

# Dutch take 'big step' towards ending COVID curbs

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The Netherlands on Friday announced further easing of a raft of measures to combat coronavirus, including an end to mask-wearing in most places.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte said the country was "taking a big step" towards a life without restrictions, from June 26.

"Almost everything is possible at a distance of 1.5 metres," he added.

The government would decide in mid-August if protective measures such as social distancing could be dropped.

"We are heading for a beautiful summer," Rutte predicted.

Masks will no longer be compulsory so long as [social distancing](#) can be applied, which the government says is not possible on [public transport](#) and in [secondary schools](#).

Discotheques can reopen to clients who show negative tests.

A partial lockdown ended on June 5 when restaurants were allowed to serve customers indoors again.

And from next Friday, the hospitality industry will be able to put up big screens to show Euro 2020 football matches indoors or out, provided clients keep at least 1.5 metres (about 5 feet) apart.

"I hope the Netherlands will make the final," Rutte said.

The nation of 17 million has recorded more than 1.5 million coronavirus cases and in excess of 17,700 deaths during the pandemic.

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