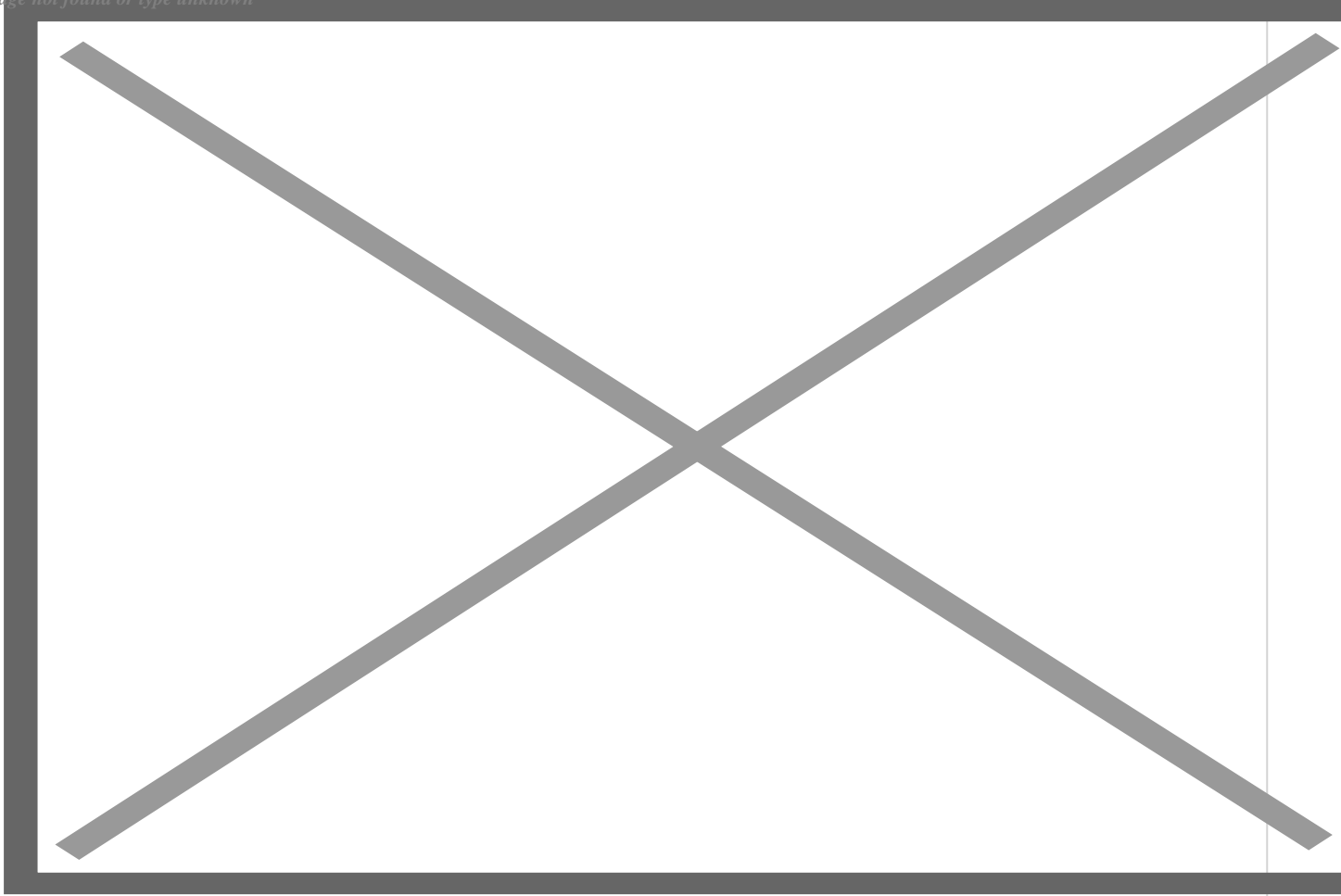


WHO sounds alarm over looming COVID-19 catastrophe in Europe

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Europe is back at the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic (Photo> London, UK)

Geneva, November 5 (RHC)-- Europe is back at the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic and could see another half a million COVID-19 deaths by February, the World Health Organization's top official in the region, has said.

"The current pace of transmission across the 53 countries of the European region is of grave concern," Hans Kluge, head of its regional office for Europe, told a press conference on Thursday.

Hospitalizations of COVID-19 patients have more than doubled in the space of just a week, according to WHO data, he said. With cases nearing record levels due to the more contagious Delta variant, Europe is back at the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic, where it was a year ago, Kluge admitted. “The difference is we know more and we can do more,” he said.

However, despite the experience the medics garnered tackling the virus, reliable forecasts suggest the continent could see “another half a million COVID-19 deaths” by February 1, the official warned.

In its weekly report on Wednesday, the UN health agency said coronavirus cases have been on the rise in Europe for five weeks in a row. The continent has had the worst coronavirus infection rate in the world, with around 192 new cases per 100,000 people, followed by the Americas, which have had 72 new cases per 100,000.

The sharp rise in numbers of those sick has been mainly driven by the UK, Russia, Turkey and Romania, the report said.

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