

COVID-19 Fact Sheet: Europe, the Caucasus, & Central Asia



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OVERVIEW AND OUTLOOK

While daily new cases and deaths in Europe have shown promising trends over the past few weeks, concerns have been raised over the spread of two mutant strains of SARS-CoV-2 originally identified in the United Kingdom and South Africa across the region. Vaccination programs have been launched in several countries with a number of governments administering first doses to healthcare staff and the elderly. While no significant or long-term disruptions to vaccination campaigns have been reported as of this writing, eight countries in Europe have experienced shipment delays of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. There have also been reports of potential degradation of some doses due to possible improper storage or transport. Europol has reiterated that criminals are likely to use COVID-19 vaccination campaigns to market counterfeit vaccines and North Macedonian authorities recently arrested seven individuals suspected of selling counterfeit COVID-19 tests. It is recommended to continue monitoring developments associated with the evolution of outbreak levels around the region and to take precautions to mitigate the risk of contracting or transmitting COVID-19.

EUROPE

The epidemiological situation in Europe has been improving over the past few weeks. Daily new infections had been falling since mid-November, followed by a spike at the beginning of December and a subsequent drop. Daily new deaths reached a plateau in December and have been falling over the past few days. On December 29, there were 187,234 infections and 5,109 deaths documented across the region. The mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 that was initially diagnosed in the United Kingdom has since spread across Europe with cases documented in countries such as France, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy, and Iceland. The mutant strain of the virus that was originally identified in South Africa has also been identified in several nations across the region, such as Switzerland, Finland, and the UK. On December 27, the European Union launched its vaccination campaign with several bloc members administering first doses of COVID-19 vaccines in the days since. Specific vaccination strategies vary by country, with several governments prioritizing vaccinating healthcare workers and/or the elderly.

Media reports have emerged indicating that eight European countries have experienced delays in shipments of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. Pfizer representatives have stated that the delays were caused by a logistical issue that has since been resolved. As of this writing, there has been no indication of any resultant significant or long-term disruptions to community immunization efforts across the region. Authorities in Germany have purportedly documented suspected issues with maintaining vaccine doses at the correct temperature during transit. While the full extent of damage incurred is not known at the time of this writing, the possibility of some procured doses losing viability due to improper storage and/or transport cannot be ruled out.

The head of Europol, Catherine de Bolle, has warned EU member states that criminal groups are likely to try to take advantage of COVID-19 vaccination campaigns to take orders and payment for doses but not deliver them, or to market counterfeit vaccines. Media reports have emerged suggesting that offers for fraudulent COVID-19 vaccines have already been identified on social media.

TOP 10 UPDATES

Both daily new cases and deaths in **Croatia** have dropped over the past few days with daily case incidence plummeting significantly. There were 316 infections recorded on December 28, representing a decrease of some 93 percent since December 11. There were 58 deaths documented on December 28. New restrictions have been imposed from December 21 whereby travel between counties is only permitted for work or medical reasons. The first wave of COVID-19 vaccinations was conducted in the country on December 27. Minister of Health Vili Beros has suggested that the second wave of inoculations is likely to occur before January 4, but there were no further details available at the time of this writing. As per the government vaccination plan, the first to receive vaccines are health workers exposed to COVID-19, workers in the social welfare system, and beneficiaries of retirement and nursing homes.

Over the past few weeks, daily case incidence in the **Czech Republic** has generally been rising with a dip over the past few days. There were 10,862 cases documented on December 29.

Hospitalizations have also been on the rise. Daily new deaths have been on an overall decline over the past few weeks but have stabilized somewhat in recent days with 150 deaths recorded on December 29. To curb the spread of COVID-19, the government has imposed additional restrictions effective from December 27 amid a move to the highest risk level, as per a statement from the health minister on December 23. These include extending the nightly curfew to begin at 9:00 PM until 5:00 AM local time and closing non-essential shops and services. Restrictive measures are expected to be in effect until January 10, with the government planning to meet in January to review restrictions. The first COVID-19 vaccinations were administered in the country on December 27 and the first doses are reportedly designated for hospitals in Prague and Brno.

The epidemiological situation in the **Republic of Ireland** has been deteriorating rapidly over the past few days amid soaring daily case incidence and hospitalizations. On December 28, there were 765 infections documented, representing an increase of approximately 234 percent since December 15. Hospitalizations have increased by some 75 percent between December 22 and December 29. Daily new deaths have held steady over the past few weeks with one death documented on December 28; however, a surge in this metric can be expected in the foreseeable future following increased daily case incidence. Level 5 restrictions are in place nationwide until January 12. As of December 27, inter-county travel is prohibited except for essential reasons such as work or medical appointments. Indoor gatherings are limited to one other household until January 1, after which household visits will be forbidden. A cabinet meeting to discuss the spread of COVID-19 is expected to take place on December 30. The first wave of COVID-19 vaccinations was administered on December 29, with media sources suggesting that hospitals in Dublin, Cork, and Galway are likely recipients of at least some of the doses.

The epidemiological situation in **Kosovo** has been improving with 109 cases and eight deaths documented on December 29. In response to promising trends, the government has relaxed some restrictive measures. In municipalities categorized as 'high risk' areas, the nightly curfew is now in effect between the hours of 8:00 PM and 5:00 AM local time. In 'medium' and 'low-risk' municipalities, establishments such as hotels, restaurants, bars, and shopping centers must close at 8:00 PM. The prohibition of public gatherings of more than four people remains in effect nationwide. Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti has stated that first doses of COVID-19 vaccines will be administered to individuals such as health staff and people with chronic illnesses. As of this writing, there has been no indication as to when the first doses are expected to arrive in the country.

In **Luxembourg**, both daily new infections and deaths have been on a general decline over the past few weeks, although daily new deaths have surged in recent days. On December 28, there were 534 cases and 16 deaths documented in the country. As of December 26, new restrictions are in effect whereby non-essential businesses are closed and the curfew has been shifted to 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM local time until January 10; restaurants and bars will remain closed until January 15. On December 28, the first doses of COVID-19 vaccines were administered to medical staff working with COVID-19 patients. The High Commissioner for National Protection, Luc Feller, has stated that he expects there to be enough vaccine doses to inoculate some 6,000 people by the end of January, as well as that additional doses may be delivered to hospitals in early January. The opening of several vaccination centers across the country is anticipated in the foreseeable future, with a center in Limpertsberg expected to open in mid-January.

Daily case incidence in **Slovakia** has been dropping over the past few days with 2,095 infections recorded on December 29. Daily new deaths, however, have surged since December 25 with 104 deaths documented on December 29. There are nationwide restrictions on movement in effect whereby movement is only permitted for reasons such as work, essential shopping, or medical appointments. While these restrictions are currently in effect until December 29, they are purportedly expected to be extended until mid-January; as of this writing, there has been no official indication of a formal extension. On December 26, the country rolled out its COVID-19 vaccination campaign with the first doses having gone to government officials and healthcare staff. The first wave of some 10,000 doses of the vaccine were distributed to four hospitals in Bratislava, Banska Bystrica, Kosice, and Nitra, from where they will be distributed to other healthcare facilities. A further 150,000 vaccine doses are expected to arrive in the country in January.

The epidemiological situation in **Slovenia** has been improving over the past few weeks with both daily new cases and deaths dropping. On December 27, there were 517 infections and 30 deaths documented. As of December 24, there is a nationwide curfew in effect between the hours of 9:00 PM and 6:00 AM local time and all non-essential shops are closed. These restrictions are expected to be in effect until January 4. As of December 15, public transport is available in the country. On December 26, some 10,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine were delivered to the National Institute of Public Health in Ljubljana. The first doses are reportedly designated for the elderly in care homes.

In **Sweden**, daily case incidence has been on the rise over the past few weeks, while daily new deaths have dropped significantly through December. On December 21, there were 6,609 cases and 19 deaths documented in the country. On December 26, the Swedish health agency announced that a case of the mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 that was initially identified in the United Kingdom has been diagnosed in the country. Authorities have noted that the individual has been in isolation and no further associated cases have been detected as of this writing. The Swedish government has proposed imposition of a “pandemic law” that would allow the government to close facilities such as shopping centers and public transport. The law has yet to be approved by parliament, but should it be ratified, government officials are reportedly hoping that it will go into effect on January 10. As of this writing, there has been no indication as to when the law may be presented to parliament.

The epidemiological situation in **Switzerland** has been improving with both daily new cases and deaths reaching a plateau over the past few days. On December 29, there were 4,197 infections and 131 deaths recorded. Three cases of the mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 originally identified in the UK have been diagnosed in Switzerland. On December 27, authorities announced that two cases of the mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 originally identified in South Africa have been documented in the country. While the epidemiological situation in the country has been improving, Health Minister Alain Berset stated on December 26 that easing COVID-19 restrictions “too far” several months ago resulted in a severe second wave of the pandemic. As such, the possibility that government officials will maintain current restrictive measures for the foreseeable future cannot be ruled out. The first batch of COVID-19 vaccines, comprising some 107,000 doses, has been delivered and distributed by the military. Media sources indicate that individual cantons will ensure vaccination of their residents with logistical support from the military. The first wave of vaccinations is designated for residents of nursing and care homes, as well as individuals with preexisting medical conditions.

In the **United Kingdom**, daily case incidence has been rising exponentially since the beginning of December. Daily new deaths have held relatively steady, with a small surge followed by a drop over the past few days. On December 28, there were 41,385 infections and 357 deaths recorded. The surge in daily case incidence has reportedly resulted in surging hospitalizations with some hospitals cancelling non-urgent procedures to liberate resources for COVID-19 patients. Two cases of the mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 originally identified in South Africa have reportedly been diagnosed in the UK. The vaccination program is underway with media sources suggesting that government officials plan to vaccinate some 2 million people over the next two weeks. On December 24, government officials stated that more than 600,000 people had thus far been vaccinated across the UK. Health officials have indicated that inadequate community immunization efforts could result in daily new cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in 2021 exceeding levels seen in 2020.

OTHER UPDATES AROUND THE REGION

In **Denmark**, daily case incidence has been surging rapidly since the beginning of December followed by a drop over the past few days. Daily new deaths, however, have been rising exponentially since mid-December. On December 28, there were 2,479 infections and 30 deaths documented. Danish authorities have identified 33 cases of the mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 originally identified in the UK. The State Serum Institute (SSI), Denmark's infectious disease authority, has stated that preliminary investigations into these cases indicate that the mutant strain is present in the country but at a "very low level." SSI officials have also stated that there is currently no indication that any of the infected individuals have traveled to England or elsewhere, suggesting that the possibility of spontaneous outbreaks of the mutant strain cannot be ruled out. Existing restrictive measures have been extended until January 17, including the closure of bars, cafés, restaurants, museums, and gyms. The first doses of COVID-19 vaccines arrived in the country on December 26 with the first inoculations administered to residents of nursing homes on December 27.

Daily case incidence in **Estonia** has dropped over the past few days following a continuous surge since mid-October. Daily new deaths have also fallen, however past trends in this metric suggest that this drop may be followed by a surge. On December 28, there were 416 infections and nine deaths recorded. While no cases of the mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 originally identified in the UK have been diagnosed in Estonia at the time of this writing, health experts have noted that the possibility that the mutant strain is already present in the country cannot be ruled out. From December 28 until January 17, additional local restrictions are in effect in Harju and East-Viru counties. Indoor sports facilities and museums are closed, and public indoor meetings are prohibited. The first doses of COVID-19 vaccines arrived in Estonia on December 26 and were administered on December 27. The first vaccinations were reportedly given to medical professionals in Tallinn, Tartu, and Ida-Viru counties. Additional vaccine shipments will purportedly arrive weekly from the beginning of January.

Daily new infections in **Finland** have dropped over the past few days with 160 cases documented on December 28, representing some 52 percent of the peak since the onset of the pandemic. Daily new deaths have reached a plateau with 22 deaths recorded on December 28. Health officials have identified one case of the mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 originally identified in the UK and two cases of the mutant strain of the virus originally identified in South Africa. The first COVID-19 vaccinations were administered on December 27 with the first doses designated for healthcare workers from the

Helsinki University Hospital district. The initial batch of some 10,000 doses has reportedly been distributed to five university hospitals across Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Oulu, and Kuopio.

In **Georgia**, the epidemiological situation has improved significantly over the past few weeks amid falling daily new infections and deaths. On December 29, there were 2,012 cases recorded, representing some 48 percent of the level at the peak of the pandemic. On December 29, there were 25 documented deaths. While trends in these metrics are promising, there was no indication as to possible easing of restrictive measures at the time of this writing. Existing restrictions remain in effect and the possibility that they may be extended in the coming days cannot be ruled out.

The epidemiological situation in **Germany** remains serious amid a fall in daily new cases and deaths over the past few days. On December 28, there were 15,515 cases and 590 deaths documented in the country. On December 29, health officials announced that the mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 that was originally identified in the UK has been circulating in Germany since November. Existing restrictions remain in effect. The first doses of COVID-19 vaccines were administered on December 27 and have been designated to individuals such as workers and residents of care homes. Community immunization efforts in the country have experienced disruptions due to some 1,000 vials of the inoculant being returned due to suspicions that they may have been stored at the wrong temperature and become unviable as a result. Furthermore, some regional authorities have postponed administration of the vaccine in their respective territories, purportedly to allow residents to decide whether they want to receive the inoculant. Minister of Health Jens Spahn has indicated that all restrictive measures will apply to individuals who have been vaccinated.

Security officials have suggested that there is a growing threat of attacks perpetrated by far-right militants who deny the existence of the pandemic and its health risks. While no specific, credible threat was known at the time of this writing, it is advised to remain vigilant to the threat of attacks and to report any suspicious items or behaviors to the authorities.

Both daily new cases and deaths in **Lithuania** have dropped somewhat over the past few days with 1,771 cases and 15 deaths recorded on December 28. Seven patients at the Vilnius University Hospital are reportedly suspected of being infected with the mutant strain of SARS-CoV-2 originally identified in the UK, although further testing is being done. COVID-19 vaccinations were launched in five hospitals in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda, Siauliai, and Panevezys on December 27. Medics are the first to be inoculated, followed by staff and patients of care institutions. Media sources have emerged suggesting that these individuals are expected to be vaccinated through January and February.

The epidemiological situation in **North Macedonia** has been improving amid falling daily new cases and deaths. On December 29, there were 497 infections and 17 deaths recorded in the country. On December 26, seven individuals were arrested at an unspecified location suspected of selling counterfeit COVID-19 tests, highlighting the risk of pandemic-related criminal activity.

In **Ukraine**, the epidemiological situation has been improving with both daily new cases and deaths dropping significantly over the past few weeks. On December 29, there were 6,988 infections and 232 deaths documented, representing approximately 56 percent and 81 percent, respectively, of the peaks in these metrics since the onset of the pandemic. The health ministry has indicated that the highest incidence rate over the past two weeks has been in the regions of Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv,

Cherkasy, Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Odesa. Over the past five days, some 40 percent of beds at COVID-19 designated hospitals were occupied, with the bed occupancy rate in Kyiv purportedly amounting to 47 percent. Health Minister Maksym Stepanov has announced that, despite promising trends in daily new infections and deaths, additional restrictions planned to go into effect on January 8 will remain pertinent. The additional measures will entail banning all public events and closing bars, restaurants, cafés, shopping malls, entertainment facilities, educational establishments, and non-essential retail establishments. Catering businesses will be permitted to provide takeaway services and public transport will remain operational. These restrictions are due to be in effect until January 24.

Both daily new cases and deaths in **Uzbekistan** have been falling over the past few months. There were 75 cases and no deaths recorded on December 28. All retail establishments, hotels, restaurants, gyms, and education centers are open and public transport in cities, as well as train travel between regions, is operational.

14-day COVID-19 Case Notification Rate per 100 000, Weeks 50-51 for EU/EEA and the UK



14-day COVID-19 case notification rate per 100 000 weeks 50 - 51

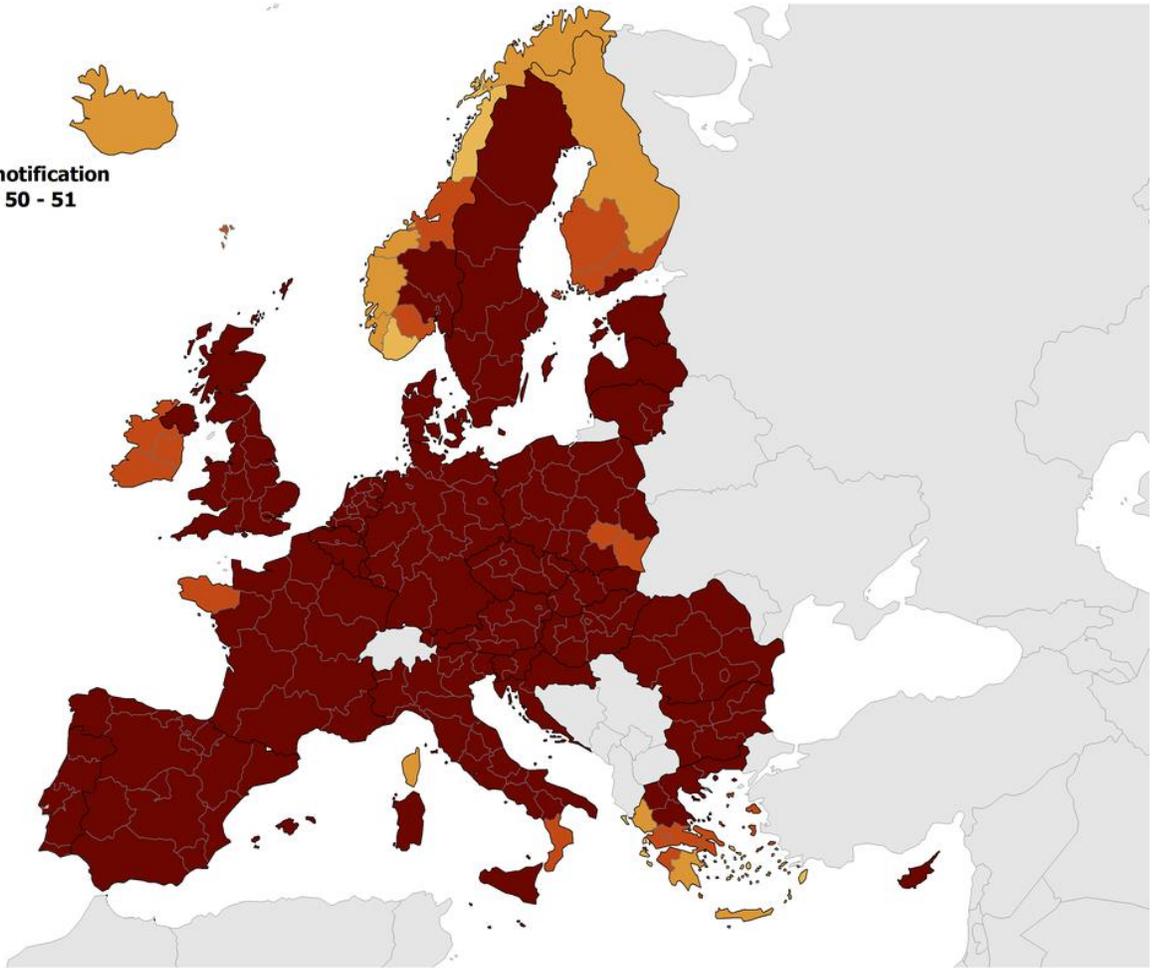
- No cases reported
- <25.0
- 25.0 to 49.9
- 50.0 to 149.9
- ≥150.0
- No data reported
- Not included

Regions not visible in the main map extent

- Azores
- Canary Islands
- Greenland
- Madeira

Countries not visible in the main map extent

- Malta
- Liechtenstein



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © Turkstat © Kartverket © Instituto Nacional de Estadística - Statistics Portugal.
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Source: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

TABLE FOR REOPENING

Country	Lockdown/Curfew in Effect; Expiration	Business Reopening Status Open*/Closed/Phased	Compulsory Face Mask Use	Gov't Links
Albania	Curfew 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Andorra	No Longer Mandatory	Open	Yes	Link
Armenia	No Longer Mandatory	Open	Yes	Link
Austria	Nationwide Lockdown	Phased	Yes	Link
Azerbaijan	Localized Restrictions	Phased	Yes	Link
Belarus	None	Open	No	Link
Belgium	Curfew 12:00 AM to 5:00 AM/10:00 PM to 6:00 AM in Brussels and Wallonia	Phased	Yes	Link
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Local curfews 11:00 PM to 5:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Bulgaria	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Croatia	Localized Restrictions	Phased	Yes	Link
Cyprus	Curfew 9:00 PM to 5:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Czech Republic	Curfew 9:00 PM to 5:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Denmark	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Estonia	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Finland	No Longer Mandatory	Open	No	Link
France	Curfew 8:00 PM to 6:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Georgia	Curfew 9:00 PM to 5:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Germany	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Greece	Nationwide Lockdown	Phased	Yes	Link
Greenland	None	Open	No	Link
Hungary	Curfew 8:00 PM to 5:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Iceland	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Ireland	Localized Restrictions	Phased	Yes	Link
Italy	Curfew 10:00 PM to 5:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Kazakhstan	Localized Restrictions	Phased	Yes	Link
Kosovo	Local Curfews 8:00 PM to 5:00 AM	Open	Yes	Link
Kyrgyzstan	No Longer Mandatory	Open	Yes	Link
Latvia	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Lithuania	Nationwide Lockdown	Phased	Yes	Link
Liechtenstein	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Luxembourg	Curfew 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Malta	None	Phased	Yes	Link
Moldova	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Monaco	Curfew 8:00 PM to 6:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link

Montenegro	Curfew 10:00 PM to 5:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Netherlands	Nationwide Lockdown	Phased	Yes	Link
North Macedonia	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Norway	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Varies by Location	Link
Poland	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Portugal	Local Curfews	Phased	Yes	Link
Romania	Curfew 11:00 PM to 5:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Russia	No Longer Mandatory	Open	Yes	Link
San Marino	No Longer Mandatory	Open	Yes	Link
Serbia	No Longer Mandatory	Open	Yes	Link
Slovakia	Nationwide Restrictions	Phased	Yes	Link
Slovenia	Curfew 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM	Phased	Yes	Link
Spain	Curfew 10:00 PM/12:00 AM to 6:00 AM (Varies by Location)	Phased	Yes	Link
Sweden	None	Open	No	Link
Switzerland	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link
Tajikistan	No Longer Mandatory	Open	Yes	Link
Turkmenistan	Localized Restrictions	Phased	Yes	Link
Ukraine	No Longer Mandatory	Open	Yes	Link
United Kingdom	Localized Restrictions	Phased	Yes	Link
Uzbekistan	No Longer Mandatory	Open	Yes	Link
Vatican	No Longer Mandatory	Phased	Yes	Link

*Open status may nonetheless include limited restrictions, such as for gyms and cinemas, still in effect

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Agata Stawicka is the Regional Analyst for Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Agata earned an Integrated Master's degree in Biological Sciences at the University of Warwick in England. She has lived in Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Germany, and currently resides in the United Kingdom. She is fluent in Polish, proficient in French, and has basic knowledge of German. Agata worked for a media intelligence company prior to joining Everbridge in April 2020.