

PORTUGAL: RECONFINED LISBON IS NOT POSITIVE FOR THE TOURIST SEASON



The lockdown in the Lisbon area was partially restored last week to prevent the spread of outbreaks of the new coronavirus, at the risk of tarnishing the image of a country hitherto relatively spared by the pandemic and jeopardizing the tourist season.

While some European countries had last week, much resented by Portugal, put in place restrictions on travelers from that country despite the reopening of borders across the continent, **Portuguese authorities have had to come to terms with their difficulty in curbing the outbreaks responsible for most of the new Covid-19 cases.**

For months, Portugal has been one of the models to be followed for confinement on the European continent, since, during the worst phase of the disease in this region, the Portuguese country managed to minimize damage significantly. But the situation changed and now it registers the second-highest contagion rate on the European continent, only behind Sweden.

Portugal, less severely hit than neighboring Spain, had last Tuesday a total of 1,540 deaths per 10 million inhabitants and nearly 40,000 confirmed cases. The socialist government decided to subject the 2.8 million or so inhabitants of the Lisbon metropolitan region to certain containment measures.

"The Situation Is Serious"

Gatherings were again limited to 10 people, compared to 20 people in the rest of the country. The consumption of alcohol in public areas has been banned, and shops, terraces or cafes will have to close at 20:00 local time. Only restaurants serving meals on site will be allowed to stay open later.

Experts believe the tourists will eventually come back, but these new measures are bad for the economy and the tourist season. At the price of plane tickets, who's going to want to come here to find bars that are closed and risk being quarantined on their way home.

Less than a week after the announcement that the Portuguese capital would host the Champions League finals in August, hailed by the government as international recognition that the country had managed the epidemic well, "the state of alarm is back," the leading daily *Publico* summed up in its editorial. "The government has done its duty: it has recognized that the situation in the Lisbon region is serious and has taken measures to remedy it," said the newspaper's editor, Manuel Carvalho.

Fines and Increased Surveillance

The new restrictions are aimed at controlling outbreaks of contamination that have broken out in some 15 neighborhoods spread over five municipalities in the region, Prime Minister Antonio Costa said. The head of the Socialist government also announced the adoption in the Council of Ministers of a regulation detailing **the fines that the police can impose on those who organize or participate in unauthorized gatherings.**

Health authorities will also intensify visits to people who test positive for the new coronavirus and

are expected to remain under house arrest.

However, deconfinement continues in the rest of the country, where the state of calamity will be lifted. It will be extended in the municipalities most affected by its persistent outbreaks: Lisbon, Sintra, Odivelas, Loures and Amadora.

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