

A European roadmap to lifting coronavirus containment measures

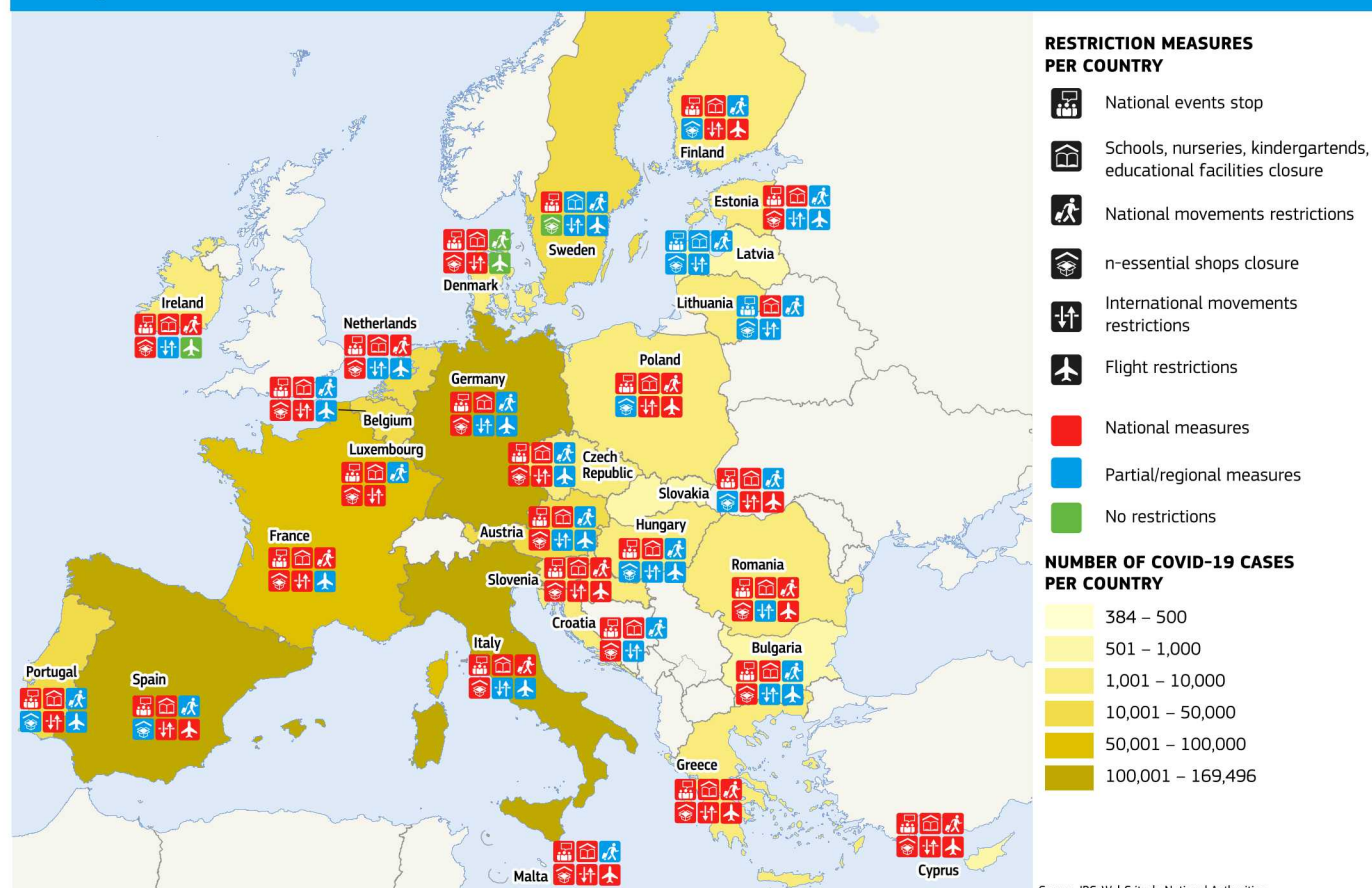
#Coronavirus #StrongerTogether

The coronavirus pandemic has claimed thousands of lives and put health systems under enormous strain. The Commission's immediate priority is fighting the virus and mitigating the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. At the same time, we must start looking ahead so that Member States can gradually lift their containment measures, with a view to entering the recovery phase and revitalising our societies and economy.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to a gradual, science-based and effective lifting of containment measures, a highly coordinated way forward is a matter of common European interest.

Responding to the [call of the European Council](#) of 26 March, the Commission, in cooperation with the President of the European Council, has put forward a [European roadmap](#) towards lifting coronavirus containment measures. It takes into account the expertise of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the Commission's Advisory Panel on the Coronavirus, experience of Member States and guidance from the World Health Organization. Evidently, any such reflection is based on the scientific knowledge available today, and should be revised as further evidence appears.

JRC Map 13 April at 16.00 UTC European Union | COVID-19 restriction measures



1 Timing is essential

A gradual rollback of confinement measures will unavoidably lead to an increase in new cases of infection with the coronavirus. Constant monitoring and a readiness to adjust and reintroduce new measures is required. Clear and timely communication and transparency with citizens is essential in this respect. **Three main sets of criteria** should be considered when assessing whether the time has come roll back the measures:

- **Epidemiological criteria** indicating a sustained reduction and stabilisation in the number of hospitalisations and/or new cases for a sustained period of time.
- **Sufficient health system capacity**, for example in terms of an adequate number of hospital beds, pharmaceutical products and stocks of equipment.
- **Appropriate monitoring capacity**, including large-scale testing capacity to quickly detect and isolate infected individuals, as well as tracking and tracing capacity.

2 A European approach based on common principles

Even though the situation differs drastically between Member States, it is essential to operate under a common approach. **Three principles** should guide the EU and its Member States when gradually lifting restrictive measures:

- Action should **be based on science** and have public health at its centre, while balancing social and economic remedies.
- Action should **be coordinated between the Member States** to avoid negative effects for all Member States and political friction.
- **Respect and solidarity between Member States** remain essential to better coordinate, communicate and to mitigate the health and socio-economic impacts.

3 Accompanying measures to phase-out confinement

Successfully lifting confinement measures requires a policy-mix of accompanying measures that are relevant for all Member States. The EU is taking steps to support all of them.

- **Gather data and develop a robust system or reporting.** Harmonised gathering and sharing of data at national and subnational level by public health authorities is essential to better manage the lifting of measures.
- **Create a framework for contact tracing and warning** with the use of mobile apps, which respect data privacy.
- **Testing capacities must be expanded and harmonised.** Fast and reliable testing is key to swift diagnoses and to measure the population's acquired immunity. The Commission has presented [Guidelines](#) on coronavirus tests.
- **The capacity and resilience of health care systems should be increased.** Particularly, to address the predicted rise in infections after rolling back the containment measures. The EU budget has been mobilised to help.
- **The availability of medical and personal protective equipment should be increased.** The Commission supports Member States by stockpiling and distributing supplies and equipment via **rescEU** and via **Joint Procurement**.
- **Develop and fast-track the introduction of vaccines, treatments and medicines.** The development of a **safe and effective vaccine** would be game-changing and essential in putting an end to the coronavirus outbreak.



4 Next steps

The following recommendations should guide Member States' reflections on gradually lifting containment measures:

- **Action will be gradual.** Measures will be lifted step by step and sufficient time should pass between the steps (e.g. one month), as their effect can only be measured over time.
- **General measures should progressively become targeted.** This would allow gradually going back to normality, while continuing to protect the EU population from the virus. For example:
 1. The **most vulnerable groups** should be protected for a longer time.
 2. **Diagnosed people should remain quarantined and treated adequately** to decrease transmission risks.
 3. **Safe, targeted alternatives** should replace existing general prohibitive measures.
 4. General **states of emergencies should gradually be replaced by more targeted interventions by governments.** This would ensure the democratic accountability of the measures taken and a wide acceptance by the populations.
- **The lifting of measures should start with those with a local impact and gradually extended to measures with a broader geographic coverage, taking into account national specificities.** This would allow for effective and tailored actions and the potentially swift redeployment of measures in case new infections occur.
- **A phased approach to opening internal and external borders** to allow for the flow of essential workers and goods.
 1. **Internal border controls should be lifted in a coordinated manner.** Travel restrictions should first be eased between identified low-risk areas. Neighbouring Member States should stay in close contact to facilitate this.
 2. **In a second phase, external borders would reopen access for non-EU residents,** taking into account the spread of the coronavirus outside the EU. Restrictions to non-essential travel to the EU must be continuously reviewed.
- **Economic activity should be phased in** to ensure that authorities and businesses can adequately adjust to increasing activities in a safe way. The whole population should not return to the workplace at the same time and social distancing should continue to apply. Teleworking should be encouraged. At the work place, occupational health and safety rules should be observed.
- **Gatherings of people should progressively be permitted.** When reflecting on the most appropriate sequencing, Member States should focus on the specificities of different categories of activity, such as:
 1. **Schools and universities;**
 2. **Commercial activity** (retail) with possible gradation;
 3. **Social activities** (restaurants, cafés, sport centres) with possible gradation;
 4. **Mass gatherings.**
- **Efforts to prevent the spread of the virus should be sustained** with awareness campaigns to encourage the population to keep up the strong hygiene practices and social distancing.
- **Measures should be continuously monitored** and a certain readiness should be developed, as there is a risk of a strong resurgence and a return to strict containment measures. This is particularly important for health care systems.

The recovery phase – revitalising an economy that works for people

While confinement measures are gradually lifted, there is a need to **strategically plan the recovery**, revitalising the economy and getting back on a path of sustainable growth. This includes enabling the twin transition towards a greener and digital society, and drawing all lessons from the current crisis for the EU's preparedness and resilience. **The Commission will develop a recovery plan, based on a revamped proposal for the next long-term EU budget (Multiannual Financial Framework) and including an updated Commission Work Programme for 2020.**