

**Unlocking COVID-19: understanding national-level policy responses**

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## Policy insights

In what follows, we provide brief policy narratives about what is happening in 36 OECD countries. There are three immediately applicable lessons for Canadian policy makers: national standards for the speed of reopening with substate enactment, three-pronged approaches to testing at border sites, and trialling technology for the next outbreak.

First, there is substantial variation in the capacity of states – especially federal states – to coordinate responses. The German approach – mirrored by the Australian approach – seems most effective. States are allowed to open largely on their own timelines, but emergency brakes can be applied by the national governments when infection rates and/or transmission rates exceed publicly-stated targets. Importantly, Germany has clearly articulated this approach, so states and citizens understand the framework in which re-opening is happening. The Australian national government has also taken control of interstate travel, allowing a coordinated rather than *ad hoc* approach to restricting interstate movement.

Second, some countries are moving towards a COVID testing regime at airports for travellers arriving from foreign countries. This involves a mix of allowing travellers to choose from one of three options: providing a recent test taken before departure, undertaking a test at the airport and waiting for results, or entering a 14 day (most often mandatory) quarantine. Countries pursuing this three-pronged approach are scaling in-airport testing now in anticipation of increased travel in the coming months.

Third, contact tracing apps are being rolled out, but adoption is slow and efficacy is unproven. They do not provide an immediate solution. The closest-case success story is Australia, which is using a non-mandatory but nation-wide app. They are aiming for 40% adoption, but have not yet reached that mark, despite a rapid adoption by ~10% of Australians in the first two weeks of roll out. Nonetheless, the Australian case is forward-looking. Beginning to scale an app now will allow for more control of the pandemic and less restrictions during the *next* outbreak. Relatedly, several countries are trialling serological testing both to understand current rates of infection and likely-immunity, but also to be prepared for further outbreaks.

## Individual OECD Country Profiles

The purpose of these memos is to provide a brief overview of the policy changes occurring throughout the week as governments around the world respond to COVID-19. Where warranted, we also note political dissent among governmental and non-governmental actors. The intention of these briefings is to allow Canadian policy-makers to identify global policy changes and trends that will ultimately support them in their decision making.

The country summaries track the policy changes between Monday, May 4, 2020, to the end of day on Thursday, May 14, 2020.

## THE AMERICAS

### *The United States: The East Coast and Midwest*

In Maine, which has 10 times the number of cases that New Brunswick has, all rural and border counties reopened on May 11th, with retail stores opening to customers, followed by restaurants on May 18th.<sup>1</sup> Illinois has around 85,000 confirmed cases. The Northeast Region bordering the Great Lakes has a 20.7% positivity rate,<sup>2</sup> just above the threshold of 20% needed for 14 straight days, as a component of advancing to Phase 3 in the governor's Restore Illinois plan, when manufacturing, offices, salons, barber shops, and retail stores will reopen to the public with capacity restrictions and other safety measures in place.<sup>3</sup> In North Dakota, restaurants, bars, and hair and nail salons have reopened, though the state's schools are remaining closed the rest of the academic year. Additionally, its June election is being conducted entirely by mail-in ballot.<sup>4</sup> Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has extended the state's stay-at-home order until May 28th, meaning residents cannot leave their homes except for work, to run critical errands, or to engage in safe outdoor activities. On May 11th, Whitmer also announced manufacturing workers, including those at Michigan's Big 3 auto companies, could return to work.<sup>5</sup> New York's North Country, which borders Canada, has achieved the seven benchmarks required to partly reopen construction, manufacturing, and curbside retail by May 15th. On May 11th, Governor Cuomo said three other regions (Rochester, the Southern Tier, and the Mohawk Valley, west of Albany) could take those steps as well. New York City continues to battle the virus, yet there is cautious optimism as death rates and the number of hospitalizations decrease.<sup>6</sup>

### *The United States: The West Coast and South*

Virginia's Governor postponed the May General and Special elections to November 3rd and will postpone the Primary elections from June 9th to June 23rd.<sup>7</sup> Trump will keep the White House Coronavirus Task Force indefinitely.<sup>8</sup> The producer of Remdesivir may allow companies abroad to produce the drug which has been distributed for use in extreme cases across the US.<sup>9</sup> The FDA approved phase two of Moderna's experimental COVID-19 vaccine, phase three may come this summer with a biologics license application to follow in early 2021.<sup>10</sup> Texas' Governor removed confinement as a punishment for violating COVID-19 orders and expanded reopening on May 8th to include beauty salons. Also, on May 18th offices and gyms will open.<sup>11</sup> California and some parts of Washington entered an early stage two reopening.<sup>12</sup> Minnesota released a five point plan to fight COVID-19 in long-term care facilities.<sup>13</sup>

None of the states that have reopened meet all four of the White House Task Force's criteria according to a John Hopkins scholar.<sup>14</sup> Washington's Governor Inslee criticized the President for not fully invoking the *Defense Production Act*, consequently contributing to PPE shortages.<sup>15</sup> Rick Bright, a former official from Health and Human Services, will testify before the House of Representatives on May 14th. Bright accuses the government of violating federal law by dismissing him for whistleblowing on a government downplay of the virus and PPE production.<sup>16</sup> In comments not entirely supported by the President, Dr. Fauci expressed

concerns before the Senate about reopening prematurely, a second wave, more deaths than what is being reported and COVID-19 in youth.<sup>17</sup> Following California's reopening, President Trump supported Tesla Inc. in reopening their California based factory, despite violating Alameda County stay home orders.<sup>18</sup>

### *Mexico*

In Mexico, the government's anticipated COVID-19 peak was between May 6th and 8th.<sup>19</sup> In the OECD, Mexico has performed the fewest COVID-19 tests per capita, but the Deputy Health Minister Lopez-Gatell highlights that understanding the data and mechanics of an epidemic is more important than the number of cases.<sup>20</sup> Two of six flights arrived from the US with ventilators after an agreement with the US to sell Mexico a minimum of 1000 ventilators.<sup>21</sup> More PPE arrived from China.<sup>22</sup> President Lopez Obrador ordered the armed forces to help enforce order in the streets until March 2024.<sup>23</sup> The President released a three stage plan to reopen Mexico on May 18th beginning in municipalities that reported no cases.<sup>24</sup> Between May 18th and 31st, the country will prepare to reopen and classify mining, automaking, and construction as essential services. On June 1st, the final stage uses a traffic light system, implemented, and directed by the Minister of Health, to recommend gradual reopenings of different sectors of society in different regions. The National Commission on Human Rights recommended transitioning to telephone visits for prison inmates.<sup>25</sup> A university based epidemiologist is critical about the government's interpretation of the curve, their delay in purchasing ventilators, and their withholding of information.<sup>26</sup> A former government official critiques the lack of testing and resulting implications on predictions and transmission.<sup>27</sup>

### *Chile*

On May 5th, more communities were put under quarantine. Regulations around quarantines have become stricter and require people in quarantined regions to present permits prior to going shopping for necessities related to quality of life.<sup>28</sup> There is a maximum of seven permits weekly with exceptions for people with certain preexisting health conditions.<sup>29</sup> In response to a large event held in Santiago, the government imposed harsher penalties for failure to comply with COVID-19 preventive measures. This included requiring masks, closing some stores and increasing monitoring and fining.<sup>30</sup> Additional military personnel were deployed to Santiago to enforce closure regulations.<sup>31</sup> 87 ventilators arrived from the Netherlands.<sup>32</sup> Chile received 500,000 antibody tests based on immunoglobulins G and M.<sup>33</sup> There will be a medical discharge card for people that have had COVID-19, but the earlier discussed COVID-19 card based on immunity that would influence general movement in society, will be postponed for fear of encouraging discrimination between those with and without a card.<sup>34</sup>

## **WESTERN EUROPE**

### *France*

After an eight-week lockdown, France began easing restrictions across the country on May 11th. Shops and hair salons can now reopen, and people can venture out without a government-mandated form.<sup>35</sup> President Emmanuel Macron decided to lift the lockdown after the number of patients in intensive care, a key measure of hospitals' ability to cope with the epidemic, fell to less than half the peak of 7,000 seen in early April.<sup>36</sup> Based on the number of new cases and the capacity in intensive care units, France has been divided into green zones and red zones (where the outbreak is worse) in order to ease restrictions by zone. Paris and the Northeastern part of the country are in the red zone. Effective immediately, masks are obligatory for everyone and non-wearers will be fined €135 (205 CAD). Gatherings of up to 10 people are allowed, and the elderly and vulnerable will be allowed outside. Home-working remains the norm, with anecdotal reports suggesting that most companies are still operating from home even though offices are allowed to reopen.<sup>37</sup> All shops, leisure centres, and cemeteries reopened, but shopping centres, cafes, restaurants, and beaches

remain closed. While primary schools and nurseries opened on May 11th, schools for 11 to 15-year-olds open only in green zones on May 18th. Schools for 15 to 18-year-olds (lycées) are not opening before June. Lessons with reduced class sizes are being implemented, but even so, some local authorities are keeping schools closed, based on parental pressure. In June, cafes and restaurants may be able to open in green zones. France has also begun testing a new app to track and trace the virus, StopCovid, which it hopes to launch on June 2nd. Concerns have been raised about the right to privacy for users, with Parliament set to debate it later in May.<sup>38</sup> Macron's popularity rating fell to 34% in May, down 5 points from April, according to a recent Elabe poll for Les Echos newspaper.<sup>39</sup>

### *Germany*

Germany announced its economic recovery plan on May 6th, starting with the opening of small businesses and schools throughout the federation, provided hygiene measures (masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and social distancing) are in place.<sup>40</sup> Since schooling is devolved, each state must decide when to reopen its schools. The main metric that Germany is using to reopen the economy is called "R0": the case reproduction per person.<sup>41</sup> Since May 1st, the rate has consistently been below 1, meaning a person with the virus infects fewer than 1 other on average.<sup>42</sup> Along with the plan, Chancellor Angela Merkel also introduced an "emergency brake mechanism" that will be used to reintroduce restrictions, if an area registers more than 50 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants within seven days and/or if  $R_0 > 1$  for a few days.<sup>43</sup> In terms of next steps, Germany will begin easing its border controls with France, Switzerland and Austria on Saturday by only implementing random crossing checks. Unrestricted crossings between these neighboring countries will be allowed by June 15th.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the country's Bundesliga soccer league can resume in the second half of May without spectators.<sup>45</sup> Defying social distancing rules, over 3,000 people rallied in Munich and thousands more across Germany on Saturday to demand the lifting of all restrictions ordered by the authorities. According to a poll conducted by the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment in March, 92% of Germans supported the restrictions; a poll this week showed that this support has now dropped to 67%.<sup>46</sup>

### *Belgium*

Across Belgium, bars, restaurants, and cafes remain closed. Belgium's easing strategy focuses on detecting people at risk of contracting COVID-19 using a team of contact tracers working at call centres and on the ground.<sup>47</sup> The initial Phase 1A of the country's easing plan began on May 4th, allowing fabric stores to reopen in order to ensure their availability for the compulsory use of masks on public transport, in schools, and at work.<sup>48</sup> Across Belgium, mayors are taking initiative by providing information on how and where people can acquire their 1 free of charge, standard cloth mask.<sup>49</sup> Between May 2nd and 4th over 24,000 tests were administered daily in Belgium with more than 2.3 million surgical masks distributed throughout the country.<sup>50</sup> Companies were also allowed to get back to work but businesses that cannot guarantee social distancing must take the necessary measures. Across the country, teleworking remains the norm.<sup>51</sup> Phase 1B of Belgium's deconfinement strategy began on May 11th. People living in the same house are now allowed to host up to four people at their home, but these four people should always be the same, and physical distancing must be respected.<sup>52</sup> Shops will also reopen under restrictions that require 1 customer per 10 square metres for a maximum of 30 minutes and the implementation of a shop alone policy with exceptions for children and people who need assistance.<sup>53</sup> On May 13th, the Belgian government announced their plans to go ahead with the next phase of its exit plan on May 18th which includes the reopening of schools, museums, cultural attractions, and amusement parks. Also, professions requiring close contact can restart by appointment only, and both parties must wear masks and respect social distancing as much as possible.<sup>54</sup>

### *Netherlands*

On May 6th, the government announced a five phase plan on reopening the Netherlands, effective May 11th, where day care facilities, schools and non-contact outdoor sports, such as tennis and badminton, will reopen to residents. Elementary schools reopened with classes split in half and rotating on a weekly basis, which will help reduce pressure on public transport and enable greater distancing.<sup>55</sup> Some close contact businesses such as hairdressers, beauty salons, dietitians, and occupational therapists are now allowed to operate by appointment as long as a 1.5 metre distance is maintained. Driving schools resumed and libraries reopened, with the 1.5m distance rule required. 25 nursing homes reopened their doors for visitors, with an allowance to only 1 visitor per resident. However, masks were not declared as a mandatory requirement on public transport within the initial phase, but will be implemented by the next phase, effective June 1st.<sup>56</sup> If all goes well, the Government plans on running more trains than the usual timetable from June 1st, along with the reopening of restaurants and cinemas. Following that, weddings with larger groups will be allowed by the next phase, with gyms, saunas and adult clubs reopening by September 1st.<sup>57</sup>

### *Spain*

Spain is expected to be one of the European countries hit hardest by COVID-19.<sup>58</sup> The government restricted entrants to the country and imposed a mandatory two week quarantine on those entering between May 15th and 24th.<sup>59</sup> As of May 2nd, people in larger cities can leave their homes for exercise.<sup>60</sup> Stage 1 began on May 11th and with it social services, businesses, stores, restaurant terraces, hotels, and religious places reopened.<sup>61</sup> Public transport resumed at a higher capacity with masks and the government distributed 156,000 out of ten million masks to transport workers.<sup>62</sup> Stage one led to crowds and lines that broke social distancing rules forcing police to discipline people and close some restaurants and other spaces. A flight from Iberia to Canary Islands on Sunday May 10th is being investigated for breaking distancing guidelines.<sup>63</sup> Around May 25th, shopping centres and places for entertainment will open with guidelines.<sup>64</sup> Later, stage three will increase public transport, restaurants, and the number of people permitted in other public spaces.<sup>65</sup> Schools will not resume until September, but some educational centres may open beforehand for students needing learning reinforcement activities, for students under six whose guardians cannot telework, and for access-to-college exams.<sup>66</sup> Despite disapproval from the People's Party, Prime Minister Sanchez extended the state of alarm with supporting votes from the Basque Nationalist Party and the Ciudadanos Party.<sup>67</sup> For several days, protests calling for the Prime Minister's resignation erupted in Salamanca.<sup>68</sup> Protestors are upset over the Prime Minister's handling of COVID-19 and limitations on their freedoms, police will enforce distance without stopping the protests and some politicians support the people's right to protest.<sup>69</sup>

### *The United Kingdom*

At 33,186, Britain's COVID death toll is the highest in Europe. Unlike most European countries, it is unknown whether the UK's first-wave curve has peaked yet. Nevertheless, on May 10th Prime Minister Boris Johnson explained a new five-level COVID-19 alert system that will be used to inform the public about how the lockdown will be lifted, with Level 5 being the most critical level. The following plan should bring the UK closer to Level 4.<sup>70</sup> For now, people are no longer confined to their homes as there is no limit on how much time people can spend exercising outside, and they can also meet someone from another household outside while observing social distancing. Shops may tentatively open by June 1st and some students could also return to school by then. Some restaurants could open by July 1st. More details of Johnson's plan will be made public in parliament on May 17th.<sup>71</sup> The government's plan relies on keeping the R0 (reproduction number) below 1. If that number, currently between 0.5 and 0.9, rises above 1, the government says it could be forced to reimpose lockdown measures. However, according to public health experts, the UK cannot have an accurate description of its R0 without extensive testing, which it is lacking currently.<sup>72</sup> Britain is developing a voluntary mobile app that uses Bluetooth technology to trace possible



infections of COVID-19. An ethics board warned that the app could exacerbate inequalities in Britain, due to the need for a smartphone.<sup>73</sup> All three devolved administrations have deviated from Westminster in their handling of this crisis, despite the perception that PM Johnson and Downing Street has been driving the coronavirus response for the entire UK. Consequently, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland are keeping their economies in a stricter lockdown, and forbidding citizens from meeting people outside their households.<sup>74</sup> Moving forward, the UK will continue tracking case outbreaks and will likely roll out serological testing, after a successful test last week that gave the correct result 100% of the time.<sup>75</sup>

### *Ireland*

Following the ease of lockdown restrictions announced last week, effective May 18th, Northern Ireland's Finance Minister warned of the severe consequences that may occur due to an early reopening, in a press conference held on May 6th.<sup>76</sup> He argued that the government was only eager to meet deadlines rather than effectively monitoring the current situation to decide on the next steps. Following this, the government launched a 'return to work' safety protocol on May 9th,<sup>77</sup> setting out a wide range of measures which employers and their employees have to follow, in order to reopen over the coming weeks. These measures included a ban on handshakes, temperature testing before heading to work, and a prohibition on using other workers' items such as bottles, pens, or cups. Additionally, grouping of workers into small teams who consistently work and take breaks together, was deemed compulsory, thus limiting interaction with other colleagues. Furthermore, an assurity was needed from the workers as a signed form three days before their return, which certified to the best of their knowledge that they do not possess any COVID-19 symptoms, are not self-isolating, nor waiting for their test results. Moreover, with regards to travel measures, in a statement on May 7th<sup>78</sup>, the Chief Executive of Aer Lingus, parent company of Intl Airlines Group, said that the reopening of local and international travel is highly possible by the end of July, given that travel restrictions around the world are relaxed. With restrictions set by the Irish government requiring all visitors to be quarantined at State facilities for 14 days, the PM announced an exception to visitors from Northern Ireland on May 12th.<sup>79</sup>

### *Luxembourg*

Following Germany's decision to extend its border controls until May 15th, the government of Luxembourg made an announcement on May 7th, to lower the EU flag at half-staff for a two day period, as a protest against their decision. They argued that despite other European countries attempting to lift their restrictions in the coming weeks, Germany has been reluctant in doing so, causing several businesses to suffer on both sides. As of May 11th, the country entered its 2nd phase of its deconfinement strategy, 'controlled exit,' with the full reopening of businesses. Cultural places such as exhibition centres, museums, archives, and libraries were allowed to reopen under a strict social framework of reduced public presence, an online reservation system, and limited access to common rooms. Gatherings of 20 people were to be authorised, while events at home were allowed with up to 6 guests, excluding the people present in the house. Furthermore, 32 sport practices were permitted to take place including golf, tennis, and football, given that they were practised without any physical contact and with an absence of large audiences, in a non competitive nature. Finally, primary schools were allowed to resume their classes, with a requirement of 2 metre distance rule in class and masks are deemed obligatory if maintaining the distance is too difficult. Sport halls, restaurants and cinemas remain closed until further notice.

### *Portugal*

Following an end to the state of emergency declared on April 30th, the government announced the reopening of small shops, hair salons, and car dealers on May 4th in its first reopening phase. These businesses must follow the necessary criteria, with customers requiring an appointment, and the careful practise of social distancing measures within its premises. Libraries and archives are also permitted to

reopen with reduced capacity and physical distancing measures. Practicing individual sports in open air will be allowed, without the use of changing rooms or swimming pools, along with some access to the beaches for the practice of nautical sport activities. Buses will be obliged to have a separate driver's cab and disinfectant gel dispensers, with a mandatory rule for travellers to wear masks or face fines for up to 350 euros. The maximum capacity for buses, trains, and boats will be reduced to two-thirds, in order to enable distancing.<sup>80</sup> Primary and middle schools are to remain closed throughout the academic year, relying on long-distance learning, with senior schools to reopen in the 2nd phase, effective May 18th, with the help of Portuguese military officials in the provision of training to school workers on resumption of classes, with proper measures in place.<sup>81</sup> Reopening of museums, bars, restaurants, and art galleries will begin in the country's second phase.<sup>82</sup>

## CENTRAL EUROPE

### *Austria*

Despite gradually easing economic restrictions throughout the country since the beginning of May, Austria has managed to keep new infections below 100 a day for over a week.<sup>83</sup><sup>84</sup> Effective May 6<sup>th</sup>, travellers looking to enter Austria and avoid a two-week quarantine can pay 190 EUR for a COVID-19 test upon arrival at Vienna's airport. This test is also available for people leaving Austria and flying to other countries.<sup>85</sup> On May 13<sup>th</sup>, the Austrian government announced that it will begin gradually opening its border with Germany on May 15<sup>th</sup>, with plans in place to have the border fully opened by June 15<sup>th</sup>. Austria's Chancellor is pushing for borders with countries that have similarly low infection rates to be reopened, and is working on a similar reopening plan with Switzerland.<sup>86</sup> A voluntary health monitoring app called *Stopp Corona* is currently being administered by the Austrian Red Cross.<sup>87</sup> The Austrian government is considering making the contact tracing app mandatory for all foreign nationals looking to enter the country, in hopes that this will encourage tourism without endangering public health.<sup>88</sup> The government has ruled out making the app mandatory for Austrian residents. Effective May 4<sup>th</sup>, protective and hygienic measures in place for long-term care homes were eased, allowing for single visitors wearing masks to enter the premises by appointment. Care homes are permitted to establish their own regulations for visitors, and systematic testing and strict monitoring remains in place. Restaurants and bars will reopen on May 15<sup>th</sup> under strict hygienic conditions, and schools remain closed at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels, with plans to begin classes for students ages 6 to 14 on May 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>89</sup>

### *Greece*

Greece's government has announced its intention to reopen the country to foreign tourists by the end of June, outlining new health requirements for visitors that include social distancing measures, new cleaning procedures in hotels, and regular testing of staff.<sup>90</sup> Athens has suggested that travellers be tested for COVID three days prior to entering Greece, given the difficulties associated with testing people upon arrival in the country.<sup>91</sup> On May 4<sup>th</sup>, retail businesses and vehicle inspections services were allowed to reopen, and residents are now permitted to exercise in open spaces and swim at beaches.<sup>92</sup> On May 17<sup>th</sup>, the third phase of a seven phase plan is expected to begin, allowing churches to resume services, and junior high and upper secondary school classes to resume.<sup>93</sup> In response to the government's effort to reopen highschools, the Greek Union of Secondary School Teachers held a three hour strike during which they halted online classes. The Union wants to ensure that schools reopen only if there is enough protective material available for staff and students. Most catering establishments remain closed.

### *Italy*

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, the Italian government continued easing some lockdown restrictions, allowing all Italian citizens to visit relatives living in the same region, and to engage in physical activity in open spaces.<sup>94</sup> The government is evaluating a plan to reopen nurseries and daycares by the summer, but all schools are expected to remain closed until at least September. An agreement between Roman Catholic bishops and the Italian government was signed on May 7<sup>th</sup> that will allow religious services and masses to resume on May 18<sup>th</sup> under strict conditions.<sup>95</sup> Regional governments will be allowed to reopen bars, restaurants, and hairdressers on May 18<sup>th</sup>, after sustained pressure, the Italian federal government agreed to to accelerate the second stage of easing restrictions. While bars and restaurants are currently allowed to deliver and provide take-away services, they will now be allowed to fully reopen earlier than June 1<sup>st</sup> as originally planned.<sup>96</sup> The previous timeline was criticised by restaurant owners as overly-cautious, amid fears that many establishments would have to close for good if they were unable to reopen sooner. The autonomy being given to various numerous regional governments across Italy means that restrictions vary across the country. Moving forward, personal protective equipment is mandatory on public transit, and in all circumstances where physical distance cannot be reasonably maintained.

### *Slovenia*

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, the Slovenian government began to reopen its borders and announced the reopening of two border checkpoints with Italy.<sup>97</sup> On May 12<sup>th</sup>, the ban on international air passenger transport was lifted - but most airlines have cancelled their flights until the end of May.<sup>98</sup> Major public events will remain closed indefinitely until a vaccine has been found, leading event organizers to urge authorities to adopt aid measures and provide a time frame for the continued ban on public gatherings so that necessary future preparations can begin.<sup>99</sup> Thousands of people protested in Slovenia's capital against the government and its COVID-19 restrictions, worried about the new government's coronavirus agenda. Protestors are alleging that the Prime Minister is using the virus to justify restricting freedoms after increasing police powers and inciting hatred against migrants.<sup>100</sup> Prime Minister Jansa is the leader of a minority coalition government, meaning that his powers are likely to be constrained if other parties are unwilling to support him.<sup>101</sup>

### *Switzerland*

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, it was announced that a new COVID-19 antibody test capable of using machines to conduct 3,000 tests daily with 99.8% accuracy has been developed by Swiss and Scottish scientists.<sup>102</sup> The Swiss government also announced their plans to test a voluntary contact tracing app for smartphones as a part of their long-term strategy to contain COVID-19, with Parliament expected to address the measure in June.<sup>103</sup> After increased pressure on the Swiss government to relax border controls, the backlog of applications filed by non-Swiss citizens for employment and to rejoin their families began on May 11<sup>th</sup>. Switzerland also reopened 15 border crossings, and announced a plan to reopen its borders with Germany, Austria, and France by June 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>104</sup> Against the recommendation of the President of Swiss Health Directors, Switzerland entered the second phase of easing lockdown restrictions on May 11<sup>th</sup>, partially reopening restaurants, schools, museums, and public transit. Restaurant staff will not be required to wear masks, but guests must be seated at least 2 metres away from the next group of guests with a limit of no more than 4 adults per table. Also effective May 11<sup>th</sup>, all compulsory primary classes will resume, but secondary schools and universities will remain closed until June 8<sup>th</sup>. Hygienic guidelines and physical distancing requirements, such as the use of masks in public places, remain in place.<sup>105</sup>

## **EASTERN EUROPE**

### *Czechia*

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, the Czech government proceeded to the third phase of its approach towards easing restrictions related to COVID-19, which included the reopening of: all indoor stores and shopping centres; establishments with a sales area of more than 2500m<sup>2</sup> where operation has not been specifically prohibited; catering establishments where sales can be made outdoors or through a dispensing window; barbers, hairdressers, and other cosmetic establishments; and cultural institutions such as museums, art galleries, and castles.<sup>106</sup> Public and private mass gatherings of up to 100 people are also being permitted for theatrical, musical, and sporting events, as well as weddings, religious services, and other large celebrations.<sup>107</sup> The fourth and final phase of easing restrictions is expected to begin on May 25<sup>th</sup>, and will include the reopening of all indoor catering establishments.<sup>108</sup>

### *Hungary*

COVID-19 related restrictions continue to be eased around Hungary amid reports from government health officials that the pandemic has entered a “dormant stage” in the country.<sup>109</sup> On May 12<sup>th</sup>, two border crossings between Austria and Hungary were reopened for passenger traffic in both directions.<sup>110</sup> While the rest of the country continues to reopen gradually, curfew restrictions will remain in effect indefinitely for all residents of Budapest and Pest counties.<sup>111</sup> Guidelines related to personal hygiene and physical distancing, including wearing a mask or scarf in shops and on public transportation, will continue to apply to all Hungarian residents.<sup>112</sup>

### *Latvia*

The Latvian government has further extended its state of emergency until June 9<sup>th</sup>, but some of the strict measures previously associated with it have been slightly relaxed.<sup>113</sup> Gatherings of up to 25 people are being allowed, provided that they maintain at least 2 metres of distance between each other.<sup>114</sup> Some cultural institutions, such as museums, art galleries, and concert halls, have also been allowed to reopen according to a “sanitary protocol” administered by the Latvian Ministry of Health.<sup>115</sup> Unless specified otherwise, all other restrictions related to Latvia’s state of emergency will remain in effect until at least June 9<sup>th</sup>. Most non-essential businesses, including nightclubs, shopping malls, and fitness centres, will remain closed during the state of emergency. Food shops, press kiosks, and pharmacies are among the non-essential businesses allowed to remain open during this period. The ban on all international air travel to and from Latvia has also been extended until at least June 9<sup>th</sup>, while some travel and tourism activities are being permitted between residents of the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia). Kindergartens will be able to reopen for children ages 5 to 6, while all other schools, including universities will remain closed indefinitely.<sup>116</sup>

### *Lithuania*

Following the end of its official lockdown period on May 13<sup>th</sup>, Lithuania’s government has continued to ease restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19.<sup>117</sup> Restaurants and bars are now being permitted to serve their customers indoors, while wearing a face mask will only be required in specific places, including public transport boarding points, and indoor shops.<sup>118</sup> Groups of up to 5 people are now being allowed to gather in public places, increased from the previous limit of 2. Since May 11<sup>th</sup>, Lithuania has allowed the entry of Polish, Lithuanian, and Estonian nationals for the purposes of work, business, and/or study.<sup>119</sup> Journalists are also being permitted to enter the country without a mandatory 14-day quarantine period.<sup>120</sup> The Lithuanian government is expected to continue easing restrictions in the coming

weeks, with plans to reopen all kindergartens and preschools on May 18<sup>th</sup>, and all primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools by the end of May.<sup>121</sup>

### *Poland*

Last week, the Polish government continued easing restrictions related to COVID-19, allowing some stores and shopping centres, hotels, and cultural institutions, to reopen, subject to strict hygienic conditions and physical distancing guidelines.<sup>122</sup> On May 6<sup>th</sup>, daycare centres, preschools, and kindergartens were allowed to reopen for the children of working parents, while all other schools and universities remain closed.<sup>123</sup> Despite reporting 595 new cases of COVID-19 on May 12<sup>th</sup>, their highest daily increase since the beginning of the pandemic<sup>124</sup>, Poland will proceed to the 3rd stage of easing restrictions on May 18<sup>th</sup>, which will include the partial reopening of hairdressers and gastronomic establishments, and increased limits on the capacity of public transport and religious services.<sup>125</sup> Poland's borders will remain closed to all foreigners until at least June 12<sup>th</sup>, and the ban on all international railway travel will remain in effect indefinitely.<sup>126</sup> General guidelines regarding personal hygiene and physical distancing will remain in effect indefinitely. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, Poland's Senate rejected a bill that would have allowed Presidential elections to take place as planned on May 10<sup>th</sup> using an untested correspondence voting system.<sup>127</sup> The bill subsequently returned to Poland's Sejm, which, on Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, passed a revised act that would allow elections to take place using a combination of polling stations and correspondence voting before the end of President Andrzej Duda's term on August 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>128</sup> The Senate now has 30 days to decide the outcome of the Sejm's latest proposal.<sup>129</sup>

### *Slovakia*

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, the Slovak government proceeded to phase 2 of their plan for easing restrictions related to COVID-19. Hotels, hair salons, massage parlours, outdoor tourist attractions, and cultural institutions such as museums and libraries, are among the establishments that have been permitted to resume business. General guidelines on hygiene and physical distancing, such as the obligatory use of facemasks in all public places, continue to apply to most residents.<sup>130</sup>

## **NORTHERN EUROPE**

### *Denmark*

The government of Denmark and its official opposition parties have reached an agreement that will permit the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions between May 11<sup>th</sup> and June 8<sup>th</sup>. Shopping malls will be allowed to reopen on May 11<sup>th</sup>, followed by dine-in restaurants, libraries, and religious services on May 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>131</sup> Any remaining restrictions will be lifted by June 8<sup>th</sup>, with cultural institutions, amusement parks, and summer activities for children allowed to operate from that date onward. Opposition parties have said that they have given the government the power to re-implement lockdown restrictions should infection rates start to rise.<sup>132</sup> However, the Head of the Danish Infectious Diseases Agency has said that he thinks a drastic second or third wave in Denmark is unlikely.<sup>133</sup> The government has not reached a decision on when to open their borders to surrounding nations, but it has indicated that a decision will be made in consultation with other Nordic nations and Germany by June 10<sup>th</sup>. This timeline comes after pressure from opposition parties to offer concrete next steps for Danish citizens as the infection rate in the country remains very low.<sup>134</sup>

### *Estonia*

Estonia has announced a gradual loosening of restrictions, starting on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Religious institutions reopened on that date, followed by dine-in restaurants on May 11<sup>th</sup> (with limited hours). Shopping malls

were also permitted to open on May 11th, though the government still encourages the use of social distancing when entering public spaces.<sup>135</sup> Contact education has also been permitted to restart, though schools in Tallinn will remain closed until the end of the academic year.<sup>136</sup> Border restrictions with the other Baltic states, as well as Finland, have been loosened to allow for those travelling for work and other essential business to enter each country.<sup>137</sup> However, the Head of the Coronavirus Research Council for Estonia has expressed reservations over opening the Finnish border this early, as the infection rate in Finland is much higher than it is in Estonia.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, the Mayor of Tallinn has called the continued practice of social distancing ‘not reasonable’ if restrictions continue to be loosened, as it can be very difficult to avoid contact with others at some of the institutions that are now permitted to open.<sup>139</sup>

### *Finland*

Finland has announced that they will begin loosening most of their remaining lockdown restrictions on May 14th. On that date, border controls for those within the Schengen area will be lifted for those travelling for work and other essential business, and outdoor recreational facilities will be permitted to open. On June 1, dine-in restaurants will be allowed to reopen with restrictions on operating hours and the sale of alcohol, and major cultural institutions can reopen with limited capacity. On the same date, private gatherings will be able to include up to 50 people (previous limit was 10), though large public events (>500) will be banned until at least the end of the summer.<sup>140</sup> The government has said that if the virus reproduction rate rises higher than 1.2 after these restrictions are loosened, they will not hesitate to return to lockdown.<sup>141</sup> An open letter signed by leaders in technology and medicine has criticized the government’s response to the pandemic, saying they should have implemented complete suppression efforts that stop the virus in its tracks, rather than simply slowing its spread.<sup>142</sup>

### *Iceland*

Iceland will further loosen its lockdown restrictions on May 25th, with gyms allowed to reopen and gatherings of more than 50 people permitted, though an exact number is yet to be determined (likely >100 people). Concerts and other public events will be allowed from May 25th, with organizers needing to ensure that two metres of distance can be maintained between all attendees.<sup>143</sup> Tourists and workers flying to Iceland will have the choice of three options in what to do upon arrival: quarantine for 14 days, be tested for novel coronavirus and await the results at an international airport, or provide certification that they have been tested recently to Icelandic health authorities. Arrivals will also be required to download the country’s contact tracing app, along with additional unspecified measures. Those arriving in Iceland to work on specific projects will enter ‘Quarantine B’ automatically, where they will be expected to self-isolate except when going to their job site.<sup>144</sup>

### *Norway*

Norway released a plan to dramatically loosen most of its lockdown restrictions in phases, with most restrictions lifted by June 15th, and the last significant measures to be removed on July 15th. Private gatherings of up to 20 people are now allowed as long as 1 metre of distance can be maintained (previous limit was 5 people), while public gatherings of up to 50 people can occur. On May 11th, all schools and some recreational institutions like cinemas were allowed to reopen, as long as social distancing measures remained in place.<sup>145</sup> The Directorate of Education has indicated that not all classes need to take place on campus, and any class that does not require the physical presence of the student can be conducted online.<sup>146</sup> Border restrictions for EU citizens have been relaxed, with foreigners now allowed to visit their relatives or any property they own in Norway.<sup>147</sup>

### *Sweden*

Sweden has maintained its social distancing recommendations, rather than a mandatory lockdown, with some slight easing of within-Sweden travel restrictions. Swedes are now allowed to travel up to two hours away from their home by car, as long as they are minimizing contact with people outside their travel party and avoiding at-risk groups.<sup>148</sup> The government also extended its advisory recommending against travelling internationally until at least July 15th, also indicating that they will likely extend this advisory even more.<sup>149</sup> There has been growing concern that Swedes are now reverting back to their original habits, despite the government's warnings that if their recommendations are not followed, a harsher lockdown may be put into place.<sup>150</sup> The high death rate in Swedish long-term care homes has prompted the government to admit that conditions needed to improve, but fought against the suggestion that the semi-privatization of the industry was to blame.<sup>151</sup>

## **ASIA/PACIFIC**

### *Japan*

Japan decided on May 14<sup>th</sup> to lift its state of emergency earlier than originally planned in 39 out of 47 prefectures, which saw fewer than 0.5 new cases per 100,000 people in the past week.<sup>152</sup> Remdesivir, the Gilead Sciences antiviral drug, has been approved under an exceptional pathway for treatment of severe COVID patients. Although lifting the state of emergency immediately deprived prefectural governors of the power to request business closure, the public are urged to avoid large gatherings and working from home where possible. Measures including staying home and restricting the use of facilities (self-restraint request of business operations) will continue until the end of the month in large metropolitan cities such as Tokyo.<sup>153</sup>

### *South Korea*

After identifying a new cluster of cases associated with a nightclub, South Korea has been expediting anonymous testing to take control over the possible resurgence. Meanwhile, guidelines requiring individuals with confirmed cases of COVID-19 to disclose their travel routes are being revised to address concerns about privacy.<sup>154</sup> An executive order was issued which lasts until June 7<sup>th</sup>, recommending that nightlife establishments refrain from operating. People were asked to refrain from using public indoor venues.<sup>155</sup> Seoul, the capital city, made wearing masks mandatory on May 11<sup>th</sup> for subway passengers during peak hours.<sup>156</sup> The country also delayed the reopening of schools by another week, originally scheduled for May 13<sup>th</sup>.<sup>157</sup> Having lifted many of its most restrictive measures on May 6<sup>th</sup>, South Korea's government is promoting "Distancing in Daily Life," which consists of 5 key tenants: two arms' distancing, personal hygiene, frequent ventilation and disinfection, social connection, and staying home if feeling unwell. Supplementary guidance concerning wearing masks, disinfection, high-risk population, and healthy lifestyles, were also provided.<sup>158</sup>

### *New Zealand*

After seeing single-digit daily new cases and no death increases for over a week, New Zealand has continued asking people to stay vigilant by practising physical distancing (at least 1 metre apart), and to follow hygienic guidelines.<sup>159</sup> Trials for an armband that automatically reads the wearer's temperature is being funded, in hopes that it will help prevent a further outbreak.<sup>160</sup> Moving from the "Restrict" alert level to "Reduce" on midnight May 13th, New Zealand relaxed the stay-home instruction, with stores, malls, café, restaurants and other public spaces (including gyms) allowed to re-open immediately, while bars have to wait until May 21st. Tertiary education facilities, schools and early learning centres will be open for all ages on May 18th. Domestic travel is possible. People are allowed to attend gatherings limited to up to 10

people in controlled settings, both at home and outside. The cap for funerals and tangihanga is 50. Contact-tracing records are required for public venues and recommended for other gatherings. Mask wearing is no longer everyday requirement for people.<sup>161</sup>

### *Australia*

Although with daily new cases mostly below 20 nationwide, several states in Australia are still expanding their testing facilities to handle possible outbreaks. The government encourages more people to use the contact tracing app. The Prime Minister announced on May 7th a three-step easing plan, aiming at a “COVID-safe economy” in July.<sup>162</sup> The plan will start with the reopening of restaurants, cafes, libraries and retail shops, which does not include nightclubs and food courts. 5 visitors are allowed in homes while up to 10 people can show up in public gatherings. The cap will be raised to 20 in step two and leisure activities and interstate travel will be permitted. Step 3 will expand the limit to 100 and restores the normalcy of working. Detailed implementation and timelines depend on the individual states and territories, with Queensland as the earliest starting from May 15th.<sup>163</sup> Physical distancing and hygiene practices will be maintained at all stages. Although the Prime Minister hopes all public schools to return physically, the states vary a lot in their policies based on the outbreak situation. Victoria, the most hit state, continues to recommend against students returning to classrooms while all students are expected to attend school physically in Northern Territory.<sup>164</sup>

### *Turkey*

On May 11th, Turkey entered its 2nd phase of deconfinement strategy, also labelled as, ‘controlled social life.’<sup>165</sup> Under this phase, travel restrictions within the 7 provinces, excluding Izmir, Istanbul and the capital city, Ankara, were lifted, along with the curfew imposed on senior and youth citizens. It allows them to go outside once a week for 4 hours, with a mask as a mandatory requirement. Barber shops, shopping malls and a few outdoor stores were reopened, given that they abide by the normalization rules set by the government, while Universities only required students to return by June 15th.<sup>166</sup> Following an end to restriction on taxis in March, which required odd and even numbered taxis to operate on alternate days, Turkey’s Interior Minister announced a new set of regulations on May 8th, for all the country’s taxis to operate amidst the pandemic. The regulations require taxis to get disinfected at least once a week with drivers being careful about their personal hygiene and the application of masks on themselves and the passengers they carry. Every taxi would have to possess sanitizers or cologne for customers and make sure that the customers apply sanitizer before beginning the ride. Moreover, taxis won’t be allowed to carry more than 3 customers or customers without masks. Drivers would have to disinfect the area where the customer was seated, after each customer exits the vehicle. Taxi associations would also have to promote contactless payment methods in the coming months.<sup>167</sup>

### *Israel*

Israel has seen sustained drop in infection, with single-digit daily deaths. A nationwide serological test of 100,000 citizens is on the way to determine the prevalence of antibodies to Covid-19.<sup>168</sup> On May 5th, the national legislature approved of the continued utilization of spy agencies to trace contacts till its expiry on May 26th, which halved the government appeal.<sup>169</sup> In terms of returning Israelis, those who have a qualified place for 14-day self-quarantine can practise or continue the quarantine on their own rather than in isolation hotels. Police will be involved in enforcing home-isolation.<sup>170</sup> On May 4th, the Israeli government modified and extended the Emergency Regulations until June 2nd, relieving a series of restrictive measures. The 100-metre limit on travel from home for non-essential activities is lifted. Nighttime curfews for Ramadan now only apply to the designated “restricted areas”. People are allowed to visit public spaces like parks without using the equipment there. Additional activities and businesses are permitted, including libraries, non-medical bodily treatment, alternative medicine, hotels and guest houses, nature reserves, zoos, and safaris.



Malls, markets, and gyms will be opened from May 7th, following physical distancing and hygiene rules. Beaches remain closed.<sup>171</sup> Following students in grades 1-3 and 11-12, children in grades 4-10 will go back to school physically next week for no more than three days per week. Online teaching makes up for the rest of the time.<sup>172</sup> Entry ban remains to nationals from other countries not living in Israel.

## **Endnotes for country summaries**

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