

Croatia detects first cases of British virus variant

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Coronavirus. Credit: European Centers for Disease Control

Croatia has detected its first cases of the more contagious coronavirus strain that first emerged in Britain, even as it considers relaxing general virus curbs, the country's health ministry said Wednesday.

The new virus variant was spotted in samples taken from three people

including a three-year-old child, it said in a statement.

The authorities were to launch several days of talks later on Wednesday on whether to ease measures to curb the spread of the novel [coronavirus](#) because of a drop in the number of cases in the past month.

The move could see cafes and restaurants reopened but it was not clear how much the presence of the new variant will weigh in the decision-making.

Interior Minister Davor Bozinovic told reporters that the talks on easing restrictions is a "very complex issue" that will last until Friday.

He said any decision, which could be applied from Monday, will have to be "appropriate to our current situation" as well as "rational regarding both health and economy".

Since the start of the pandemic the country of 4.2 million people has confirmed nearly 240,000 infections and more than 5,000 deaths from the respiratory disease.

Neighbouring Bosnia and Serbia, as well as Kosovo and North Macedonia, have all also registered cases of the British variant since the start of the year.

Albania's [health authorities](#) said Tuesday they had indications about "probable presence" of the new variants in the country.

In the Balkans region, home to some 21 million people, more than one million people have been infected with the novel coronavirus and more than 21,000 have died from COVID-19.

A vaccination campaign is under way in Serbia—which is Europe's

fastest vaccinator apart from Britain, according to the scientific publication Our World in Data. It is also ongoing in Albania and European Union member Croatia.

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