

Belgium PM says COVID resurgence worse than feared

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Belgium's Prime Minister Alexander De Croo Thursday said his country had recorded an uptick in coronavirus cases and hospitalisations far worse than feared, after reimposing tougher COVID rules last week.

The surge exceeded "the most pessimistic curves" drawn last week by experts, he said in a statement.

"The latest data gathered show that the... situation has considerably deteriorated," he added, ahead of an urgent meeting Friday to discuss imposing further measures.

Like several other European countries, Belgium is experiencing a stark surge in new coronavirus infections as winter sets in—despite a relatively successful vaccination campaign.

Last week, De Croo's government announced the reimposition of tougher COVID rules, including mandatory home working for some and compulsory mask-wearing.

Not all have welcomed the new restrictions.

Violence broke out Sunday during a 35,000-strong Brussels street protest against the measures.

Some of the protesters were opposed to vaccines, others to compulsory health measures they saw as infringements of personal liberty.

De Croo and four of his ministers went into quarantine on Monday after French Prime Minister Jean Castex tested positive for COVID-19, a government statement said.

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