

Slovakia introduces restrictions for unvaccinated

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Slovakia on Monday introduced restrictions for people unvaccinated against COVID-19, the health ministry said, as the central European country battles one of the world's highest coronavirus infection rates.

Unvaccinated people are not allowed to enter stores other than those

considered essential, such as grocery stores, drugstores or pharmacies—even with a negative coronavirus test.

"We have resorted to a vigorous lockdown of the unvaccinated, because we need to protect them," Prime Minister Eduard Heger said earlier on public broadcaster RTVS.

Heger also said that he would propose to the government mandatory vaccination for senior citizens.

Slovakia has the world's fourth-highest infection rate at 917 new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 inhabitants over the last seven days, according to an AFP calculation, after Slovenia, Austria and the neighbouring Czech Republic.

"The high rate is due to many factors, the most important of which is that we have very few people vaccinated, " Doctors Trade Union Association chairman Peter Visolajsky told AFP on Monday.

"The adopted restrictions are still very weak, and they are not as effective as in the case of the previous variant of the coronavirus," Visolajsky said.

The expert said that better enforcement of the existing restrictions and "a more intensive vaccination could reduce the number of infections".

"Compulsory vaccination would be an important step in Slovakia but it must be medically justified," he added.

The EU country of 5.4 million has one of the European Union's lowest vaccination rates.

Only 45.7 percent of the population is fully vaccinated in Slovakia.

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