirus for weeks, suddenly struck a different tone, announcing strict rules on restricting travel from much of Europe to begin this weekend. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)



A man looks at his phone in front of the information screen at Barcelona airport, Spain, Thursday, March 12, 2020. President Donald Trump, who had downplayed the coronavirus for weeks, suddenly struck a different tone, announcing strict rules on restricting travel from much of Europe to begin this weekend. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

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