Germany tightens COVID-19 restrictions as numbers surge in Europe

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Police controls IDs and guest lists due to restrictions against the spread of the COVID-19.

Berlin, October 10 (RHC)-- Authorities in Germany have rolled out new restrictions to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus in the capital, Berlin, and Frankfurt, as the number of cases surges in the country and other parts of Europe.

Bars and restaurants are to close at 11:00pm local time (21:00 GMT) in Berlin until October 31 in a partial curfew, a measure already imposed – but starting an hour earlier – in Frankfurt.

The shutdown in the German capital -- with more than 400 new cases daily -- also covers all shops except pharmacies and petrol stations, although they will be banned from selling alcohol. "This is not the time to party," Berlin's Mayor Michael Muller said on Saturday. "We can and we want to prevent another more severe confinement."

Germany, Europe's largest economy, has won wide plaudits for slowing the spread of the coronavirus when it first broke out but is grappling with what to do now as cases seem to be picking up again.

Many business owners have criticised the new restrictions, fearing the curfew will severely damage the economy.

Chancellor Angela Merkel had already warned on Friday that high-infection areas would be given 10 days to bring down cases or face tougher action, calling big cities the "arena" to keep the pandemic under control.

"These are the days and weeks that will determine in what shape Germany will get through winter in this pandemic," Merkel told reporters. "Summer went very well overall, but we now see a picture that is cause for concern."

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Germany increased by 4,721 to 319,381 on Saturday, according to data from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for infectious diseases.

In neighbouring Poland, meanwhile, the authorities told people to wear face masks in all public spaces after coronavirus cases hit a new record daily high of 4,280.

To the south, the Czech Republic faced the prospect of a new lockdown as the growth in COVID-19 cases set a fourth straight daily record. The number of 8,618 was the fastest spike in Europe.

And in Spain, authorities declared a state of emergency for the capital, Madrid, amid increasing tensions between local and national authorities over virus containment measures.

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