

Russia mulls non-working week after record COVID deaths

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Russia's government on Tuesday proposed introducing a single non-working week to battle surging coronavirus cases as the country registered a new record number of daily deaths.

The surge has come without any strict restrictions to limit COVID-19's

spread, although several regions have re-introduced QR codes for access to [public places](#).

A new high of 1,015 coronavirus deaths was recorded over 24 hours, officials said Tuesday, bringing the country's official total to 225,325—the highest in Europe.

Officials have been accused of downplaying the severity of the pandemic, and figures published by statistics agency Rosstat in October showed more than 400,000 people had died in Russia as a result of coronavirus.

At a meeting on Tuesday, Deputy Prime Minister Tatiana Golikova called for the introduction of a non-working week starting from October 30 to curb the spread of the virus.

She proposed that the hardest-hit regions introduce such a measure from this Saturday.

"The solutions we are proposing are very difficult," Golikova told Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

"But we ask you to support these proposals and appeal to the head of state."

Golikova is due to submit her proposal to President Vladimir Putin for approval during a meeting on Wednesday.

Russia has struggled to inoculate its citizens despite domestic vaccines including Sputnik being widely available.

Only 35 percent of Russians are fully vaccinated, despite pleas from Putin.

The president insists that Russia has handled the pandemic better than most countries, but even top officials have recently voiced concern.

Pyotr Tolstoy, deputy chairman of the lower house, said at the weekend that authorities had "completely lost" an information campaign on coronavirus.

"There is no trust in people to go and vaccinate themselves, it is a fact," he said.

Putin's spokesman on Tuesday urged Russians to be "more responsible" and admitted that the government could have done more to explain the "lack of alternative to vaccines".

"There is a tradition to blame everything on the state," Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"But at the same time, we need a more responsible position from citizens of our country."

Western vaccines are not available in Russia, and Peskov insisted that bringing them into the country would not help the sluggish vaccination rates.

"The vaccinophobia of some citizens is not linked to the brand of vaccines," he said.

Independent polls show that more than half of Russians do not plan to get a shot.

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