

Spain locks down one million as Europe battles regional surge

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Spanish officials expanded a lockdown in and around Madrid on Friday to cover one million people, as European nations faced up to a sustained spike in virus cases.

Madrid's health authority said new rules largely banning tens of

thousands from leaving their districts—in addition to the 850,000 already living under similar restrictions—would be enforced from Monday.

New spikes are springing up across the continent, with Poland and France the latest to register record figures—France's daily cases soared past 16,000 for the first time in a stark indicator of the virus's resurgence.

Governments are fighting back with tougher restrictions.

Russia's capital has ordered vulnerable residents to stay at home and France has forced restaurants, bars and other venues in [major cities](#) to shorten their hours or close entirely in a move that has sparked widespread frustration.

"I am angry because there was no consultation," said Michele Rubirola, mayor of the southern city of Marseille, which is bearing the brunt of the new outbreak and the new restrictions.

"Why turn the screws when our numbers have been improving for a few days now?" she asked.

The story of surges and countermeasures was not limited to Europe—Israel once again ratcheting up its lockdown on Friday by stopping people from taking flights out of the country.

Worldwide deaths are nearing one million and more than 31 million cases have been detected since the [coronavirus](#) first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

Carnival blues

As well as the human toll, the year's sporting and entertainment calendars have been trashed—the Rio carnival in Brazil being the biggest casualty this week with organisers postponing the festival for the first time since 1912.

"It's not a cancellation, it's a postponement," said Jorge Castanheira, president of the group that organises the parades.

"We are looking for an alternative solution, something we can do when it's safe to contribute to the city."

The carnival, famous for its gyrating samba dancers, drummers and dancing crowds, draws millions for all-night parties in packed streets, making social distancing all but impossible.

Brazil now has the world's second highest death toll after the United States—nearly 140,000 fatalities—and is still battling to bring the virus under control.

Rio's samba schools had already warned in July that without certainty of a vaccine this year it would be difficult to organise the February 2021 festival.

The carnival joins a growing list of events disrupted by the pandemic.

On Friday alone, Australia shelved plans for cricket matches against Afghanistan and New Zealand and the French Open tennis tournament said it would allow only 1,000 spectators each day in a much scaled-back event.

'Stressful, endless shifts'

Eastern Europe emerged as another hotspot this week with EU officials

warning on Thursday of an alarming rise in deaths and hospitalisations of more vulnerable patients in countries including Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Romania.

Poland, which was not included on the EU's list, saw infections double from just over 700 on Tuesday to more than 1,500 by Friday.

And further east, Russia was battling its own resurgence.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin has ordered older people and those with chronic illnesses to stay at home and told employers to allow their staff to work from home where possible.

Sobyenin had enforced a tough lockdown in the capital earlier in the pandemic but said he hoped such measures would not be needed again.

"We all really don't want to go back to the harsh restrictions of spring," Sobyenin said. "I hope we can avoid this."

With rising cases and hospitalisations, Madrid's [health workers](#) were also reminded of the bleakest days of their own epidemic fight.

Diana Llorens, who works at the intensive care unit of a Madrid hospital, said the situation was leaving many in the health service feeling "frustrated, jaded, tired".

She said medical workers were "afraid of going back to what we suffered through in March: stressful, endless shifts".

Some British people are also feeling jaded, as their government instituted a new phase of restrictions on pubs and entertainment venues—enforcing early closures from Thursday night.

"I don't think it's gonna help, it's too little too late, as usual," Joyce, a drinker in her fifties in east London, told AFP. "You're just displacing the problem."

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