

Europe may see 'several' waves of COVID-19: experts

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Europe risks being hit with further waves of coronavirus infections next year, France's scientific council has warned, as the continent scrambles to cope with a second deadly spike in COVID-19 cases.

Even if partial lockdowns being put in place across Europe reduce the rate of new infections, additional waves of disease are probable in the

absence of a vaccine, the council said.

French President Emmanuel Macron announced last week a nationwide [lockdown](#) until December 1, citing findings of the council, which includes France's top pandemic experts and advises the government on [health policy](#).

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson followed suit on Saturday, announcing a partial, month-long shutdown in England—including restaurants and pubs—that is to start later this week.

Germany will adopt similar measures as of Monday, with people nationwide confined to their homes, and all bars, restaurants, theatres and cinemas closed.

Spain has imposed a nighttime curfew, and the Italian government is expected to announce new restrictions on Monday.

In France, Macron said the objective of its nationwide lockdown was to bring the number of daily infections down to 5,000.

Currently, France is seeing between 40,000 and 50,000 new cases each day.

The [second wave](#) ravaging Europe could taper off by late December or early 2021, the French council said in a statement released late Friday.

'On-off strategy?'

"It depends on the virus itself, its environment, the measures that will be taken to limit the circulation of the virus, and the level of compliance," it said.

But in the absence of a vaccine—not expected to be widely available until well into the new year—further outbreaks are likely on the horizon.

"It is probable that these measures—even if they are optimised—will not suffice to avoid other waves," the council said.

"We might thus have several successive waves during the end of winter and spring 2021."

Weather patterns, the efficacy of test-and-trace policies, and the stringency of lockdowns will all have an impact on their timing, intensity and duration, the experts added.

"We are therefore entering the management of successive waves of outbreaks... until the arrival of vaccines," the council said, adding that fresh outbreaks would not necessarily be seasonal.

The advisory body highlighted several possible strategies in dealing with successive waves of infection.

One would be an "on/off strategy" of partial lockdowns to limit the circulation of the virus, though tolerance for such measures may be an issue.

"Will the French accept such a strategy? Is it viable for the economy? The questions are there and they remain unanswerable at this time," the council concluded.

Another approach favoured by several Asian countries, Denmark, Finland and Germany aims to limit the number of new cases below a certain threshold—in France, 5,000 a day—and take prompt action if cases begins to spike.

This "[early intervention](#)" strategy would be the least harmful to economies in the long run, the council said.

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