

Ireland locks down for second wave, Germany smashes record daily high

October 22 2020, by Joe Stenson With Afp Bureaus



Ireland's five million people have been hit with a six-week stay-at-home order

Ireland became the first European country to enter a second national lockdown and Germany's daily cases leapt to a record high as the second wave of coronavirus spread gloom across the continent on Thursday.

As a Covid-19 surge gripped European countries ahead of the onset of winter, Spain added to the list of disquieting statistics when it became the first country to pass a million cases.

Many European authorities have been reluctant to reimpose harsh lockdown measures, after previous restrictions caused deep recessions and widespread bitterness.

But Ireland's five million people have been ordered to stay at home for six weeks, with non-essential businesses urged to shut up shop.

Irish authorities have also imposed a strict five-kilometre (three-mile) travel limit, limited bars and restaurants to takeaway only and extended a ban on visits between households.

"It's devastating to see us locked down again... during our busiest line-up for the Christmas period," Dublin antique jeweller John Farrington told AFP this week.

The novel [coronavirus](#) has killed at least 1,126,000 people since emerging in China late last year, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP. Global GDP is expected to contract 4.4 percent in 2020, the International Monetary Fund said.



A restaurant in China's eastern Zhejiang province separates diners with table partitions to prevent coronavirus spread

Germany, once a European success story for its virus response, leapt to a record 11,287 new infections in 24 hours, soaring past the previous high of just over 7,800 set last Friday.

Faced with the sharp rise, authorities have toughened anti-pandemic measures, such as banning large gatherings and making [face masks](#) compulsory on certain streets in Berlin.

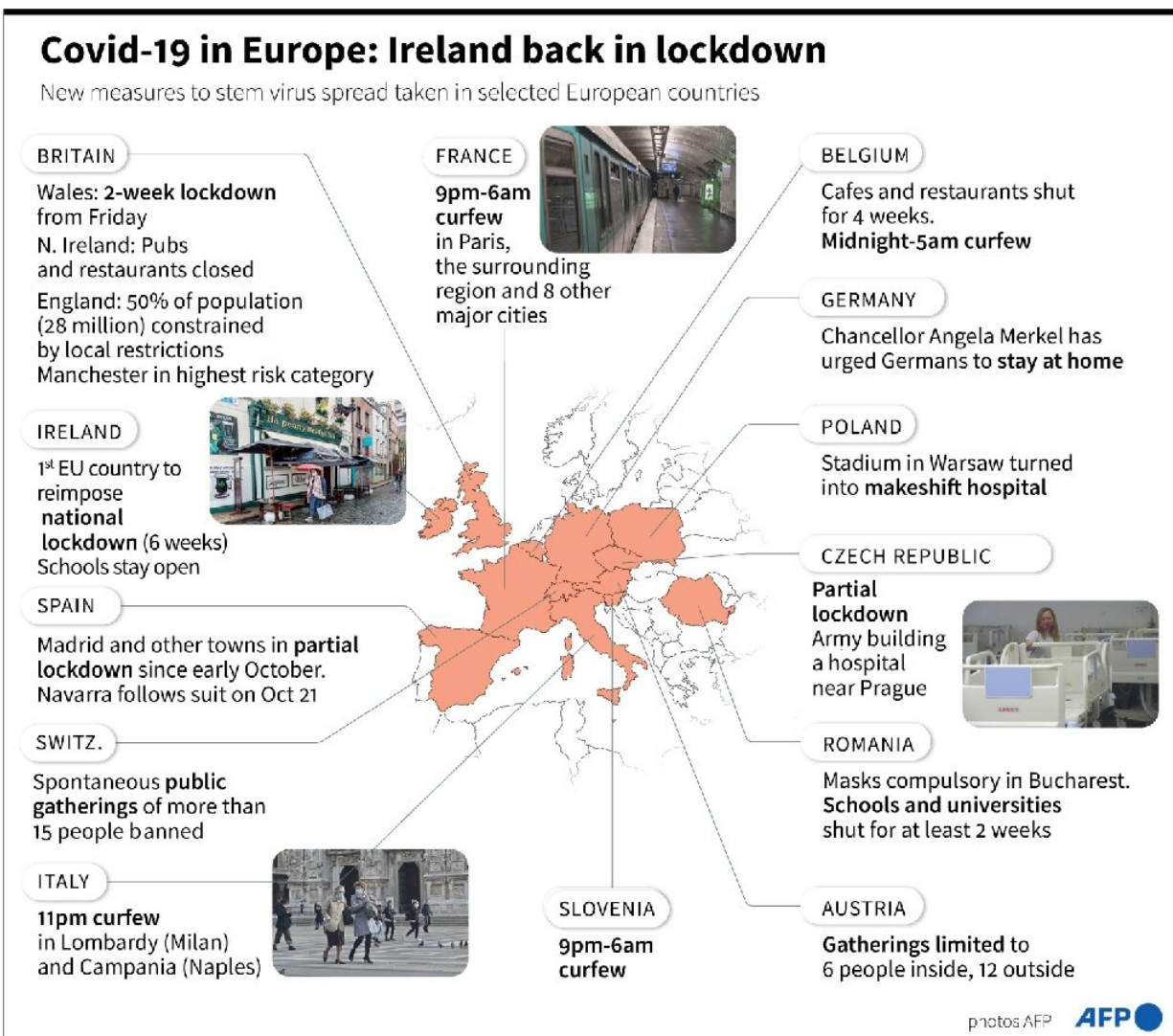
In a symbol of Germany's woes, Health Minister Jens Spahn—a chief ally of Chancellor Angela Merkel who has been praised for his calm stewardship during the pandemic—tested positive and went into home

isolation.

'Months of agony'

Spain announced 16,973 cases, taking it to more than a million since its first diagnosis on January 31, in the Canary Islands.

Spain, home to around 47 million people, is only the sixth country worldwide to cross the million mark after the United States, India, Brazil, Russia and Argentina, according to the AFP tally.



A map of Europe showing new measures to stem the spread of Covid-19

Meanwhile Britain, with Europe's largest death toll of 44,000, said more than a million people in the north would be banned from mixing with other households, prompting opposition leader Keir Starmer to warn of "months of agony" ahead.

The county of South Yorkshire, which includes the city of Sheffield, will enter into "very high" alert or tier three restrictions for at least four weeks from Saturday, the UK government announced.

The decision will affect around 1.4 million people, taking the number under the very toughest restrictions to 7.3 million—or 13 percent of England's population.



The south German city of Berchtesgaden, after a local lockdown was imposed

In France, major cities including Paris were virtually deserted on the fifth night of a curfew affecting some 20 million people from 9pm. The number of patients in [intensive care](#) in France has surged past 2,000 for the first time since May.

Elsewhere in Europe, Poland's prime minister said he wanted "red zone" lockdown measures to be extended to the entire country amid a record spike in infections.



Essential workers, members of the clergy, parents and activists participate in a 'die-in' and memorial service to honor those who have died of Covid-19 in Los Angeles

And the Czech government said it would curb movement and close shops and services to battle a huge spike in cases. The latest European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention data showed the country had by far the most new cases and deaths per 100,000 inhabitants over the past two weeks.

Wednesday also saw the first reported death in a [vaccine trial](#)—a volunteer in [clinical trials](#) in Brazil developed by Oxford University.

It was not clear if the victim had received the vaccine or a placebo in one of a series of trials to bring a much-anticipated vaccine to market.

"Following careful assessment of this case in Brazil, there have been no concerns about safety of the clinical trial, and the independent review in addition to the Brazilian regulator have recommended that the trial should continue," Oxford said in a statement.

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