First case of coronavirus confirmed in Belgium

Tuesday, 04 February 2020

Belgium has reported its first confirmed coronavirus case after one of the nine Belgians repatriated from China at the weekend tested positive, authorities said Tuesday.

The public services (FPS Santé) said that one of the repatriated persons, who were put in quarantine in a military hospital after their arrival, “appeared to be infected by the new coronavirus.”

“The results of the other compatriots are negative,” the FPS wrote in an online statement, published on a recently released coronavirus website.

The patient, whose identity was not disclosed, was said to be in good health and to have not developed any symptoms from the virus at the time of the tests.

On Monday evening, they were transferred to Brussels Saint-Pierre hospital, designated as reference health centre to treat any potential coronavirus cases.

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First case of coronavirus confirmed in Belgium

Europe’s deadly outbreak surged to 426, with the first two deaths outside China declared in the Philippines and in Hong Kong.

The infected patient was among a group of around 350 Europeans, including nine Belgians and three relatives, who were voluntarily repatriated from the province of Hubei, whose capital city Wuhan is the epicentre of the outbreak.

Belgium’s first confirmed case comes as the virus, which has sickened at least 20,000 people since it broke out in late December, continues to spread globally, with the World Health Organisation declaring the outbreak a global health emergency last week.

In Europe, France, Germany, Finland, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK have all confirmed cases of the virus.

Gabriela Galindo
The Brussels Times

Correction: The first confirmed deaths outside of China took place in Hong Kong and the Philippines, not in Thailand.

European climate law is ‘a surrender’, says Greta Thunberg

Wednesday, 04 March 2020

The new European climate law presented by the European Commission on Wednesday is “a surrender” to the challenge of climate change, according to teen climate activist Greta Thunberg.

The European climate law is an important step in the implementation of the Green Deal, which is the European Commission’s plan to make the EU climate neutral by 2050, by making it binding for member States. If they are not on track to achieve the objective, they can be called to order.

However, the intention to achieve a climate neutral Europe by 2050 is no more than “a surrender,” said Greta Thunberg and 33 other climate activists, including Belgians Adélaïde Charlier, Anuna De Wever and Julie Schümmer, in an open letter to the European Commission on Wednesday.

“We are acting today to make the EU the world’s first climate neutral continent by 2050. The Climate Law is the legal translation of our political commitment, and sets us irrevocably on the path to a more sustainable future,” President Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement.
“It is the heart of the European Green Deal. It offers predictability and transparency for European industry and investors. And it gives direction to our green growth strategy and guarantees that the transition will be gradual and fair,” she added.

“‘Net zero emissions by 2050’ for the EU equals surrender. It means giving up. We don’t just need goals for just 2030 or 2050. We, above all, need them for 2020 and every following month and year to come,” the letter read.

The push for climate-neutrality will be felt in all sectors from energy to agriculture, from building renovation to packaging, from public transport to the banking sector.

For each sector, there will be legislative proposals, action plans and measures to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, by 2030 the Commission wants new rules on packaging, which should become as recyclable or biodegradable as possible.

Essential is the so-called global CO2 budget, which represents a maximum of 340 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide that can still be released into the atmosphere if global warming is to be limited to 1.5 degrees.

“We will not be satisfied with anything less than a science-based pathway,” Thunberg said. “Nature doesn’t bargain and you cannot make ‘deals’ with physics,” she added.

Maithé Chini
The Brussels Times
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