

France, Poland and Ukraine impose new lockdown measures

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Paris, March 21 (RHC)-- Poland, France and Ukraine have introduced partial lockdowns as they battle surging coronavirus infections. Residents in Poland, parts of France, including Paris and the Ukrainian capital Kiev faced new restrictions on Saturday, with most shops shut and people urged to work from home.

The imposition of new curbs comes as the pace of the European Union's vaccination rollout remains sluggish and several member states face a third wave of the virus.

In France, the government introduced new measures after a jump in COVID-19 cases in Paris and other parts of northern France. Under the new measures, non-essential businesses in Paris are closed, while schools remain open and outdoor exercise is allowed up to 10 kilometres (six miles) from home.

As in previous lockdowns, a form will be needed to justify why a person has left home in areas under the new restrictions. President Emmanuel Macron insisted on Friday that the word "lockdown", was not

appropriate to describe the government's strategy.

"What we want is to put a brake on the virus without shutting ourselves in. This is not being locked down," he said at a meeting at the Elysee Palace. "Strictly speaking, the term lockdown is not right," he added.

The government argues the measures are needed to relieve pressure on intensive care units which are close to overflowing. "And in Paris doctors say that the intensive care units are nearly saturated, in fact, some hospitals in the city had to fly their patients out of the city to hospitals in different regions of France," Butler said.

Meanwhile, in Germany, cases are rising at a "very clearly exponential rate", a top public health institute said on Friday, with many expecting new curbs on work and social life to be introduced in the coming days.

The Robert Koch Institute reported 17,482 new infections in the previous 24 hours and 226 deaths in Germany, with the seven-day incidence rate soaring to 96 per 100,000 people despite a months-long shutdown of large swathes of public life.

German leaders agreed earlier this month to impose new restrictions in regions where the seven-day incidence rate surpassed 100. "We are in the third wave of the pandemic, the numbers are rising, the percentage of virus mutations is high," Health Minister Jens Spahn told a news conference.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Friday that Germany must not hesitate to introduce emergency measures and return to a hard lockdown if necessary.

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