
Bulgaria: Covid, record number of infections, deaths rise, hospitals collapse. New restrictive measures, but only 20% are fully vaccinated

(from Sofia) There have been 6,813 Covid-19 infections and 124 deaths in the last 24 hours in Bulgaria, while hospitals are on the verge of collapse. This is the assessment of the pandemic in the Balkan country where around 80% of the population is still unvaccinated, a key factor in the ongoing fourth wave: Bulgaria ranks last among European countries in terms of the number of vaccinated people. Schools have been closed since 21 October and classes are being held online with the prospect of reopening if students take Covid-19 tests twice a week. Since last week, the interim government has introduced the green pass, valid after vaccination, testing or recovery for all indoor spaces: restaurants, shopping centres, theatres. At the moment there are no restrictions on churches and no religious denomination has been consulted for similar proposals. "The situation in hospitals is critical," said Health Minister Stoicho Katsarov, calling on Bulgarians to observe the rules. Of the 700 beds in intensive care across the country, 608 are occupied; there have been 23,440 deaths since the start of the pandemic, another European record for the country in terms of mortality rate in relation to the total population. However, protests against green certification are taking place in Sofia, while some doctors claim that the introduction of the restrictions should have happened long before the escalation of the infections. The reason for the delay in vaccinations, according to Bulgarian newspapers, lies in the ongoing election campaign. The country is in the hands of a technical transitional government that will cease to function on 14 November, after the vote for a new parliament, the third election in 2021.

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