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Onderwerp: Belgian health minister: No further lockdown lifting in early August

Belgian health minister: No further lockdown lifting in early August

-- By Carmen Paun
 7/21/20, 10:24 PM CET | [View in your browser](#)

Belgium's next phase of lockdown relaxation will not start as foreseen on August 1 given the current state of the coronavirus pandemic, the country's federal health minister said tonight, according to national media reports.

"The situation is still serious," Maggie De Block said at the end of a meeting among federal and regional authorities today, [L'Echo reported](#).

The formal decision not to move to the next relaxation phase is expected to be adopted on Thursday, when the country's national security committee meets.

So-called Phase 5 included allowing a higher number of people to take part in events held indoor and outdoors. Currently, civil marriage ceremonies, religious gatherings and funerals for up to 200 attendees are allowed, while the limit for participation at private indoor receptions is 50 people. Outdoor events for up to 400 people are also permitted.

The authorities were considering doubling these numbers as of August 1, but the increase in the number of infections in recent weeks has derailed the plans. Belgium [recorded an increase of 79 percent](#) in the number of reported coronavirus cases in the week between July 11 and 17, compared to the previous week.

As a consequence, wearing a face masks in all public spaces may be made mandatory as of Thursday, De Block said. As of earlier this month, masks are [mandatory in many indoor public spaces](#), such as shops, cinemas, theaters, concert venues, places of worship, museums and libraries.

Local measures could also be decided for places that have experienced outbreaks, according to De Block.

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