

# Norway closes borders to nearly all non-residents over virus

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Norway announced Wednesday that it would close its borders to almost all non-residents in a bid to avoid highly transmissible new strains of the coronavirus spreading.

"From midnight Thursday to Friday, Norway will introduce the strictest rules in this territory since March 12," Prime Minister Erna Solberg told

a news conference.

"In practical terms, the border will be closed to all those who do not live in Norway."

She added that a handful of exceptions would apply, including for health workers arriving from Sweden and Finland, and people transporting goods. Also exempt are energy and defence workers as well as foreign journalists.

The restriction applies however to foreign athletes as Norway prepares to host international ski trials in the next few weeks.

The Nordic nation, which is not a member of the European Union but is part of the passport-free Schengen zone, aims to re-evaluate the measure in two weeks.

The kingdom, which has one of the lowest infection rates in Europe, said it aims to keep the health threat under control.

"We see that other countries have passed from low infection rates to an uncontrolled spread in the space of a few week," Solberg said, citing Ireland.

The new curbs add to entry measures for the country that were already among the strictest in Europe. For example, it requires people to have a negative COVID test before entering the country, register with the local authorities and respect a quarantine.

The Oslo area has since the weekend entered a semi-lockdown following the discovery of a cluster of cases of a new more contagious strain, first discovered in Britain, in a retirement home near the Norwegian capital.

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