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Brussels, 19.03.2020

COVID-19 HEADLINES

EU

The **EUROPEAN UNION** will impose an entry ban on travellers from outside the bloc for 30 days to battle the spread of the coronavirus, German Chancellor Merkel said. Member states "agreed to impose an entry ban" into the bloc, with only nationals of EFTA countries and Britain exempt from the restriction, said Merkel, adding that the bloc was taking "*coordinated action to bring back stranded travellers*".(AFP/The Local) [more..](#)

European Union leaders agreed to close Europe's borders for 30 days to prevent the spread of coronavirus but establish fast-track lanes at their countries' frontiers to keep goods moving, bloc leaders said after a video-conference summit. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told a news conference that it would be up to European countries to implement the closure of their borders to citizens from third countries. (Reuters) [more..](#)

Le sommet qui devait se tenir les 26 et 27 mars à Bruxelles entre les 27 dirigeants de l'UE sera remplacé par une vidéoconférence en raison de la pandémie de coronavirus, a annoncé mardi le président du Conseil européen Charles Michel. (AFP/Le Figaro) [plus..](#)

BELGIUM will impose a lockdown from 1100 GMT on Wednesday until April 5 that will restrict the movement of people to contain the spread of coronavirus, Belgian television RTBF reported. Belgians' travel will be limited to visits to supermarkets, pharmacies and banks or for cases of emergency. Gatherings of people will be forbidden but physical activity will be allowed outside, provided a distance of 1.5 metres between people is respected. Police will ensure the lockdown is enforced, RTBF said. (Reuters) [more..](#)

DENMARK: Public crowds of more than 10 people will be banned in Denmark starting Wednesday at 10am local time in a move to curb the spread of coronavirus, the country's prime minister said. (Reuters) [more..](#)

FINLAND will start restricting traffic over its borders on Thursday in an attempt to contain the coronavirus outbreak, Interior Minister Ohisalo said. Finland's centre-left government approved legislation on Tuesday to adopt a state of emergency which the parliament is expected to approve on Wednesday. (Reuters/CNA) [more..](#)

SWEDEN will close its borders to most visitors from non-EU countries from March 19, Home Affairs Minister Mikael Damberg said. (Reuters) [more..](#)

IRELAND'S health service is finalising contracts to add 100 ventilators per week to meet the demand from coronavirus cases that the country's prime minister has forecast could reach 15,000 by the end of the month. Many countries are trying to buy ventilators, used to keep people with coronavirus alive if they struggle to breathe, with neighbouring Britain asking non-medical manufacturers to help produce them. (Reuters) [more..](#)

The **NETHERLANDS** will spend up to 20 billion euros (\$22 billion) in emergency financial assistance for businesses that have run into trouble due to the coronavirus pandemic, Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra said. (Reuters) [more..](#)

The Netherlands will bar all non-EU travelers from entering the country, Dutch PM Rutte told national broadcaster NOS after a video conference with other EU leaders amid the worldwide coronavirus outbreak. (Reuters/Yahoo) [more..](#)

ITALIAN PM Conte told his fellow EU leaders that coronavirus was causing a "socio-economic tsunami" across Europe and that dedicated bonds may be needed to cushion the hit, an Italian government source said. (Reuters) [more..](#)
Italy will rush 10,000 student doctors into service, scrapping their final exams, in an effort to help the struggling health service cope with the coronavirus which claimed another 345 lives. (Reuters) [more..](#)

SPAIN announced a 200 billion euros package to help companies and protect workers and other vulnerable groups affected by the spiralling coronavirus crisis. (Reuters) [more..](#)

ESTONIA AND LATVIA will dispatch ships from Tuesday to bring back hundreds of their citizens stranded on the border between Germany and Poland, following Warsaw's decision last week to shut its borders due the coronavirus outbreak, officials said. (Reuters) [more..](#)

POLAND'S border crossings have turned into bottlenecks after the government closed them to stem the spread of coronavirus, local media reports said, with lines in some places reaching almost 50 km and wait times surpassing a dozen hours. (Reuters/US News) [more..](#)

BULGARIA is already entering into a fiscal deficit amid the global crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic and increased public spending to contain its spread, PM Borissov said. (Reuters/Devdiscourse) [more..](#)

The **CZECH** authorities seized nearly 700,000 face masks that are needed against the coronavirus outbreak from a company seeking a higher price for the shipment, Interior Minister Hamacek said. (Reuters/US News) [more..](#)

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

GB: Le gouvernement britannique a promis mardi de soutenir l'économie "quoi qu'il en coûte" face aux conséquences de la pandémie de coronavirus, annonçant des garanties de l'Etat sur les prêts aux entreprises atteignant 330 milliards de livres et des aides atteignant 20 milliards de livres. (AFP/Le Soir) [plus..](#)

Britain's government set out emergency legislation to tackle a growing coronavirus outbreak, with measures including giving powers to police and immigration officers to detain people and put them in isolation to protect public health. (Reuters) [more..](#)

KYRGYZSTAN has confirmed its first coronavirus cases, as three citizens tested positive after arriving from Saudi Arabia, the healthcare minister said on Wednesday. (Reuters) [more..](#)

BiH: The IMF said it may extend a 165 million euros loan to Bosnia to soften the blow to its healthcare and economy from the spread of coronavirus. (Reuters) [more..](#)

MONTENEGRO has confirmed its first case of coronavirus infection in two female patients who had arrived 12 days ago from the US and Spain, PM Markovic said. (Reuters) [more..](#)

SERBIA will ban people older than 70 from leaving their homes at any time and impose a night curfew on almost everyone else in a bid to halt the spread of coronavirus, President Vucic said, adding the measures take effect on Wednesday. (Reuters/Swiss Info) [more..](#)

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTHERN AFRICA

LIBYA: The Embassies of Algeria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States along with the Delegation of the EU and the Governments of Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates call on all parties in the Libya conflict to declare an immediate, humanitarian cessation of hostilities. (Libyan Express) [more..](#)

MOROCCO'S King Mohammed VI ordered the army to use field hospitals to help health services fight the coronavirus outbreak, the royal cabinet said. (Reuters) [more..](#)

ALGERIAN President Tebboune ordered a ban Tuesday on mass street protests demanding political reforms for more than a year, to slow the spread of the coronavirus. (Reuters/Daily Star) [more..](#)

TUNISIAN police used tear gas to disperse dozens of youths at a traditional ram fight because it broke coronavirus rules against crowds, the local Mosaïque FM radio reported. (Reuters) [more..](#)

Tunisia will impose a curfew from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. starting Wednesday with the army patrolling the streets, Tunisia's president said, tightening the measures to counter the spread of the coronavirus. (Reuters) [more..](#)

JORDAN'S King Abdullah approved a law that gives the government sweeping powers to enforce a state of emergency to help it combat the spread of coronavirus, state media said. (Reuters/US News) [more..](#)

IRAN: [Iran faces catastrophic death toll from coronavirus](#). (DW)

SAUDI ARABIA announced that mosques would no longer accept worshippers for the customary five daily prayers and the weekly Friday prayer, in exceptional measures intended to help limit the spread of the coronavirus. (Reuters) [more..](#)

YEMEN: The banning of flights in and out of Yemen to reduce the spread of coronavirus has seen international relief teams scaled back to essential staff only, medical evacuations halted, and a scheme to limit aid fraud using fingerprinting technology likely put on ice. (The New Humanitarian) [more..](#)

QATAR closed part of the Industrial Area for 14 days over fears of coronavirus spread, with salaries being paid for employees working in the closed part, Qatar's high committee for crisis management said in a press conference aired on state TV. (Reuters) [more..](#)

AFRICA

[FACTBOX-What Africa is doing to fight coronavirus](#). (Reuters)

ETHIOPIA suspended schools, sporting events and social gatherings as it confirmed its fifth case of Covid-19. (The East African/All Africa) [more..](#)

GAMBIA's health ministry reported its first case of coronavirus, a 20-year-old woman who had recently returned from the UK. (Reuters) [more..](#)

ASIA/PACIFIC

SOUTH EAST ASIA: The WHO called for "aggressive" action in South-east Asia to combat the fast-spreading coronavirus, warning that some countries were heading towards community transmission of the deadly disease. (AFP/ST) [more..](#)

PAKISTAN cannot afford to implement the type of large-scale urban lockdowns the West is undertaking as it tries to slow the spread of coronavirus, PM Khan said. (AFP/ST) [more..](#)

JAPAN'S imports from China almost halved last month from a year earlier to log the steepest fall since 1986 as the new coronavirus outbreak disrupted trade, official data showed. (AFP/Outlook India) [more..](#)

SOUTH KOREA said it will loosen restrictions on currency forward positions for banks to encourage financial institutions to supply more dollars as the coronavirus pandemic sends shock waves through global markets. (Reuters) [more..](#)

South Korea reported 93 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, bringing its total infections to 8,413, the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. (Reuters) [more..](#)

AUSTRALIA: The Prime Minister has told Australians not to go overseas as he announced a raft of measures to combat the spread of the coronavirus. (Daily Mail) [more..](#)

AMERICAS

USA: The White House is in talks with the Pentagon about how the military can be deployed to deal with the fast-moving coronavirus, U.S. officials said, including setting up field hospitals in states with a surge in cases. (Reuters/MSN) [more..](#)

The **MEXICAN** government has not yet received a formal proposal from the United States about migrants in that country being returned to Mexico due to coronavirus, Mexico's foreign ministry said a brief statement. (Reuters) [more..](#)

The **ECONOMIES OF MEXICO, CHILE AND ARGENTINA** will all likely shrink this year while **BRAZIL** should expect no growth as the coronavirus pandemic ravages supply and demand around the world, Credit Suisse said in a note to clients. (Reuters) [more..](#)

BRAZIL has recaptured nearly 600 prisoners who fled four jails ahead of a planned lockdown of the facilities over the coronavirus pandemic, while roughly 800 remain on the run, the Sao Paulo state prison authority said in a statement on Tuesday. (Reuters) [more..](#)

Brazil will partially close its border with Venezuela starting on Wednesday to slow the spread of the new coronavirus, while allowing trucks with merchandise to continue crossing, President Jair Bolsonaro said. (Reuters) [more..](#)

CHILE may postpone a referendum on a new constitution scheduled for April 26 due to the coronavirus outbreak, Interior Minister Gonzalo Blumel said. (Reuters/US News) [more..](#)

GUATEMALA: Flights to Guatemala of Guatemalans and other nationalities deported from the United States under a deal with Washington have been temporarily suspended, Guatemala's government said, amid concerns over the spread of coronavirus. (Reuters) [more..](#)

VENEZUELA: Le Fonds monétaire international (FMI) a rejeté mardi une demande d'aide de 5 milliards de dollars réclamée par le président du Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, afin de lutter contre la pandémie de nouveau coronavirus dans son pays. (AFP/Journal de Montréal) [plus..](#)

Roadblocks across Venezuela snarled the transportation of goods and businesses in the capital Caracas reported that food deliveries failed to arrive, in signs that a national coronavirus quarantine could worsen a humanitarian crisis. (Reuters) [more..](#)

BOLIVIA will close its borders to non-residents and suspend all international flights to combat the spread of coronavirus, the interim government announced. (Reuters) [more..](#)

ARGENTINA'S economy minister pledged a package of decisive measures, including tax breaks and higher state spending on infrastructure, to protect the country's already vulnerable economy from the impact of the global coronavirus pandemic. (Reuters) [more..](#)

ECONOMIC ISSUES

G20: Saudi Arabia said it would convene a virtual summit next week bringing together the leaders from the Group of G20 to address the coronavirus pandemic. (Reuters) [more..](#)

The **WORLD BANK** said it had increased to \$14 billion the amount of fast-track financing available to members to respond to the global coronavirus pandemic, adding \$2 billion to an initial package announced on March 3. (Reuters) [more..](#)

SAS: The governments of Sweden and Denmark said they would provide more than 275 million euros in guarantees to protect airline SAS from the economic impact of the new coronavirus. (AFP/The Local) [more..](#)

AIRBUS announced plans to halt operations at its plants in France and Spain for four days as the coronavirus crisis spread from battered airlines to the manufacturing sector. (Reuters) [more..](#)

HEALTH ISSUES

GERMAN INSTITUTE: The coronavirus pandemic is likely to take about two years to run its course, the head of Germany's public health agency said, adding that much depended on the speed with which a vaccine against the virus was developed. Wieler, president of the Robert Koch Institute, said that eventually some 60% to 70% of the global population would have been infected, recovered and acquired immunity, but it was impossible to say how fast that would happen. (Reuters) [more..](#)

The **UNHCR AND IOM** will temporarily suspend sending refugees on to resettle in new permanent homes abroad because of travel disruptions caused by the coronavirus, the agency said. (Reuters) [more..](#)