Coronavirus: reinforced measures

date: 24 March 2020

On Tuesday 17 March, the National Security Council, which has been expanded to include the Ministers-President, decided to take additional measures. On the one hand, these measures are based on the evolution of the spread of Covid-19 in Belgium. On the other hand, they are the result of new conclusions and recommendations of CELEVAL (Evaluation Cell) that were formulated yesterday and this morning.

These decisions are again the result of strong cooperation between the levels of competence, which is essential for the proper management of the current crisis. Everyone around the table is aware of how difficult the measures listed below are and to what extent they will impact everyone’s daily life. But the gravity of the situation and the protection of public health require these sacrifices.

The authorities count on every citizen's sense of duty and trust that these decisions, which are taken to protect them, but also their relatives and loved ones, will be fully respected. Only the personal commitment of everyone will ensure that these measures have a real impact on the situation.

The measures set out below will enter into force at noon on Wednesday 18 March and shall be maintained until 5 April. The situation will continue to be assessed on a daily basis and further changes may be made as the situation evolves.

(1) Citizens are required to stay at home to avoid contact outside of their family as much as possible:

   Except to go to work
   Except for essential travel (to the doctor, food shops, post office, bank, pharmacy, to refuel or to help people in need)
   Outdoor exercise is allowed and even recommended. You can exercise together with family members living under the same roof and together with one friend. Trips with family members living under the same roof are allowed. It is important to keep a reasonable distance.
   Larger gatherings of people are not allowed.

(2) Companies - irrespective of their size - are obliged to organise working from home for every position where this is possible, without exception.

   If this is not possible for certain employees, social distancing will be strictly respected. This rule applies both to the performance of work and to transport organised by the employer. If companies cannot meet these obligations, they must shut down.

   If the authorities find that the social distancing measures are not being complied with, first a heavy fine will be imposed on the company; in the event of non-compliance after the fine has been imposed, the company will have to shut down.

   These provisions do not apply to key industries and essential services. However, they will have to ensure that the social distancing rules are respected as much as possible.

(3) Non-essential shops and retail outlets will remain closed, with the exception of food shops, pharmacies, pet food shops and newsagents.

   In addition, access to supermarkets will be regulated, with the number of customers being limited (1 person per 10m² and a maximum presence of 30 minutes).
   Bars are obliged to put their terrace furniture inside.
   Night shops are allowed to remain open until 10 PM and must comply with the social distancing instructions.
   Hairdressers close from 24 March midnight until 5 April.

(4) Public transport should be organised in such a way as to ensure social distancing.

(5) Non-essential travel outside Belgium is prohibited until 5 April.

(6) Outdoor markets are shut down. Food stalls are only allowed in areas where they are indispensable.

Finally, we cannot stress it enough: the basic hygiene measures continue to apply.

In addition, all information will be available and updated on the website https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/. The telephone number 0800.14.689 is still available (8 AM - 8 PM) to answer questions from citizens.

You can watch the press conference again here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKmmV08R4_8&feature=emb_logo

More information:

- Info-coronavirus.be
- General information: FPS Public Health (fr)
- World Health Organisation (WHO)
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)
- Information for travellers: Institute of Tropical Medicine
- Information for healthcare professionals: Sciensano

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