

# Europe ramps up vaccinations as virus haunts Easter holidays

April 4 2021, by Angela Charlton and Oleg Cetinic

---



Patients receive an injection of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine on the opening day of a mass vaccination centre set up in the Olympique Lyonnais soccer Stadium, in Decines-Charpieu, Saturday, April 3, 2021. (Jean-Philippe Ksiazek, Pool via AP)

The French city of Lyon's main stadium opened as a mass vaccination

center during Easter weekend, and thousands spent the holiday lining up for injections at hippodromes, velodromes or other sites as France tried to speed up shots amid a new rush of coronavirus cases.

But as Europe celebrated its second Easter in a row under the cloud of the pandemic, some cities put vaccinations on hold over during the long holiday weekend—defying French President Emmanuel Macron's insistence that "there are no weekends or days off during vaccination."

Medical workers need "a little rest at last," said an official with the French city of Strasbourg, which shut down vaccination facilities from Good Friday through Easter Monday, a public holiday. To ensure that residents still had access to potentially life-saving vaccines, Strasbourg expanded vaccination hours and administered all of its weekly supply of doses between last Monday and Thursday, the official said.

Spain, Italy and Germany faced a similar holiday vaccination challenge.

Spaniards lined up for shots on Easter Sunday in Barcelona and other points around the country, but Madrid halted vaccinations at local health centers to give staff a break. The Spanish capital continued to give shots at a soccer stadium and a new hospital built to help handle pandemic cases.



People wait outside as they arrive to be vaccinated against Covid-19 the opening day of a mass vaccination centre set up in the Olympique Lyonnais soccer Stadium, in Decines-Charpieu, Saturday, April 3, 2021. (Jean-Philippe Ksiazek, Pool via AP)

With Spain fearing yet another surge of infections like the one now overwhelming French intensive care wards, Spanish Health Minister Carolina Darias had urged regional authorities to keep up vaccinations throughout Easter Week.

The French city of Sarcelles, north of Paris, was among those whose vaccination center stayed open Easter Sunday, amid mushrooming infections and demand. The center's organizers planned to inject 2,000 doses Sunday—twice their daily average.



Those waiting to get inside felt lucky and relieved. The surrounding Val d'Oise region now has the highest coronavirus infection rate in France, and the situation in Sarcelles symbolizes how the pandemic has worsened existing inequalities.

"The problem is with people who do not qualify yet and are in a hurry, which I understand as they want to get back to a normal life," said Dr. Majida El Mokhtari. "Unfortunately we are not able to vaccinate everybody with the doses that are distributed to us."



A person receives his shot of vaccine against Covid-19 as the vaccination campaign continues on Easter Day in Rome, Sunday, April 4, 2021. Italy has entered a three-day strict nationwide lockdown to prevent new surges of the coronavirus. Police set up road checks to ensure people were staying close to home and extra patrols were ordered up to break up large gatherings in squares

and parks, which over Easter weekend are usually packed with picnic-goers.  
(Mauro Scrobogna/LaPresse via AP)

The city's working class residents have higher exposure to the virus because many can't work remotely. In the area's housing projects, many families have multiple generations living in close quarters. Language barriers make sorting out vaccination arrangements a challenge for many immigrants.

In Lyon, French first division soccer club Olympique Lyon opened its stadium and provided volunteer employees to help medical workers and firefighters with a mass vaccination drive that started Saturday. Authorities plan to administer 3,000 doses per day during the first three days.

Club President Jean Michel Aulas expressed hope that the effort would help create "[social cohesion](#)" at a time of strain and uncertainty, as France entered a third partial lockdown starting Sunday.

Meanwhile, the French military announced that it would open seven vaccination centers starting Tuesday to help inject civilians.



People wait to receive their shot of vaccine against Covid-19 as the vaccination campaign continues on Easter Day in Rome, Sunday, April 4, 2021. Italy has entered a three-day strict nationwide lockdown to prevent new surges of the coronavirus. Police set up road checks to ensure people were staying close to home and extra patrols were ordered up to break up large gatherings in squares and parks, which over Easter weekend are usually packed with picnic-goers. (Mauro Scrobogna/LaPresse via AP)

In Italy, those fortunate to get a vaccine in Milan on Sunday received an extra reward: an Easter cake in the shape of a dove and packages of pasta. Only one hospital in the city administered vaccines on Easter, according to Italian media. Among those administering the injections at Milan's Niguarda Hospital were retired hospital doctors volunteering their time.



"We're just making our contribution to this important battle" against COVID-19, Dr. Vincenzo Rapisarda told SkyTG24 TV.

German vaccination centers appeared to mostly stay open over the holiday, but numbers of injections are typically slower on weekends.

The accelerated Easter actions in some European Union countries stood in contrast to the slow beginning of Europe's vaccine rollout over Christmas and New Year's.

While France remains far behind Britain and the United States in terms of vaccinating its population, the pace is starting to pick up. France has administered 12 million [vaccine](#) doses overall, including nearly 1 million in the last three days.



Firefighters welcome people to be vaccinated against Covid-19 on the opening day of a mass vaccination centre set up in the Olympique Lyonnais soccer Stadium, in Decines-Charpieu, Saturday, April 3, 2021. (Jean-Philippe Ksiazek, Pool via AP)



People go through a preliminary examination before getting their shot of vaccine against Covid-19 as the vaccination campaign continues on Easter Day in Rome, Sunday, April 4, 2021. Italy has entered a three-day strict nationwide lockdown to prevent new surges of the coronavirus. Police set up road checks to ensure people were staying close to home and extra patrols were ordered up to break up large gatherings in squares and parks, which over Easter weekend are usually packed with picnic-goers. (Mauro Scrobogna/LaPresse via AP)





Patients receive an injection of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine on the opening day of a mass vaccination centre set up in the Olympique Lyonnais soccer Stadium, in Decines-Charpieu, Saturday, April 3, 2021. (Jean-Philippe Ksiazek, Pool via AP)



Chief urologist Ferenc Haja administers the first dose of the Russian vaccine Sputnik V to a patient in the Josa Andras Training Hospital in Nyiregyhaza, Hungary, Sunday, April 4, 2021, as the vaccination with Sputnik V against the new coronavirus continues in the country. (Attila Balazs/MTI via AP)



Clergyman and servers arrive for the Easter Sunday Mass celebrated by Primate of the Hungarian Catholic Church, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, Cardinal Peter Erdo in the Esztergom Basilica in the City of Esztergom, Hungary, Sunday, April 4, 2021, during the pandemic coronavirus. The mass was broadcast on the Facebook account of the Archdiocese of Esztergom-Budapest and by a television channel as due to the pandemic of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 church services are not allowed to be attended by the public in Hungary. (Marton Monus/MTI via AP)





Resident pulmonologist Tunde Juhasz administers the first dose of the Russian vaccine Sputnik V to a patient in the Josa Andras Training Hospital in Nyiregyhaza, Hungary, Sunday, April 4, 2021, as the vaccination with Sputnik V against the new coronavirus continues in the country. (Attila Balazs/MTI via AP)



Boxes of Sputnik V vaccines against coronavirus marked with exact dates of use in the Josa Andras Training Hospital in Nyiregyhaza, Hungary, Sunday, April 4, 2021, as the vaccination with Sputnik V against the new coronavirus continues in the country. (Attila Balazs/MTI via AP)

Spanish authorities are speeding up vaccination efforts with the arrival of 2 million doses over the past week, its biggest lot yet. Spain had administered 8.5 million doses as of Friday.

Across the Channel, authorities in Britain were planning to test a series of measures including "coronavirus status certifications" over the coming weeks to see if they can allow people to safely return to mass gatherings at sports arenas, nightclubs and concerts.

People attending a range of events, including conferences and soccer's FA Cup, will need to be tested both before and after. The trials will also gather evidence on how ventilation and different approaches to social distancing could enable large events to go ahead.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to set out more details about the [coronavirus](#) passports on Monday.

© 2021 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Europe ramps up vaccinations as virus haunts Easter holidays (2021, April 4) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-04-europe-ramps-vaccinations-virus-easter.html>



This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.