

# Europe coronavirus deaths surge past 300,000

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A second coronavirus wave ploughed on relentlessly through Europe which reported more than 12 million cases and 300,000 deaths as swathes of Italy returned to lockdown and the British city of Liverpool trialled city-wide testing on Friday.

The continent has become the new epicentre of the pandemic and a total of 300,688 deaths have been reported in Europe since the COVID-19 virus first hit, according to an AFP tally of health authorities figures.

Two-thirds of these fatalities have been registered in the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Spain and Russia.

As countries raced to try and curb their spiking cases, they imposed new lockdowns despite signs of growing unrest, with several Italian regions shutting down and Greeks facing fresh stay-at-home orders from Saturday.

The United States is also struggling to rein in the pandemic, recording over 1,200 deaths and more than 120,000 infections between Wednesday and Thursday evening in another daily record, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

The figures came as US President Donald Trump, who survived a bout with COVID-19 in October and insists the virus will "disappear," was fighting for his political life with vote-counting from Tuesday's presidential election still ongoing.

## **'Sick of saying the same things'**

In Italy, a lockdown was ordered for prosperous Lombardy, fellow northern regions Piedmont and Val d'Aosta, as well as one southern region, Calabria.

Giorgio Gori, the mayor of the northern city of Bergamo—the epicentre of Italy's coronavirus crisis earlier this year—said "there is more tiredness and more distrust around" than during the first lockdown, after people protested outside his home.

The head of the infectious diseases department at Milan's renowned Luigi Sacco hospital, Massimo Galli, told reporters he was "alarmed" by the situation and had been ever since the end of Italy's first lockdown in May.

"I've always confirmed that you have to keep on high alert to avoid the return of problems," Galli said.

"I'm sick of saying the same things, like the voice screaming in the desert without any acknowledgement."

Governments are desperately trying to find alternatives to lockdowns which hammer at the economy.

In England, which has also shut down, the northwestern city of Liverpool on Friday began the country's first city-wide coronavirus testing programme.

All 500,000 residents will be offered repeat tests, even if asymptomatic, under a pilot scheme that could be rolled out nationwide if successful.

"It's a big step to save our loved ones, friends, colleagues, everybody. I really hope as many people as possible use the opportunity," said Jurgen Klopp, the manager of the Liverpool football team.

Denmark meanwhile defended the strict measures it has imposed on the northwest of the country after a mutated version of the new coronavirus linked to mink farms was found in humans.

Copenhagen has warned that the mutation could threaten the effectiveness of any future vaccine, and has ordered the slaughter of all of the country's minks, estimated at up to 17 million.

"These are timely and necessary measures" amid a "worrying" development, said Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod.

## **Last-minute haircuts**

Meanwhile, Greece's second nationwide shutdown drew the ire of teachers as it closes down [secondary schools](#) and universities.

Theodoros Tsouchlos, president of the secondary school teachers' union, said many [high school students](#) had already fallen behind during the first wave.

The second lockdown could raise inequalities further, as some students don't have access to wifi or own a laptop, or else it is used by parents for teleworking, he added.

"These are issues that the government should have prepared for during the summer, but instead it acted as if everything was under control."

People rushed to get a haircut before the Saturday shutdown, even though hairdressers and nail salons are allowed to open for two more days.

Athens hairdresser Apostolos Gelbas said he was struggling to find the time to serve all his clients.

"It seems that this was one of the main things that the people missed during the first [lockdown](#)."

The [coronavirus](#) has also been mercilessly hitting Switzerland, and in particular its French-speaking region where hospitals are rapidly becoming overwhelmed.

At one small hospital, patients with severe COVID-19 infections filled all 10 enclosed beds.

"This morning, I was asked to take one more patient... so I had to transfer the most stable patient I had to another hospital to make room," Herve Zender, the chief physician at the La-Chaux-de-Fonds's ICU, told AFP.

The pandemic has killed at least 1,235,000 people since it first emerged in China late last year, out of more than 48.7 million confirmed infections.

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