Daily COVID-19 infections jump in Czech Republic, Slovakia

November 10 2021, by Karel Janicek

A mother tests her daughter with a Corona antigen self-test before starting school in Trencianske Stankovce, Slovakia, Oct. 4, 2021. New coronavirus cases soared to a new record high, with some hospitals flooded by growing numbers of COVID-19 patients unable to admit any more. The Health Ministry reported that the daily increase of new infections hit 7,055 on Tuesday, Nov. 9 surpassing the previous record of 6,805 set on the previous Thursday. Credit: Radoslav Stoklasa/TASR via AP, file

Coronavirus cases soared to a new record high in Slovakia on Wednesday, with some hospitals having to move COVID-19 patients elsewhere in the country because they couldn't take any more.

In neighboring Czech Republic, new infections jumped to levels close to record numbers seen during previous waves, authorities said.

The Slovak Health Ministry reported that the daily increase of new infections hit 7,055 on Tuesday, surpassing the previous record of 6,805 set last Thursday.

The number of people needing hospital treatment rose to a total of 2,478, with 370 admitted this week, the ministry said.

About 80% of the hospitalized have not been fully vaccinated.

Slovakia has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the EU. Only 2.4 million people out of a population of nearly 5.5 million have been fully vaccinated.

Some hospitals in western and eastern Slovakia say they have had to transport patients to other clinics in the country because they were unable to treat more patients in serious condition.

"We're facing a catastrophic development in hospitals," President Zuzana Caputova said. The vaccinate rate needs to "significantly speed up," Caputova added.

The Slovak government approved Wednesday new restrictions that include a right for employers to check whether their employees have been vaccinated, recovered from COVID-19 or tested negative on the coronavirus.

Without presenting such documents, employees would not be allowed entry into their workplace.

In this May 10, 2021 file photo, woman lights a candle to commemorate victims of the COVD-19 pandemic at the Prague Castle in Prague, Czech Republic. Coronavirus infections in the Czech Republic have significantly jumped to the levels close to record numbers recorded at previous waves. The Health Ministry says the daily tally of new cases reached 14,539 on Tuesday, Nov. 9 about 4,500 more than a week ago and the highest number since March 12. Credit: AP Photo/Petr David Josek, file

The owners of bars and restaurant owners, as well organizers of public gatherings and events, will need to check the same for customers.

Fines for forging the documents and for insulting medical personnel will be increased to 1,000 euros ($1,155).

In the Czech Republic, the Health Ministry said the daily tally of new cases reached 14,539 on Tuesday, about 4,500 more than a week ago and the highest number since March 12.

The record daily high of 17,776 was registered on Jan 7.

The country's infection rate rose to 558 new cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days, more than double the figure recorded in neighboring Germany.

"The situation's not good," Prime Minister Andrej Babis said on Wednesday. "We again appeal to everyone to get vaccinated."

Almost 6.2 million people in the nation of 10.7 million have been fully vaccinated. That's below the average among the European Union nations.

The steep rise in new cases has been followed by a rise in patients needing hospitalization. A total of 3,295 patients with COVID-19 were treated in hospitals on Tuesday. That's almost double the figure since the beginning of November.

Authorities said all medical personnel in hospitals, nursing and pensioner homes will have to get tested on a weekly basis if they're not vaccinated. All foreigners living legally in the country will be offered vaccination free of charge, Health Minister Adam Vojtech said.

Babis said more measures will be approved by his Cabinet on Friday, but didn't give details. However, he ruled out a strict lockdown.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia have both been among EU nations

hardest hit by the pandemic.

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