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Press Release  
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## Phase-out strategy (phase 1b, 11 May): More social contacts and shops allowed to open, subject to conditions

Today, Wednesday 6 May, **the National Security Council, extended to include the Ministers-President, met to validate, complete and clarify the new phase of the phase-out strategy**, phase 1b, which will start on 11 May. The experts gave this new phase the go-ahead, as a number of criteria are looking well at the moment: the number of hospital admissions per day, the average trend of these hospital admissions which is lower than in previous weeks, the number of occupied beds in ICUs, testing and tracing. These criteria will continue to play a role in the gradual phase-out process.

To address issues such as loneliness and the difficulties of physical distance, the National Security Council decided in the first place to **allow a further extension of social contacts as of next Sunday**.

At present, you are allowed to meet outside with two people - always the same - to go for a walk or to do sports together. This is still allowed.

**From 10 May, every family may receive a maximum of four people - always the same - at home.** To limit the number of contacts and to prevent the spread of the virus, visitors can only meet with one family. The aim is to minimize the number of families (people under the same roof) meeting each other and to ensure the greatest level of reciprocity.

This is possible under the following conditions:

- A **safe distance** must of course be observed with the visitors.
- If people have an outside garden or terrace, it is better to organize **this visit outside**.
- Clearly, no visitors are allowed if a family member or one of the visitors is ill.
- Special attention should be paid to older and vulnerable people.

This system also makes it easier to trace people's contacts in case one of them is infected with Covid-19.

We will continue to assess the possibilities for extending these contacts as we go through the different phases. This will not be possible by 18 May.

On the 11th of May we will also **reopen the shops**. Shops will only be allowed to reopen - as always - if they can strictly comply with the following rules:

- For the shops that are already open - **only 1 customer per 10m<sup>2</sup> will be allowed, for a maximum of 30 minutes**. An exception is made for smaller shops.
- Customers are strongly recommended to **wear protection that covers the nose and mouth** when inside a store. **In any case, a safe distance must be kept**.
- Employers are responsible for the health and safety of their employees and must make every effort to **ensure safe working conditions**

To avoid overcrowding, people will have to **do their shopping alone**. An exception is made for children under the age of 18 - they can be accompanied by a parent - and for people who require assistance. We also recommend that you frequent shops that are located **in a city or town near your home or workplace**. Day trips and tourist activities are still not allowed. Gatherings of people are also not allowed. Local authorities will ensure that safety distances in public spaces are maintained and will take the necessary measures. Priority should be given to people over 65 years of age, people with reduced mobility and healthcare staff.

**You may use public transport if you have no alternative.** The aim is to give priority to those most in need of public transport.

**Unfortunately, contact professions outside of medical and paramedical care are not yet allowed to resume their activities.**

**Markets will not be able to start in this phase either. Only individual market stalls** (food and non-food) will be allowed by the local authorities and at the usual locations. As everywhere, a safe distance will have to be respected.

Unfortunately, cafes, bars, restaurants and festivity halls, recreational, cultural and tourist sites will remain closed in this phase.

**The next phase is currently scheduled to start on 18 May.** The communities and educational stakeholders are already working together to ensure a gradual resumption of lessons in primary and secondary education.

In the meantime, together with the experts, we will determine **the feasibility and conditions** for:

- Markets to resume;
- Museums, libraries, zoos etc. to reopen;
- Professions with physical contact such as hairdressers to restart;
- Increasing the number of attendees at weddings and funerals;
- Outdoor sports training to resume. How to resume sports and cultural events will also be analysed by the experts on the basis of the work submitted by the competent ministers with a view to proposing a more specific timetable for the various phases;
- The issue of day trips, second homes or the holiday homes will be addressed during the preparation of phase 3 (estimated date: 8 June).

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