

Italy eases lockdown, U.S. haltingly lifts some restrictions

May 4 2020, by Geir Moulson and Nicole Winfield



A commuter has his temperature red at Termini station in Rome, Monday, May 4, 2020. Italy began stirring again Monday after a two-month coronavirus shutdown, with 4.4 million Italians able to return to work and restrictions on movement eased in the first European country to lock down in a bid to stem COVID-19 infections. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

Millions of people were allowed to return to work in Italy on Monday as Europe's longest coronavirus lockdown started to ease, while the U.S. took halting steps to lift some of its own restrictions even as tens of thousands of new cases were reported every day.

In Washington, the Senate was convening for the first time since March, while dozens of people in Florida were waiting before sunrise for the 7 a.m. opening of Clearwater Beach. In South Dakota, a pork processing plant took its first steps toward reopening after being shuttered after more than 800 employees were infected with [coronavirus](#).

Louisiana lawmakers were also restarting their legislature—even as they feuded over whether they should return at all.

Political battles have become increasingly embedded in coronavirus policy in the United States. In Louisiana, Republican legislators irritated by Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards' decision to extend Louisiana's stay-at-home order through May 15 were eager to return to work.

But Democrats saw things differently: "It could be a devastating blow to the strides made and to the safety of our residents, our staff and members if we returned to business as usual prematurely," Democratic leaders wrote in a letter.

More than 29,000 people in Louisiana have tested positive for the coronavirus, and 1,969 people have died, according to state health department data released Sunday. The true number of infections is thought to be far higher.



Andrea, 29 years old, is attended by hairstylist Laura Naturana in a hairdresser, Pamplona, northern Spain, Monday, May 4, 2020. Spaniards will be able to get a haircut, buy take away food as long as they have previously made an appointment and travel on public transport with mouth and nose covered with mandatory masks. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)

With pressure growing in many countries for more measures to restart the economy, politicians also were trying to boost funding for research into a vaccine for COVID-19. There are hopes that one could be available in months, but many scientists warn it could take much longer.

Italy, the first European country hit by the pandemic and a nation with one of the world's highest death tolls, started stirring after its two-month shutdown. In all, 4.4 million Italians were able to return to work, and

restrictions on movement eased.

Traffic in downtown Rome picked up, construction sites and manufacturing operations resumed, parks reopened and flower vendors returned to the Campo dei Fiori market for the first time since March 11.

"It's something that brings happiness and joy, and people have been missing that these days," vendor Stefano Fulvi said. He doesn't expect to break even anytime soon, "but you have to take the risk at some point."



Commuters crowd Cadorna train station in Milan, Italy, Monday, May 4, 2020. Italy began stirring again Monday after a two-month coronavirus shutdown, with 4.4 million Italians able to return to work and restrictions on movement eased in the first European country to lock down in a bid to stem COVID-19 infections. (Claudio Furlan/LaPresse via AP)

But Europeans' new-found freedoms are limited as officials are wary of setting off a second wave of infections.

In Italy, mourners were able to attend funerals, but services were limited to 15 people and there was still no word on when Masses will resume. Restaurants scrubbed their floors in preparation for take-out service, but sit-down service was several weeks away.

Southern Italy braced for the return of students and workers who were trapped in the hard-hit north when the lockdown took effect. Some regional governors said they would require anyone arriving home to go into quarantine for two weeks.

"It's a new page that we must write together, with trust and responsibility," Premier Giuseppe Conte said in a message to Italians.

Belgium allowed some companies to open offices to employees, though remote work was still encouraged. Like Italians, Greeks, Spaniards and many others in Europe, Belgians were told to wear masks on public transport.



A girl runs in front of the Sforza Castle in Milan, Italy, Monday, May 4, 2020. Italy began stirring again Monday after a two-month coronavirus shutdown, with 4.4 million Italians able to return to work and restrictions on movement eased in the first European country to lock down in a bid to stem COVID-19 infections. (AP Photo/Luca Bruno)

Italians still have to carry certifications explaining why they are out. Greece, which began lifting its seven-week lockdown Monday, dropped a similar requirement for people to send a text message or carry a self-written permit justifying being outdoors.

People in hard-hit Spain ventured out for the first time for haircuts or food take-outs, but many small shops were still closed as owners worked on meeting strict health and hygiene guidelines. Neighboring Portugal

also eased its confinement measures and allowed small stores to open.

On Europe's western edge, Iceland reopened many of its businesses after the country tamed its [virus outbreak](#).

In the Middle East, Lebanon was allowing restaurants to open at 30% capacity during the day starting Monday. But many business owners said they won't reopen because they would be losing more money if they operate under such restrictions in a faltering economy. Cafes, clubs and bars have been ordered to stay shut through June.



A coffee shop opens for takeaway in Rome, Monday, May 4, 2020. Italy began stirring again Monday after a two-month coronavirus shutdown, with 4.4 million Italians able to return to work and restrictions on movement eased in the first European country to lock down in a bid to stem COVID-19 infections. (Cecilia

Fabiano/LaPresse via AP)

India allowed some economic activities to resume after a five-week halt, even as the pace of infections has slightly accelerated. The lockdown has achieved a slowdown in the spread of the virus but has caused immense hardship for India's poor.

An estimated 1.5 million South Africans returned to work after a five-week lockdown. The mining, manufacturing and select retail sectors began reopening with up to 30% of their workforce. Trains, buses and private minibus taxis resumed operations with reduced occupancy, and all South Africans must wear face masks in public.

Russia reported a steady rise in the number of infections, fueling concerns the nation's hospitals could be overwhelmed. Authorities say that broader testing has contributed to a surge. Russia's economy has been partially shut since late March, and lockdown measures have been extended through May 11.



Beachgoers sunbathe near a beach rules sign after Clearwater Beach officially reopened to the public Monday, May 4, 2020, in Clearwater Beach, Fla. Many public beaches and restaurants are reopening as part of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' plan to stop the spread of the coronavirus. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

Governments around the world have reported 3.5 million infections and more than 247,000 deaths, including more than 67,000 dead in the United States, according to a count by Johns Hopkins University. Deliberately concealed outbreaks, low testing rates and the severe strain the disease has placed on health care systems mean the true scale of the pandemic is undoubtedly much greater.

Developing a vaccine will be the key to returning to less restricted everyday life. On Monday, an alliance of world leaders was holding a

virtual summit hoping to drum up around 4 billion euros (\$4.37 billion) for vaccine research, some 2 billion euros for treatments and 1.5 billion euros for testing. Officials say that amount is just the start.

The leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Norway and top European Union officials said that money raised will be channeled mostly through recognized global health organizations. The EU's executive Commission had hoped that the United States would take part, but it remained unclear what role, if any, Washington might play in the donor conference.



A couple wears a face mask as they enjoy the sun in park full of flowers, in Milan, Italy, Monday, May 4, 2020. Italy began stirring again Monday after a two-month coronavirus shutdown, with 4.4 million Italians able to return to work and restrictions on movement eased in the first European country to lock down in a bid to stem COVID-19 infections. (AP Photo/Antonio Calanni)



Workers at a hair salon work on customers, all wearing face masks to prevent the spread of new coronavirus, in Athens, Monday, May 4, 2020. The Greek government started relaxing the restrictions against the COVID-19 from Monday and throughout May and June. The authorities warned Greeks to remain vigilant and maintain strict hygiene and social distancing protocols. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)



A food delivery rider walks with his bike inside the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, Italy, Monday, May 4, 2020. Italy began stirring again Monday after a two-month coronavirus shutdown, with 4.4 million Italians able to return to work and restrictions on movement eased in the first European country to lock down in a bid to stem COVID-19 infections. AP Photo/Luca Bruno)



Refugees and migrants wearing masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, wait to get on a bus after their arrival at the port of Piraeus, near Athens on Monday, May 4, 2020. Greek authorities are moving 400 migrants, mostly families, to the mainland to help ease overcrowded conditions at the camp Moria in Lesbos island. (AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris)



Commuters wearing face masks to prevent the spread of new coronavirus, enter the Syntagma Metro station in central Athens, Monday, May 4, 2020. The Greek government started relaxing the restrictions against the COVID-19 from Monday and throughout May and June. The authorities warned Greeks to remain vigilant and maintain strict hygiene and social distancing protocols. (AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis)



Indians line up to buy liquor outside one the liquor shops which was reopened Monday after six weeks lockdown in New Delhi, India, Monday, May 4, 2020. India's six-week coronavirus lockdown, which was supposed to end on Monday, has been extended for another two weeks, with a few relaxations. Locking down the country's 1.3 billion people has slowed down the spread of the virus, but has come at the enormous cost of upending lives and millions of lost jobs. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



Indians line up to buy liquor outside one of the liquor shops which reopened Monday after six weeks lockdown on the outskirts of New Delhi, India, Monday, May 4, 2020. India's six-week coronavirus lockdown, which was supposed to end on Monday, has been extended for another two weeks, with a few relaxations. Locking down the country's 1.3 billion people has slowed down the spread of the virus, but has come at the enormous cost of upending lives and millions of lost jobs. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri)



A man checks his phone by plastic circles on the ground indicating where to stand to respect social distances at the Gare du Nord train station in Paris, Monday, May 4, 2020. France prepares to lift its strict nationwide lockdown on May 11th. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)



Indians leave for work in cars and motorcycles in the morning in New Delhi, India, Monday, May 4, 2020. India's six-week coronavirus lockdown, which was supposed to end on Monday, has been extended for another two weeks, with a few relaxations. Locking down the country's 1.3 billion people has slowed down the spread of the virus, but has come at the enormous cost of upending lives and millions of lost jobs. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

Germany's health minister said there are "promising" developments but warned that developing vaccines is one of the biggest challenges in medicine.

"I would be glad if we succeeded in a few months, but I think we must remain realistic," Jens Spahn told ARD television on Sunday. "It can also take years."

© 2020 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Italy eases lockdown, U.S. haltingly lifts some restrictions (2020, May 4) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-italy-eases-lockdown-haltingly-restrictions.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.