

French PM reveals detailed plan to end lockdown in France ^[1]

French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe on Tuesday presented to parliament the government's detailed plan for gradually easing France's strict lockdown. Here's what he had to say on everything from when shops will reopen to a limit on social gatherings.

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Main points on what changes on May 11th:

- No permission slip needed - as long as you are less than 100km from home
- France to carry out 700,000 tests a week after May 11th
- Those who test positive must be isolated for 14 days either at home or in special accommodation
- Masks will be made compulsory in some sectors, for example on the metro and in secondary schools
- Everyone working from home should continue to do so
- **Crèches to reopen, but with max 10 children in each group**
- Maximum 15 pupils in each school class
- Shops to reopen
- Bars, restaurants, cinemas and beaches remain closed
- Public gatherings of up to 10 people allowed
- No religious ceremonies before June
- BUT, rules may vary between départements
- French football, rugby seasons cannot resume till September

The French PM presented to parliament the government's long-awaited plan for how the nationwide lockdown will begin to be eased on May 11th.

"This is how we will tell the French that life will resume", said Philippe.

The PM said the government would provide a lot of leeway to regional authorities to adapt the measures, in order to ensure that the final decisions would be tailored to local needs.

"We have never in our history known this kind of situation," Philippe said as he presented a plan, which was to be debated and voted on in the French parliament.

Philippe's address was followed by a debate and a vote, with just 75 of the 577 lawmakers allowed into the National Assembly in line with social distancing measures.

The rest will vote by proxy.

The government's lockdown had been key in limiting the epidemic curve avoiding the country's hospitals becoming unable to cope with the number of patients, the PM said.

"If, as we approach May 11th, the number of daily new cases is not what we predicted, we will pay the consequences (.. and) we won't begin to end the lockdown," he said.

"We all want to avoid having to, after confining and the unwinding the lockdown, having to re-confine."

The PM outlined a "phase one" from May 11th to June 2nd, when the necessary steps for the "next phase" ("until summer") would be determined.

The entire speech is available here.

'Learn to live with the virus'

After May 11th the French public are going to have to learn to live with the virus, the PM warned.

"As long as we don't have a vaccine, or reached collective immunity, the virus will continue to circulate among us," the PM said, outlining that this was the "first axis" of the government's strategy: "protecting, testing, isolating."

"We therefore need to learn to live with the virus," he said.

The second axis was that the easing of the current lockdown would be "progressive." The government aimed to gradually relieve restrictions in order to continue to protect the country's hospitals.

"Red" and "green" areas

The third key point of the government's strategy was "geography", said Philippe, meaning that mayors and local authorities around France would be allowed to adapt the government's plan depending on the spread of the virus in their area.

Some départements would have to introduce stricter rules than others, the PM said.

Indicators to determine "which départements would need a stricter easing of the lockdown (..) will be fixed on May 7th."

On May 11th, some areas would be categorised as "red" and others as "green" depending on local testing capacities, hospital capacity and the total number of new cases over the past seven days.

Full details on that system here.

'Protect, test, isolate'

Philippe spelled out the risk that a second wave of infections could mean a second spell of confinement.

"The risk that a second wave, which will result in a second period of confinement is a serious risk, that must be taken seriously."

The plan would need to concentrate on "protect, test, isolate."

Masks

"We will have enough masks for everyone starting May 11th," the PM said.

He acknowledged that "the question of mask had been a source of anger among many," explaining that France - "like all other European countries" - had faced the challenge of stock shortages.

"The government therefore decided to set aside national stocks of masks for the country's health workers," he said.

France has massively increased the country's national production, Philippe said.

"We are receiving nearly 100 million surgical masks per week," he said.

The government would "support regional collectivities in buying masks by covering 50 percent of the price," Philippe said.

Starting May 11th, masks would be required as facial protection in several everyday life scenarios (outlined below).

Tests

"At the end of the lockdown (May 11th) we will be able to carry out 700,000 virology tests per week," Philippe said.

The cost of the tests would be covered "100 percent by social security," the PM said.

All "contact points" with a contaminated person would also be identified and tested, Philippe said. That means everyone having been in touch with a COVID-19 positive person would need to take a test too and would be isolated if they tested positive.

Isolating those with the virus

Philippe said those who test positive for the virus would have to isolate themselves for 14 days, either on their own in special accommodation such as hotels or at home. If people chose to isolate with their family then the whole household will have to stay in self-isolation, the PM said.

"The main objective of isolation is to allow us to identify those carrying the virus. It's not a punishment, it's putting them in a safe place," he said.

Philippe said the policy relied on "individual responsibility and each person's conscience".

Shops and markets

Shops and stores will be allowed to reopen from May 11th as long as they have protective measures in place to ensure social distancing and "hygiene barriers."

Shop owners can, starting May 11th, require customers to wear masks.

All open air markets can reopen starting May 11th, providing that they maintain current security measures and have customers respecting social distancing of metre between each person.

Hair dressers and beauty salons can also reopen on May 11th.

Big museums, cinemas and theatres to remain closed

The country's cinemas, theatres and large museums will not reopen on May 11th but libraries and small museums will be allowed to.

Public transport

Starting May 11th, masks will be mandatory on all public transport. People travelling by tram, metro, RER or train would need to wear a protective facial mask, the PM said.

Public transport capacity in Paris would be increased to 70 percent of normal service by May 11th and social distancing will be required "also in the Metro."

Philippe said rush hours would be "reserved for workers" who needed to get to their workplace.

Working from home

Philippe said working from home would be needed to be maintained in the professions where this was possible - at least in the coming three weeks.

Restaurants, bars and cafés

The government will set a date for when the restaurants, bars and cafés could reopen at the end of May. They would not, however, open before June 2nd.

Social gatherings limited to 10

Any kind of social gathering whether in public or private will be limited to 10 people.

Physical exercise

All individual physical exercise will be allowed starting May 11th (without permission slip).

Joggers and cyclists may move further away from their home than 1km again and no time limit will be set on running, walking or biking.

However, all collective sports and contact sports will continue to be banned.

Schools

The French government has already said French schools would begin to reopen starting May 11th.

Now, Philippe said crèches would also open starting May 11th, but with an upper limit of 10 children in every group. Staff will have to wear masks.

Collèges (secondary schools) would progressively reopen starting May 18th - "but only in the départements where the circulation of the virus is very low," the PM said. The classes 5ème (11 year olds) and 6ème (12 year olds) would return to school first.

No classes could exceed 15 pupils, the PM said.

The government would make a decision in early June on whether lycées (high schools) would be able to reopen.

Universities will remain closed until September.

Returning to school will however be voluntary, and the government has previously said that no parent will be forced to send their child back to school against their will.

As for masks in schools, Philippe said "masks will be forbidden in maternelle (nursery)" and "not recommended" in primary school due to health risks if the user did not wear the mask correctly.

Wearing masks in secondary schools (*collèges*) would however be compulsory, the PM said. Secondary school children who had "not managed to procure a mask" would be provided with masks by the government.

Religious ceremonies

The PM said religious communities would not be able to organise ceremonies "before June 2nd."

Funerals would continue to be permitted albeit the maximum number of attendees would remain at 20 as is the case now.

Parks and gardens

Will reopen on May 11th, but only in the areas that are least affected by the virus.

Graveyards

The public would be able to visit the country's graveyards after May 11th.

Sport

French football, rugby seasons cannot resume till September.

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: health and safety ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 30 Apr 2020): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/04/french-pm-reveals-detailed-plan-end-lockdown-france>

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