

Estonia tightens virus certificate criteria as cases rise

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People in Estonia no longer can use negative test results to obtain the coronavirus certificates needed to attend sporting events, movie showings, indoor public meetings and other events.

As of Monday, only proof of vaccination or having recovered from COVID-19 are accepted as the basis for obtaining a certificate. Authorities said the rule, along with another requiring masks in indoor public places, will remain in place until Jan. 10.

It wasn't immediately clear why the government disqualified negative test results from the certificate process, although concerns about the reliability of some tests could be a factor.

Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas said that among the people who have died of COVID-19 in the Baltic nation, there are five times more unvaccinated people than people who have been vaccinated. Kallas did not give the timeframe for the statistic.

Estonia on Monday reported 1,787 new daily cases, a number equivalent to its March pandemic peak.

On Sunday, the country's 14-day coronavirus infection rate stood at 1,311.3 per 100,000 inhabitants, one of the highest in Europe, Estonian broadcaster ERR said.

The two other Baltic countries also are seeing worsening coronavirus situations.

Last week, Latvia entered a nearly monthlong lockdown that includes a nightly curfew and the closing of all shops except for those selling essential goods. The country has one of the European Union's lowest vaccination rates.

Latvia recorded 887 new cases and 21 deaths in 24 hours, the Baltic News Service said Monday, quoting official statistics.

Lithuania, the southernmost Baltic country, recorded 1,810 new daily

cases and 25 deaths, according to the news service. The 14-day infection rate rose to 1,314.4 per 100,000 people.

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