

# **The role of STR's during Pandemic and the Antwerp wave: supra-local approach to a local pandemic resurgence: preconditions, tools, approach: lessons learned and critical success factors**

Governor Cathy Berx  
Province of Antwerp

AERTE Days in Florence 2021



Provincie  
Antwerpen



Vlaanderen  
verbeelding werkt



Cathy Berx  
Gouverneur  
Provincie Antwerpen

# **1.**

# **Legislative framework**



# 1. Legislative framework

- **Civil protection act of 31 December 1963 (art. 4)**
- **Civil safety and security Act of 15 May 2007**
- **Royal Decree of 22 May 2019**  
*"Decree on emergency planning and management of emergency situations at municipal and provincial level and on the role of the mayors and provincial governors in the event of crisis events and situations which require coordination or management at national level" (also meant for infectious diseases)*
- **Ministerial Decrees**  
During pandemic, role of mayors and provincial governors specified and included in Ministerial Decrees
- **Belgian Pandemic Act of 15 July 2021**

# 1. Legislative framework

Art. 128 **Provincial Act**: the governor guarantees the public order, safety, security and good health within the province.

Art. 135, § 2, **5° New Municipal Act**: the municipality/mayor takes the measures to avoid or stop the outbreaks of infectious diseases.  
(the municipality/mayor can/must use its/his competence when the public health/health of people is in danger).

# **2.**

## **Role of the governors**

## 2. Role of the governors & the Antwerp approach

03-03-2020 : Start of **consultations with hospitals in Antwerp**

11-03-2020 : Consultation with **Minister of the Interior**

- Landwide ban on events +1000 people
- Exception (in plus) possible when certain conditions are met

**In Antwerp (12-03-2020):**

- Conditions were especially applied to ban smaller events that could not be organized safely (lack of social distancing, mix of generations, duration, presence of vulnerable people, indoor, standing...). Clear demand for a federal Phase!
- Proclamation of provincial phase of the Emergency Plan:
  - systematic consultation with the Provincial Crisis Cel (PCC)
  - almost daily consultation with the hospitals

## 2. Role of the governors



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**13-03-2020** : **proclamation federal phase** Emergency Plan

- General lockdown
- Systematic and almost daily consultation with National Crisis Centre / mayors
- Implementation of measures and escalation of problems in the field (enforcement, PPE...)
- Contribution to implementation federal measures: estimation of needs, distribution and production of PPE (detainees, companies)

+ subsequently:

- Additional Flemish policy decisions: 'midcare', residential care centres,...

# **3. Ministerial Decrees**





# 3. Ministerial Decrees

## New measures /abolition of measures – established in **Ministerial Decrees**

- Content of the measures is thoroughly and meticulously communicated and explained to mayors
- Answering questions on interpretation and implementation
- Implementation problems > escalated to higher level/NCCN
- Communication is aligned

Result: **greater uniformity** of **application** of measures and **enforcement**

+ Additional rules (protocols) per sector to protect everyone's health  
(when measures were loosened step by step)



## 3. Ministerial Decrees

**24-07-20**: Adaptation in Ministerial Decree (art.23)

- From now on, governors as well as mayors are allowed to **take preventive or reactive measures**

Explicitation possibility/duty of imposing **stricter local measures**

Cf. art. 128 Provincial Act: the governor guarantees the public order, safety, security and good health within the province.

Art. 135, § 2, 5° New Municipal Act: the municipality/mayor takes the measures to avoid or stop the outbreaks of infectious diseases.

# **4.**

# **The Antwerp wave**

**July & August 2020**



# 4. The Antwerp wave

27-07-2020 : National Security Council

- Special attention for the situation in Antwerp (city & province)
- Half of all positive tests in BE: detected in the region of Antwerp
- Reproduction number rose above 2, indicating an exponential increase in the number of infections
- Increased pressure on family doctors and hospitals



## 4. The Antwerp wave

**29-07-2020** : Issuance 1<sup>st</sup> **police regulation** on **additional Antwerp measures**

- Additional to and more strict than the federal/national measures
- E.g. curfew, mouth-nose masks, additional regulations for bars & restaurants/markets, only non-contact sports, mandatory teleworking, ban nightly alcohol sale for take-out, ban on gatherings of +10 persons
- > Lots of (international) **press attention**
- **Further additional measures** in the **most affected area** (city Antwerp & periphery) : Total ban public events/celebrations/fairs, fitness centres & banquet halls have to close (exc. funeral ceremonies)





Gouverneur Cathy Berx stuurt voor de tweede keer de provinciale coronamaatregelen bij. © Klau Scheider

# Gouverneur Cathy Berx waarschuwt "Horeca open tot 1 uur is een bijsturing, géén versoepeling"

Cafés en restaurants in de provincie Antwerpen mogen vanaf vandaag/woensdag weer onopenblijven tot 1 uur. De avondklok wordt...

De Telegraaf

NIEUWS | BINNENLAND

# Gouverneur: hard optreden tegen schenders avondklok Antwerpen

23 jul 2020 in BINNENLAND

ANTWERPEN - Mensen die in de provincie Antwerpen de avondklok en andere maatregelen tegen verspreiding van corona overtreden kunnen een boete krijgen tot maximaal ongeveer 1600 euro. Er zal hard, kortdaat worden opgetreden. No mezel provinciegouverneur Cathy Berx op een persconferentie.



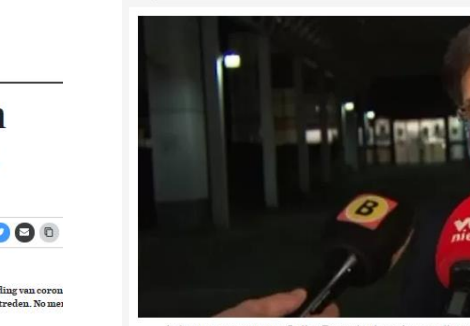
# Antwerpse avondklok smelt als sneeuw voor de zon



Gouverneur Cathy Berx. Beeld BELGA

Gouverneur Cathy Berx (CD&V) schaft de avondklok in Antwerpen tijdelijk af door de hittegolf. Het samenscholingsverbod blijft wél van kracht.

JNN 0 augustus 2020, 07:37



Antwerps gouverneur Cathy Berx staat na de marathonvergadering de pers te woord. © VTM Nieuws

# Antwerpse avondklok haalt internationale media

Het nieuws dat in de provincie Antwerpen nu een avondklok geldt, wordt ook door internationale media opgepikt.



Gouverneur Cathy Berx was vanavond te gast in 'De Afpraak' - © VRT

# Antwerps gouverneur Cathy Berx: "Tijd voor zeer vergaande verstrengingen"

Bron: BELGA  
Maandag 26 oktober 2020 om 21:57

# Avondklok en mondkapjesplicht Antwerpen, dringend advies om regio te mijden



# LIVEBLOG - Bubbel beperkt tot 5 personen in heel het land, provincie Antwerpen voert avondklok in van 23.30 tot 6 uur

De Provinciale Crisiscel Antwerpen heeft beslist dat er een avondklok komt in heel de provincie Antwerpen van 23.30 uur tot 6 uur 's ochtrends. Eerder op de dag heeft de Nationale veiligheidsraad de sociale bubbel fors verkleind voor heel het land. De komende maand mag een gezinsbubbel maximaal 5 vaste contacten hebben, kinderen onder de 12 jaar niet megerkend. Ook winkelen wordt opnieuw strenger en er komt een registratieplicht voor sportplekken en wellnesscentra. Herbekijk alle updates van onze liveblog.

W antwerpen heeft over coronamaatregelen in België kan terecht op de website info-coronavirus.be of het nummer 0800-14-888. Bij TeleOrthaal kan u terecht voor een luistrend oor op het telefoonnummer 102, of via chat op teleorthoal.be. Jongeren kunnen terecht bij Aweel op telefoonnummer 102, of via chat op aweel.be.

W de opties en de trends in detail wil bekijken klik hier Volg hieronder de meest recente nieuwsupdates.

# Coronavirus à Anvers : pour la gouverneure de la province, le relâchement des mesures est intervenu bien trop tôt



# Qui est Cathy Berx, la femme qui a imposé le couvre-feu à Anvers ?



Muriel Lefevre

Cathy Berx est la femme qui a imposé un couvre-feu à la province d'Anvers. Elle a ainsi coupé l'herbe sous le pied de Bart De Wever et, au passage, acquis une notoriété internationale. Portrait.



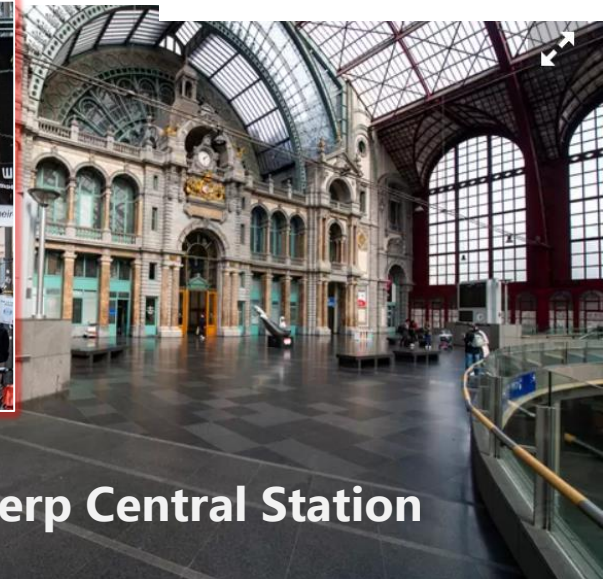
# 4. The Antwerp wave



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Provincie Antwerpen



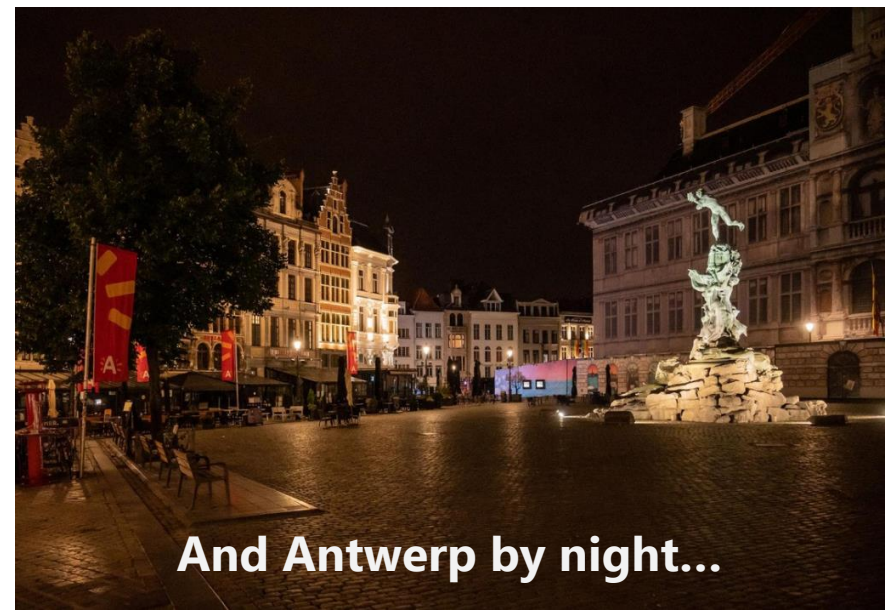
Antwerp Grote Markt



Antwerp Central Station



Antwerp Groenplaats



And Antwerp by night...



## 4. The Antwerp wave

**05-08-2020** : Issuance 2<sup>nd</sup> **police regulation** on **additional Antwerp measures**

**12-08-2020** : Issuance 3<sup>rd</sup> **police regulation** on **additional Antwerp measures**

The **main message** of Antwerp measures:

- sense of urgency: change behaviour and social contact
- Track down the main sources of infection
- Base and focus your measures upon those sources/fields
- For a time period that is long enough - at least 4 weeks

+ **Detection project Antwerp** – necessary complement to Flemish system of contact investigation/source detection



# 4. The Antwerp wave—some conclusions

- Aim of the measures
  - To bring about a **very rapid and radical change in behavior** in order to ceil infection numbers, and subsequently reduce them
- Some conclusions<sup>1</sup>
  - **Swift and decisive action** can contain local outbreaks
  - Need for set of effective measures - formulated in a clear and concise way
  - Measures must succeed in drastically reducing number of contact moments
  - Curfew: important role in achieving this aim
  - The more infections, the more effective the curfew was



## 4. The Antwerp wave

And what's more....

### 01-07-2020 : **Start of primary health care zones**

- Established to better coordinate the work of local authorities, care and assistance providers
- In Antwerp: very frequent consultation between Provincial Crisis Centre & primary health care zones, even up till now

### 26-08-2020 : **Abolition** of the Antwerp additional measures



# 4. The Antwerp wave - aftermath

October 2020 – approximately May '21 : **second national wave: smart and better balanced lock-down**

22-01-20 : **special Hearing of Parliamentary Committee COVID-19 epidemic**

- Title of contribution : Explanation and evaluation COVID-19 crisis in the Antwerp Province
- Other contributor: colleague of Walloon Brabant, Gilles Mahieu

January 2021 – February 2021 : very successful start of **vaccination campaign** (outstanding work by primary health care zones & by more than 10.000 volunteers)

- Role: to designate and facilitate establishment vaccination centres

# **5. National phase-out**



# 5. National phase-out

11-05-2021 : presentation of the summer plan

- If the number of **COVID beds** taken in **intensive care** continues to **move towards the 500 maximum**
- And if the **vaccination campaign** goes according to plan

The **Summer Plan** foresaw four important steps (ventilation/vaccination/testing):

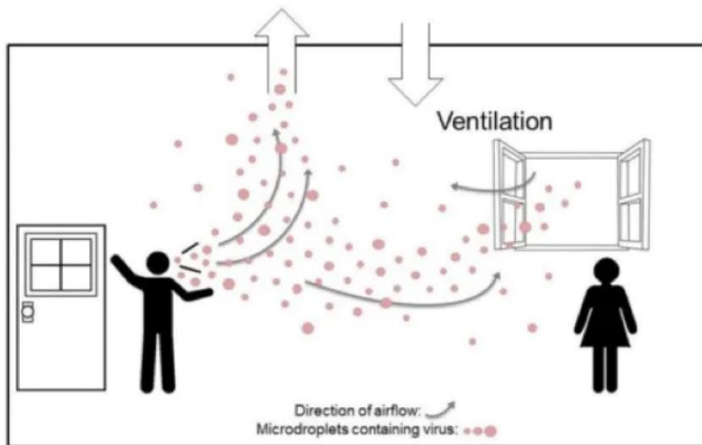
- **09-06-2021** : Step. re1 e.g-opening restaurants/bars (4/table)
- **01-07-2021** : Step 2 e.g. small events/no restrictions sports/back to office (telework not obliged anymore)
- **30-07-2021** : Step 3 e.g. larger events/larger receptions inside
- **01-09-2021** : Step 4 e.g. larger events/CST



# 5. National phase-out: Important tools



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Gouverneur  
Provincie Antwerpen





# 5. National phase-out

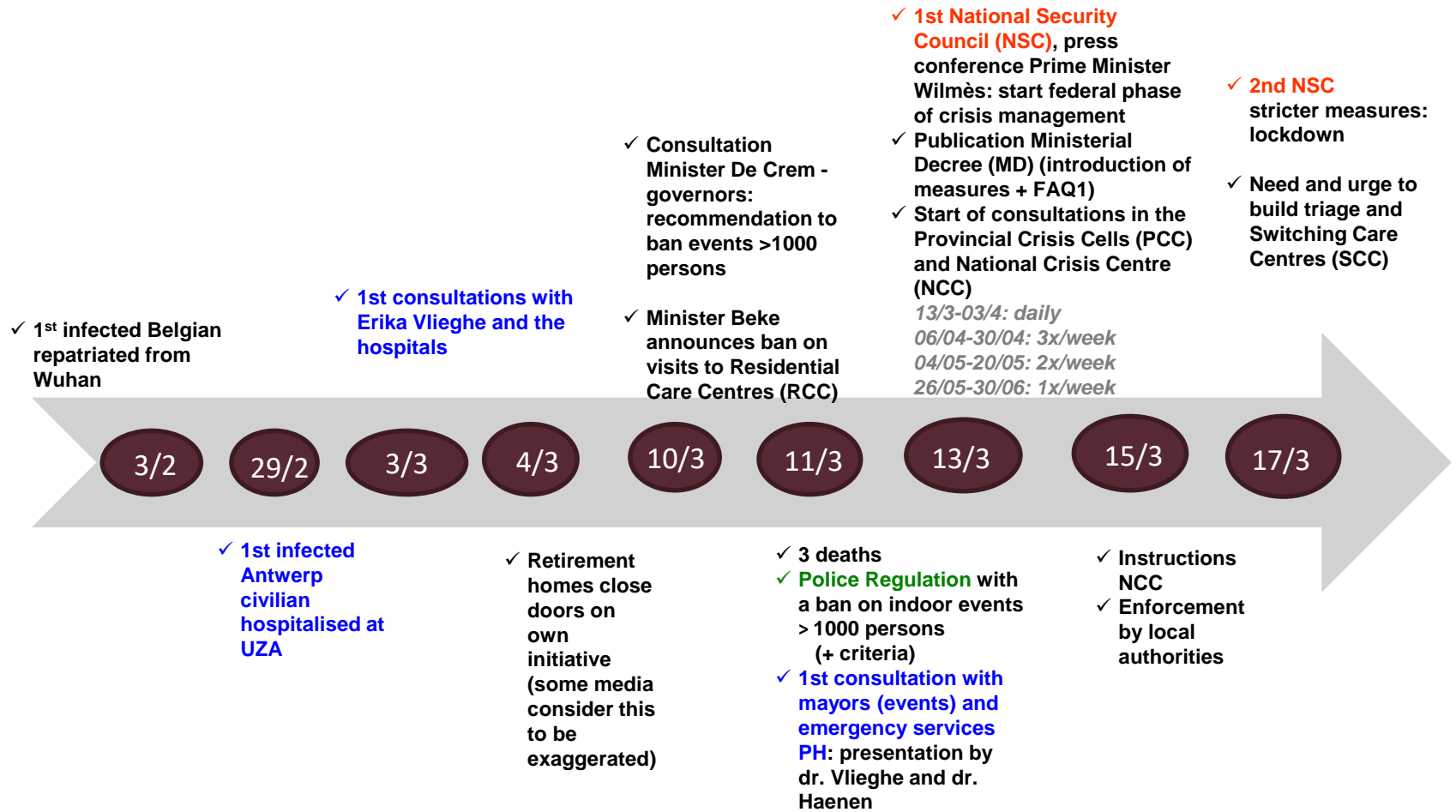
Most important themes/discussion points of past summer

- Large international festivals (Tomorrowland Summer Edition Boom)
- Easing of corona measures
- Evaluation
- Phase-out federal phase (in preparation)
- Local outbreak-management: preconditions, toolbox temporary extra local measure and restrictions, division of responsibilities

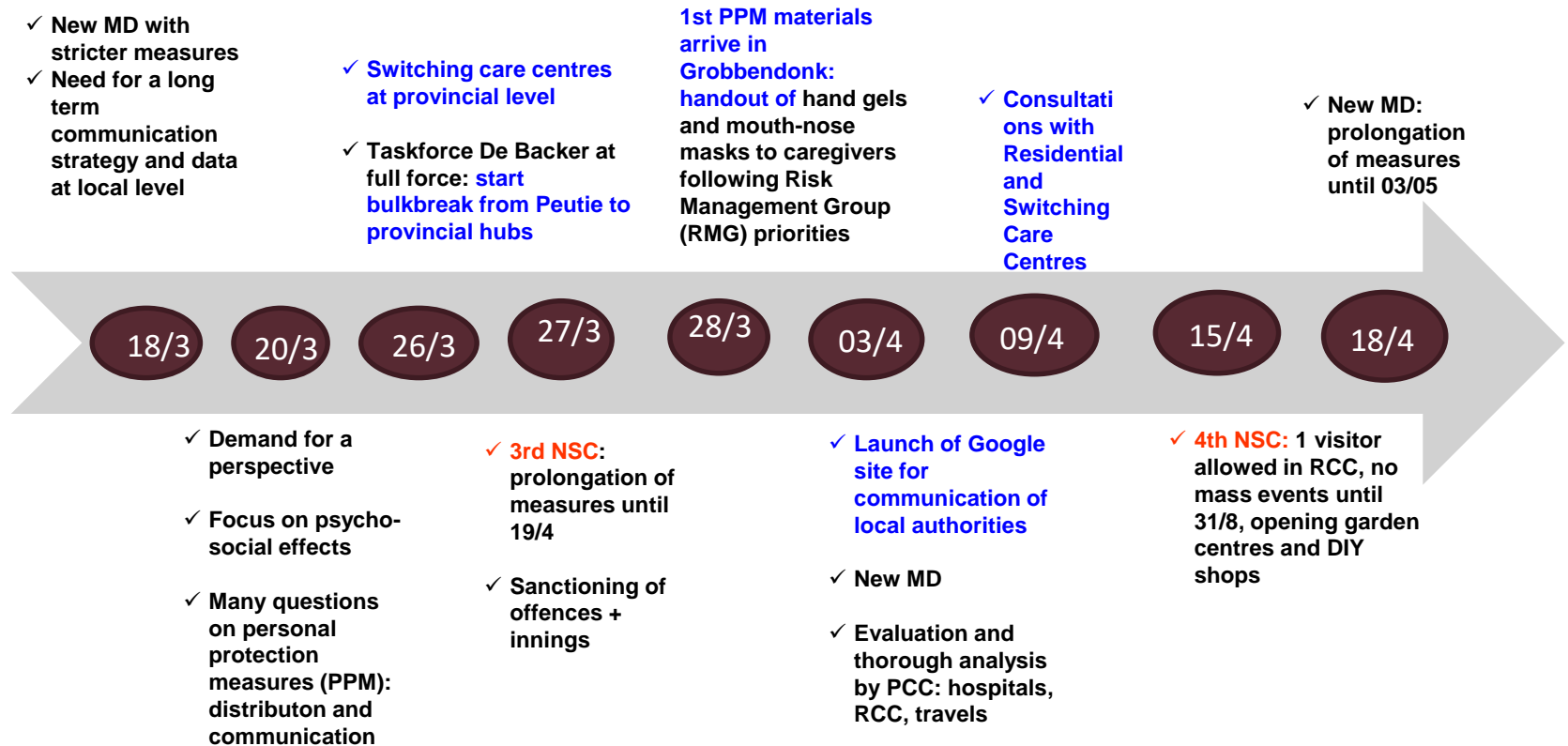


# **6. Chronology: 2 Years of SARS-CoV-19**

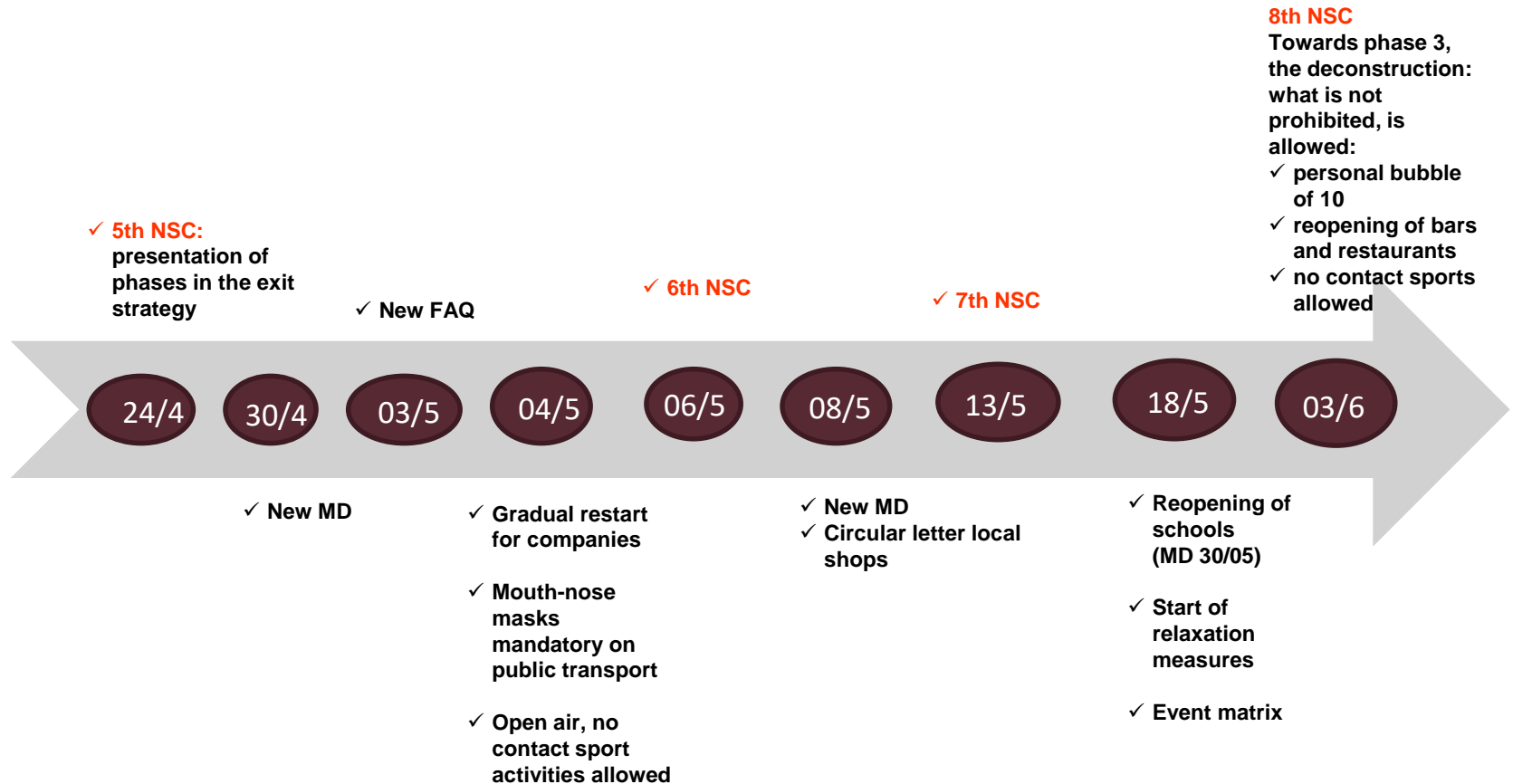
# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (1)



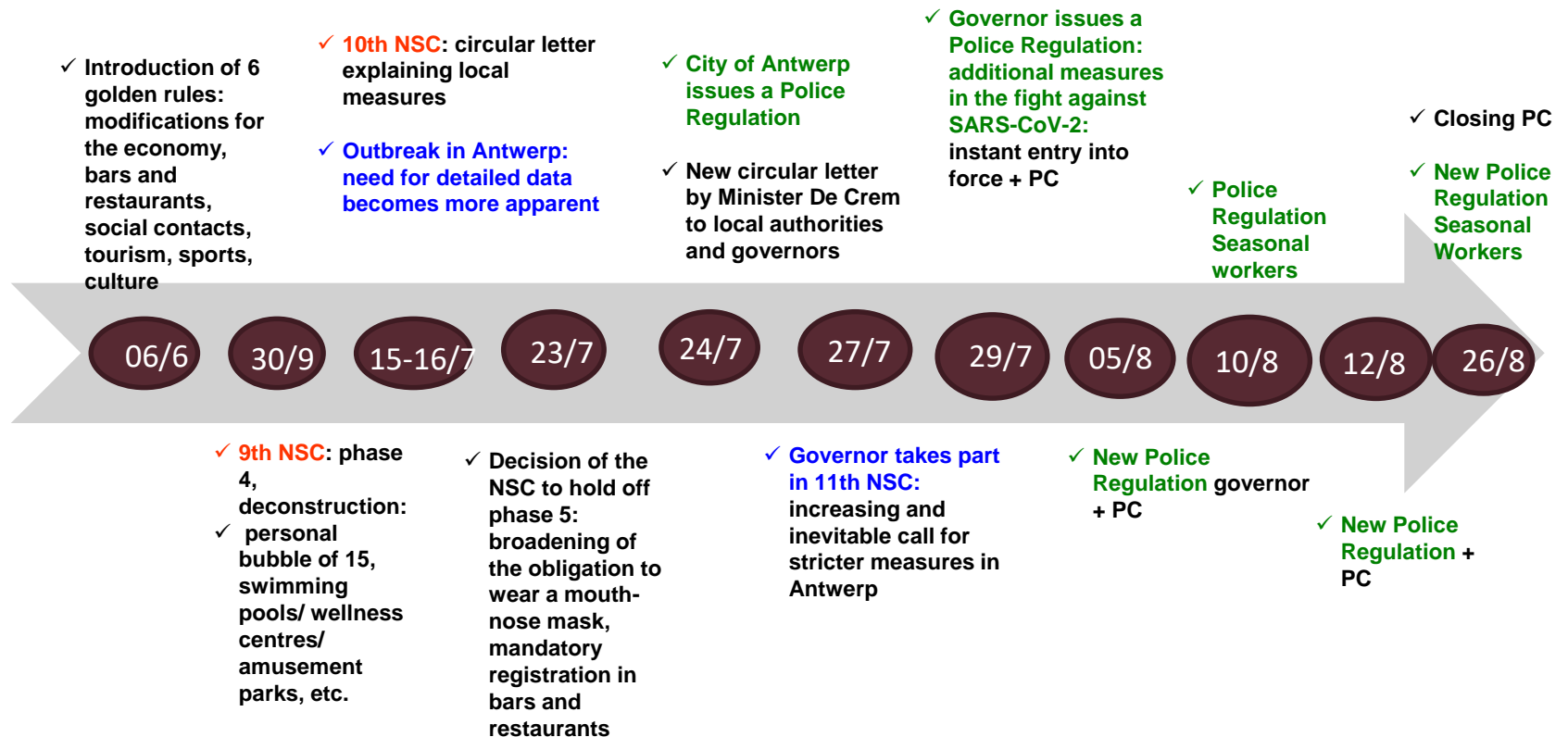
# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (2)



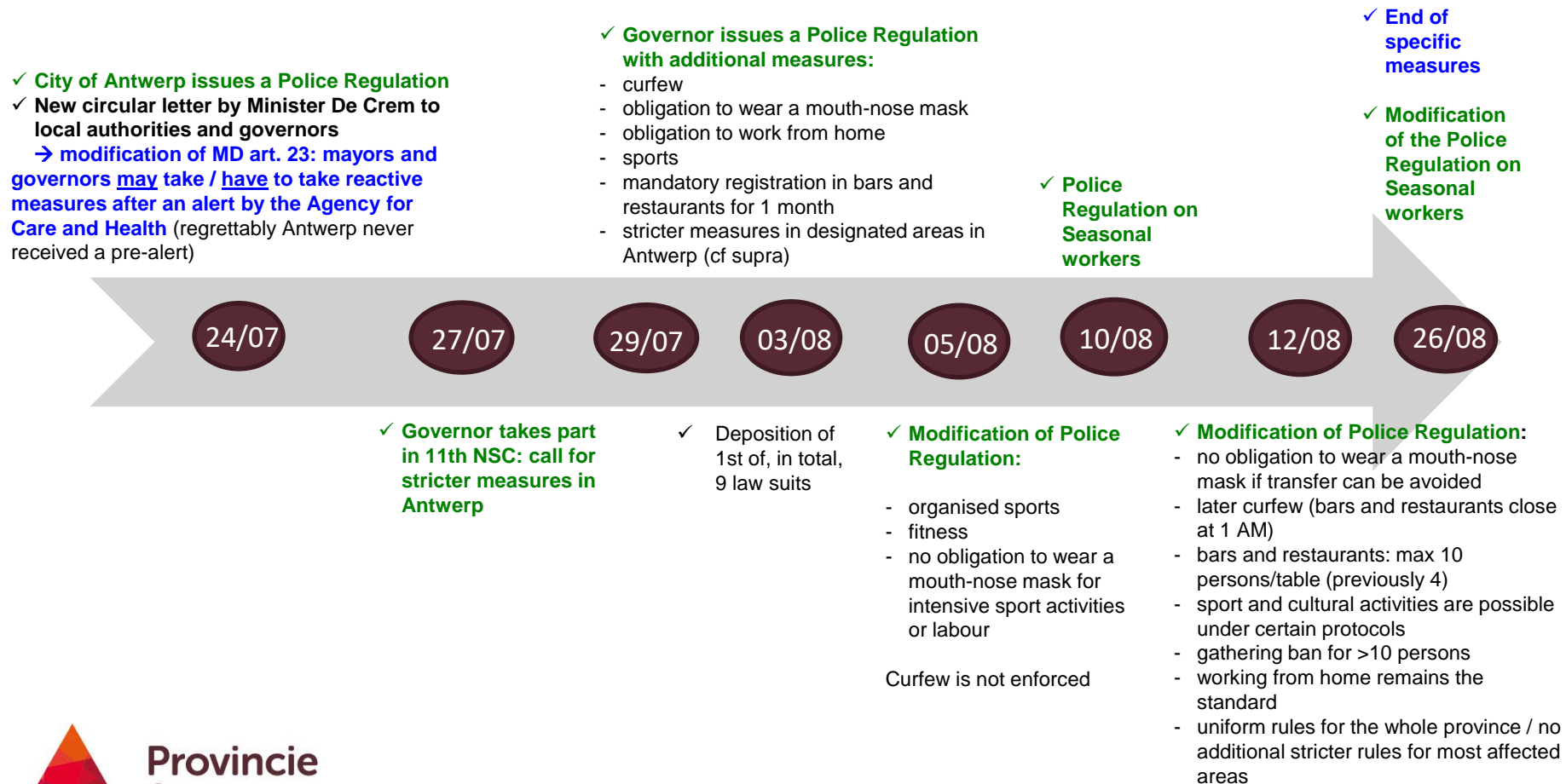
# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (3)



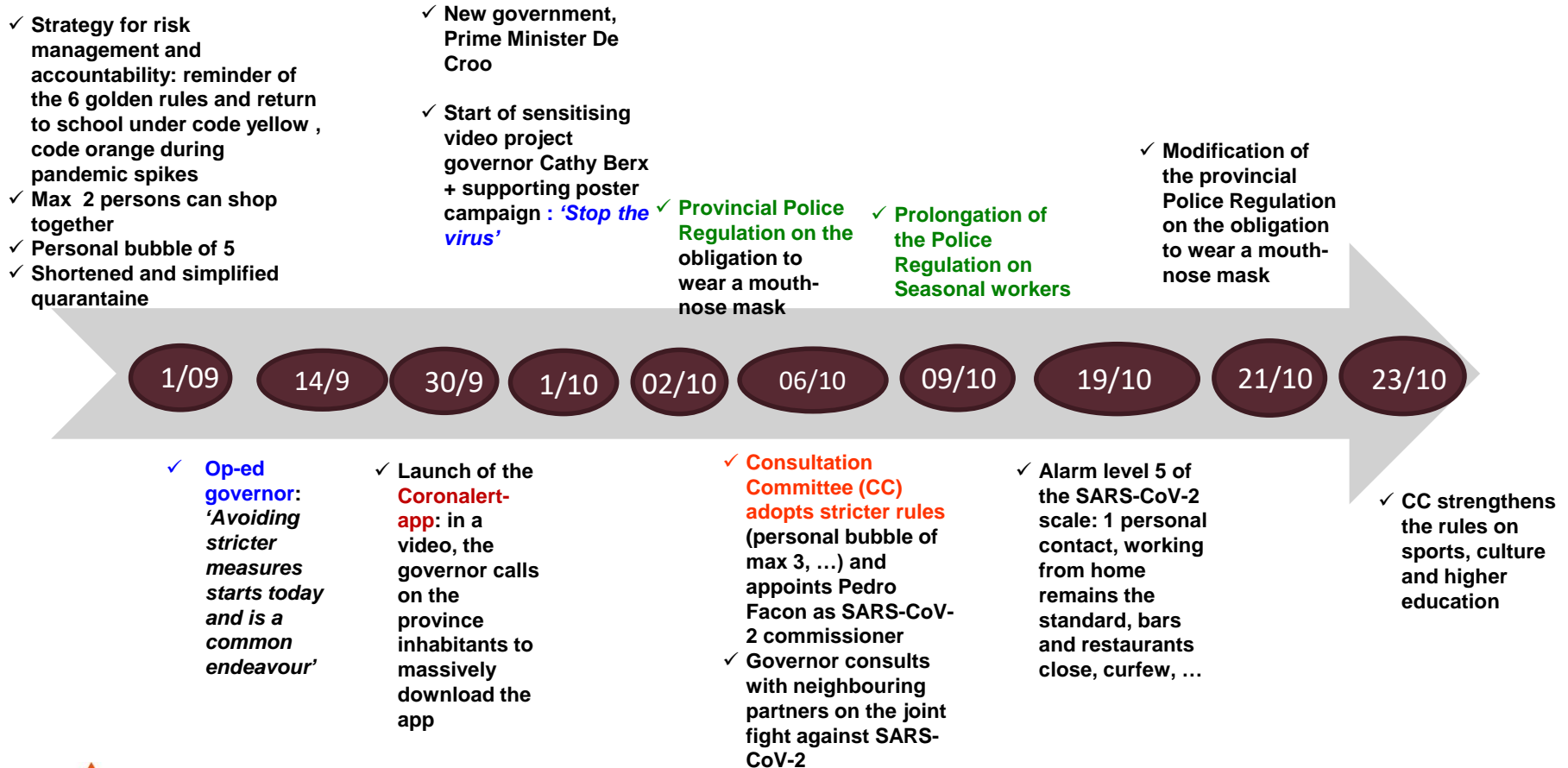
# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (4) transition to stricter measures in Antwerp



# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (5): Evolution of measures in the province of Antwerp (detail of summer 2020)



# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (6): period following the stricter measures in Antwerp (26/08 until Dec 2020)



# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (7): period following the stricter measures in Antwerp (26/08 until Dec 2020)

✓ **CC moves to a stricter lockdown:** max 1 personal contact, obligation to work from home, closure of non-essential shops and non-medical contact professions, places of worship can remain open but no services can be held, schools move to 50% contact education in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, 100% distance learning in higher education

✓ **CC gives the green light for the reopening of non-essential shops,** stresses contact rules during the Christmas period and announces sharp controls on travels

✓ **Do not defer necessary health care: launch of extra provincial campaign on guaranteed health care.** Province of Antwerp on posters and breadbags, in cooperation with First-Line-Care and Patients Union

✓ **CC does not allow for a relaxation of the measures taking, into account the epidemiological situation, instead focuses on a stronger enforcement of existing rules:** number of social contacts, traveling, individual shopping (no funshopping) and obligation to work from home

✓ **CC makes travel rules stricter:** mandatory quarantine and tests on day 1 and 7 after a stay in a red zone for over 48 hours and stricter border controls

30/10  
- 2/11

09/11

30/11

2/12

11/12

15/12

18/12

23/12

30/12

✓ **Provincial Police Regulation issues a ban on Christmas markets and winter villages**

✓ **Op-ed governor on why tobacco shops don't have to close**

✓ **Modification of the provincial Police Regulation introducing the obligation to wear a mouth-nose mask to people >13 years of age**

✓ **Modification of the provincial Police Regulation on Christmas markets and winter villages**

✓ **Provincial Police Regulation: ban on door-to-door New Years' or Three Magi choirs**

✓ **Op-ed governor: 'Secretly partying and singing door-to-door = longer closure of bars and restaurants'**

✓ **Governor Cathy Berx and Royal Commissioner Ina Adema consult with border mayors on a safe transit during the end-of-year period**

✓ **Provincial Police Regulation ban on possession and use of fireworks**

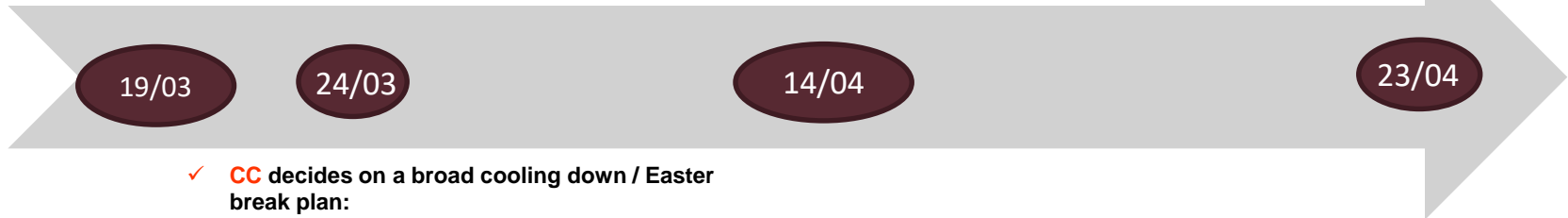


# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (8): starting 2021 (MD 28/10)



# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (9): cooling down and Easter break

- ✓ Following a steep rise in new infections **CC** pauses the outdoor plan and limits the number of seats on trains to tourist areas. It also greenlights the deployment of antigen tests in sectors where working from home is not possible.
- ✓ **CC** decides on partial reopening of schools: 50% for 2nd and 3rd grade in secondary education, 1 day/week contact education in higher education and full time contact education for the rest. End of Easter break for outdoor bubbles, shops and contact professions.
- ✓ Curfew is lifted and replaced by a gathering ban (max 3 persons between midnight and 5 AM)
- ✓ Relaxation measures:
  - possibility to simultaneously host 2 persons per household
  - reopening of terraces for bars and restaurants
  - events (incl receptions), cultural shows and worship services for max 50 persons
  - amusement parks, professional salvage and brocante markets
- ✓ **CC** confirms end of the Easter break and issues rules for outdoor terraces (max 4 persons/table, 1,5m distance in between, opening hours from 8 AM to 10 PM,...). **CC** also allows organised activities with max 25 persons outdoor or 10 persons indoor in case of minors up to 12 years of age



- ✓ **CC** decides on a broad cooling down / Easter break plan:
  - max 4 persons outdoors
  - mandatory appointment for shopping in non-essential stores
  - closing of non-medical contact professions
  - suspension of lessons at all educational levels from 29/03 until 02/04
  - stricter controls on working from home
  - continued ban on non-essential travel
  - static manifestations limited to max 50 persons

# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (10): summer plan

✓ **CC** presents a broad summer plan (on the condition that ICU remains <500 and the vaccination campaign runs as planned)

✓ 09/06

- possibility to host 4 persons indoors
- mandatory working from home but 1 return moment is allowed
- reopening of indoor areas of bars and restaurants
- for events, max 200 persons indoors, 400 persons outdoors
- for non professional sports, max 50 persons indoors, 100 outdoors
- for indoor parties or receptions, max 50 persons
- for worship services, marriages and funerals, max 100 persons indoors, 200 outdoors
- reopening of fairs and non professional salvage markets
- reopening of fitness and public wellness centres
- reopening, subject to a ventilation protocol, of movie theatres, bowling bioscopen, bowling alleys, casino', indoor parts of amusement parks, zoos

✓ **CC** issues rules on safe and free traveling during the summer, by making use of a corona certificate, a Passenger Location Form and 2 free-of-charge PCR tests. Opening hours for bars and restaurants are extended from 5 AM to 11:30 PM. The procedure, test event with Covid Safe Ticket (CST) and conditions for events is decided upon on 13/08.

✓ **CC** announces new step in the summer plan, starting 27/06:

- possibility to host 8 persons outdoors, subject to the protocol for tourist lodging >15 persons
- no more limitation on number of people that can shop jointly
- for bars and restaurants, max 8 persons/table, mandatory use of plexiglass
- for worship services, max 200 persons indoors, 400 outdoors
- for fairs, markets, ... rules apply as from 5000 persons
- nightly gathering ban is lifted
- indoors test events for max 2000 persons (Covid infrastructure risk model) or 4000 persons with a CST, outdoor test events for max 5000 persons with a CST

11/05

04/06

11/06

18/06

19/07

- reopening of door-to-door and sex work
- for rallies, max 100 persons, subject to a previously agreed upon route

✓ 01/07: on the condition that 60% of adults are vaccinated, for camps, max 100 persons and for events, max 2000 persons indoors and 2500 outdoors

✓ 30/07/: on the condition that 70% of adults are vaccinated, greater numbers for events, camps, receptions, ...

✓ 01/09: on the condition that 70% of adults are vaccinated, more relaxation measures are possible

✓ Following the positive evolution in the epidemiological situation, the provincial Police Regulation on mouth-nose masks is lifted

- ✓ **CC** stresses the importance of wearing a mouth-nose mask, keeping a safe distance and properly ventilating indoor areas
- ✓ Traveling: stricter procedures for EU and Schengen countries where dangerous virus variants are present, without having regard to the country's colour code: mandatory PCR test on day 1 (+quarantaine) and on day 7 for not fully vaccinated persons
- ✓ Outdoor events >1500 persons with a CST

# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (11): as from 01/09

- ✓ **CC** relaxes a lot of measures as from 01/09
- ✓ No more limitations on gatherings in private areas (houses or tourist lodging)
- ✓ No more limitations on bars and restaurants, except for the obligation to wear a mouth-nose mask when moving around
- ✓ No more limitations for organised activities
- ✓ No more limitations for buffets and dancing in private parties
- ✓ No more limitations for worship services, except for the obligation to wear a mouth-nose mask

- ✓ **Interministerial Conference for Public Health** imposes a supplementary test on certain travelers and persons with high risk contacts

20/08

26/08

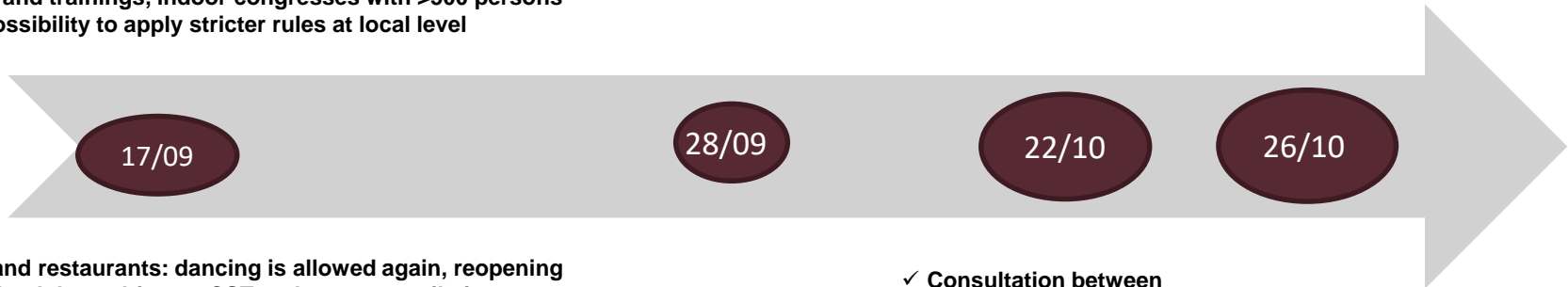
- ✓ **Events**
  - no more limitations for events with <200 persons indoors and <400 outdoors
  - possibility to make use of CST for events with >200 persons indoors and >400 outdoors
  - obligation to wear a mouth-nose mask on public transport, in shops and shopping centres, when moving around in bars and restaurants, in conference centres, trade fairs, courthouses, buildings for worship services, libraries, during rallies or in heavily visited areas such as shopping streets, annual or other fairs (to be determined by the local authorities)
- ✓ **Dedicated measures for the Brussels Capital Region**

# 6. Chronology of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (12): as from 01/09

- ✓ **CC** lays down the federal minimum set of rules for the obligation to wear a mouth-nose mask, limited to persons >12 years of age:
  - ✓ in indoor areas of public transport, stations and airports
  - ✓ in care centres
  - ✓ for personnel and clients of medical and non-medical contact professions
  - ✓ for events, cultural and other shows, sports games and trainings, indoor congresses with >500 personsPossibility to apply stricter rules at local level

✓ **MD is adapted following the CC decisions. Decisions enter into force on 01/10**

✓ **CC will meet again**



- ✓ Bars and restaurants: dancing is allowed again, reopening of night clubs, subject to CST and proper ventilation
- ✓ CST as an alternative to stricter measures, possibility for states or regions to develop proper rules with regard to a broader use of CST
- ✓ Events as from 01/10
  - no more limitations for events with <500 persons indoor and <750 persons outdoor
  - possibility to make use of CST for events with >500 persons indoor and >750 persons outdoor
- ✓ Dedicated measures for the Brussels Capital Region are confirmed

✓ Consultation between Flemish governors and Intern Cabinet of the Flemish government

# **7.**

# **Lessons learned**

# 7. Lessons learned



- Need for continuous **in-depth evaluation**
- Perfect 'case' of **multilevel governance**
  - From WHO to each individual and everything in between: EU; federal government; federal states, governors, mayors, primary health care zones
  - Various (policy) areas: education, work, leisure, events
- **From crisis management to Risk management/communication**
  - Importance of data / data sharing (privacy), information on figures, raising awareness in case of high virus circulation, inciting on greater alertness instead of measures and enforcement
  - Crisis management ↔ politic choices and societal support



## 6. Lessons learned

- **How to live** with **uncertainties and continuous changes?**
  - resilience, flexibility, solidarity
- **Importance of primary care** in particular in managing a pandemic:
  - field knowledge, mobilization of volunteers, population management, public health as a systemic strategy for care in general
- Renewed and changing **balance** between **private and public** interest:
  - transparency, motivation, co-creation
  - freedom and social context as a 'scarce good': subject of politic debate



**8**

**And it isn't over yet...**



**Thank you!**