



MINISTÉRIO DOS NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS
Direção-Geral dos Assuntos Europeus

03.07.20

PORTUGAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

- The initial wave of transmission has passed its peak and Portugal demonstrated a good control of the evolution of the COVID-19 outbreak since its beginning. Timely and balanced public health measures have been taken, namely through the imposition of strong confinement rules.
- So far, according to the national data, the incidence rate in Portugal in the past 7 days (25 June to 1 July) is 23.0 cases per 100.000 inhabitants.
- The latest figures (from 25 June to 1 July) for each region of Portugal:
 - North: 5.1 cases per 100.000 inhabitants
 - Centre: 3.9 cases per 100.000 inhabitants
 - Lisbon and the Tagus Valley: 42.7 cases per 100.000 inhabitants
 - Alentejo: 10.5 cases per 100.000 inhabitants
 - Algarve: 14.7 cases per 100.000 inhabitants
 - Azores: 1.2 cases per 100.000 inhabitants
 - Madeira: 0.0 cases per 100.000 inhabitants
- The numbers of the Lisbon and the Tagus Valley region are a result of massive tracing/testing operations that were conducted in very specific contexts, revealing infection trends in small hotspots connected to specific industry sectors, such as construction sites.
- Portugal is now on phase 3 of deconfinement. Like most other European countries, we have been gradually lifting restrictive measures, based on a strict scientific assessment. Industry, which was never obliged to close its activity, is now back to full production, most of commerce has already reopened and all public transports are fully functioning, while the use of protection masks indoors, respect for social distancing, respect for limited capacity and earlier closing times, and a restriction of public gatherings of more than 20 people remain in force.
- Following a sound principle of prudence, the Portuguese Government has decided to apply a specific set of rules in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, which comprises 18 municipalities (out of a total of 308 in Portugal). In this area, all public gatherings are limited to 10 people and all retail and service establishments must close at 8pm, except for restaurants, gas stations, supermarkets, medical clinics, pharmacies, funeral homes and gyms.

Furthermore, in order to control some infection trends identified in specific hotspots, a group of only 19 parishes within the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (out of a total of 118 in this area and 3.092 in the whole country), all but one of them outside the Lisbon Municipality, were put under a general civic duty of confinement, with movement allowed only for work and shopping, prohibition of outdoor markets and public gatherings limited to a maximum of 5 people.

- Portugal is conducting a very high number of tests. It should be noted that, according to the most recent data (from March 1 until June 30), Portugal has so far carried out 118.236 tests per million population, which is the 5th highest number of COVID-19 tests per one million population in the EU.
- As the ECDC clearly put it on June 19th: ***the incidence rate is not a sufficient metric, because it depends on the testing strategy and volume.*** In addition, the ECDC declared that the definition of such a rate would be “arbitrary”; to use a simplistic formula with only the incident rates would lead to a result that is not scientifically sound nor politically credible.
- Testing capacity is key. The number of positive tests vs the tests performed per 100.000 inhabitants is crucial. Also relevant are the numbers of hospitalized people, people in ICUs and fatality rate; this requires data which may not be easy to get, but if Johns Hopkins University or Worldometers have them, one would expect the countries of the European Union to get them, as credible as possible. And if some countries do not share credible data on testing, that speaks volumes in itself.
- Besides having the 5th highest testing rate in the EU, Portugal applies prudent criteria when it comes to the overall number of recovered patients, in the sense that a negative test, and in some cases a double negative test, is mandatory for a patient to be considered cured of COVID-19. This policy obviously impacts in the number of active cases, certainly higher if recovery has to be confirmed by a test.
- However, even following this cautious approach, 65,7% of the patients that tested positive for COVID-19 have already recovered.
- Most patients present mild symptoms, with no need for hospitalisation, and are recovering at home. Only 3,9% of the current active cases are admitted into hospital and only 0,6% are in ICU.
- Globally, this lack of severity of the symptoms is also expressed by the low fatality

rate – the number of victims of COVID-19 *per capita* in Portugal remains considerably lower than in other countries in Europe, with 154 deaths per million and a lethality rate of 3,7%, and it has consistently declining in the last days.

- Only 3 EU countries have a lower lethality rate and, simultaneously, a higher number of tests per million people (worldometers.com).
- This means that the National Health Service in Portugal is well prepared. Furthermore, in order to strengthen its national response capacity to the pandemic throughout the territory, Portugal doubled the number of Intensive Care Units, which are well equipped, including with ventilators, and with well-trained health professionals.
- We consider that any decision regarding the imposition of travel restrictions among EU Member States should be taken according to the broadest possible picture of each country's situation. Like in many other cases, good data is essential to take good, fair and science-based balanced decisions.
- The reestablishment of free movement within Schengen should have preceded lifting restrictions on non-essential travel from third countries to the EU; now that the latter have been lifted for some third countries citizens since the 1st of July, there is a reinforced argument to lift all restrictions on non-essential travel among EU Member States.

Health and safety measures targeting the tourism industry

- No quarantine is required for tourists arriving in Portugal, except in Madeira for travellers without a negative test in the previous 72 hours. In the Azores travellers need to present a negative test done in the last 72 hours or, if they have not done so, be tested on arrival, being obliged to stay at their place of accommodation until the test result is known.
- All European citizens, through the European health card, have access to the National Health System. In case of illness or accident while visiting Portugal, nationals from the 27 European Union countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland are entitled to free or reduced-cost healthcare (the same benefits as Portuguese citizens). Tourists planning to come to Portugal will also have the possibility to join Portugal Health Passport (through the Portugal Health Passport website) which guarantees access, at previously fixed prices, to high quality urgent health care in a large network of private hospitals and clinics, with the potential right to medical repatriation.

- On Portuguese territory, travellers who show symptoms suggestive of respiratory disease during or after travel should immediately contact the National Health Service by calling 808 24 24 24 (SNS24). Foreign citizens can be tested free of charge for COVID-19 at hospitals and laboratories provided they have a prescription issued by a national health service doctor.
- The beach season opened officially on June 6, with a set of rules that were put in place regarding social distancing (1.5m between beachgoers who are part of the same group; 3m between parasols; ban on sporting activities with 2 or more participating individuals) and establishing the maximum capacity of each guarded beach. Beach occupation information is updated continuously, in real time, in the digital app “Info Praia” and on the ‘website’ of the Portuguese Environment Agency (www.apambiente.pt). At each beach, there will be signs similar to traffic lights to display the status of beach occupancy: green – low occupancy; yellow – high occupancy; red – full occupancy. Other rules and safety protocols designed to help everyone enjoying a safe day at the beach are: i) at least four daily cleanings must be carried out in beach restaurants, bars and outdoor terraces; ii) these businesses will have a capacity limitation of 50% of their total occupancy (same rule applies to restaurants in general); iii) possible reorganization of the terraces to ensure safety distance; iv) circulation corridors, parallel or perpendicular to the coastline can be defined; v) the use of pedal boats, slides or indoor showers is prohibited; vi) outdoor showers, sunbeds, mattresses or beach ashtrays must be cleaned daily or whenever the user changes.
- Tourism represents around 15% of our GDP and a considerable share of our work force, so Portugal is fully committed to reassuring our tourists that they will always have the best experience in our country. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have taken extraordinary measures to ensure that the highest standards of hygiene and safety are observed throughout our tourism industry. This includes, among other measures, training for all employees, as well as reduced maximum capacity for restaurants, shops and public transportation. All information related to COVID 19 for travellers to Portugal, can be seen at www.visitportugal.com.
- To ensure that these standards are widely employed, we have launched the “Clean and Safe” seal, awarded to accommodation and tourism related activities that ensure full compliance with the Health Authorities requirements, thus reinforcing the confidence of tourists in the destination. Accommodations, Tour Operators and Travel Agencies that have achieved the “Clean and Safe” commit

to provide training for all employees, including on hand disinfection, breath etiquette and social behaviour. They should ensure that the social distancing and occupancy rules apply throughout their premises and activities and that there is readily available COVID-19 information for guests and costumers. Accommodation businesses must also ensure that there will always be an employee responsible for following the necessary procedures in the event of a suspected case. In accordance with the DG for Health's recommendations, the isolation area will always be decontaminated after a positive or a suspected case of infection. Employees' temperature will be measure and recorded twice a day. Turismo de Portugal, in coordination with the competent entities, will carry out audits of establishments that join this "Clean and Safe" initiative. All establishments awarded with the Clean & Safe seal are listed in the www.portugalcleanandsafe.com platform. In recognition of our work, Portugal was the first European country to receive the "Safe Travels Stamp" issued by the World Travel & Tourism Council.