

Tens of thousands protest against health pass in France

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in the streets of France on Saturday afternoon against the extension of the health pass and compulsory vaccination for certain professions.

It was the second weekend in a row to see thousands rally on the streets against the government's decision to make it compulsory to have a health pass in order to access restaurants, bars and other cultural establishments.

The pass attests that the holder has either been fully vaccinated, has tested negative over the previous 24 hours or has recovered from COVID during the previous six months.

The new measure was announced last week by President Emmanuel Macron in a bid to boost vaccinations, as the country battles a surge in coronavirus cases.

Meanwhile in London, UK, hundreds of people rallied in the centre of the city, demonstrating against vaccine passport plans there.

Clashes between police and protesters

Several thousand people, divided into at least three rallies, began demonstrating in the early afternoon in Paris.

Mostly made up of 'yellow vest' protesters, a first procession set off shortly after 2pm from the Place de la Bastille, bound for the Porte de Champerret.

Police on motorbikes clashed against protesters along the way.

In the Trocadero square several thousand people, rarely masked, gathered at the call of Florian Philippot. "You are thousands," said the President of the Patriots and former RN No. 2, between two "Marseillaise".

It is a very good thing that we have a very good relationship with the people," he said, "but we have to be very careful not to get caught up in a situation where we have to be very careful.

“Freedom, I am not your guinea pig”, summarised a slogan carried on a placard.

Finally, a third procession, made up of several hundred people, left the area around the Conseil d’Etat, bound for the Place des Invalides.

These demonstrations come as a very large majority of French people (76%) approve of President Emmanuel Macron’s decision to make vaccination compulsory for health care workers and other professions, with penalties attached, according to an Elabe poll for BFMTV on 13 July.

The extension of the health pass also receives a majority of approvals.

The health pass, “we would have done well without it if the context was different,” said Health Minister Olivier Véran, speaking to readers of Le Parisien. “We will put an end to it the minute we can,” he promised.

Outside Paris, rallies are taking place in dozens of cities and towns in France.

In Marseilles, thousands of people of all generations marched in a good-natured atmosphere to cries of “Freedom, Freedom” or “Macron, your pass, we don’t want it”, AFP noted.

“I will not take the injection,” said Sandra, a 49-year-old nurse who refused to give her name. “Our country is becoming totalitarian,” said Jean-Claude Dib, 71, a retired truck driver who said he was “ready to fight back.

At least a dozen rallies are taking place in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes.

Demonstrations are taking place in Valence where there are several thousand people, in Lyon, in Auxerre where several hundred people are marching, in Bourg-en-Bresse, in Grenoble.

In the Grand Est region, some 4,000 people are demonstrating, according to the police.

Last Saturday, more than 110,000 people demonstrated throughout France against vaccination, “dictatorship” or the health pass, including 18,000 in Paris divided into several processions and 96,000 in the rest of the country, according to the Interior Ministry.

To stem the spread of the Delta variant, President Emmanuel Macron presented a

series of measures on 12 July.

A source of debate and the subject of numerous amendments in the National Assembly, the presentation of a health pass came partially into force on Wednesday.

Already applied in cultural and leisure venues, its extension to cafés, restaurants and trains is planned for the beginning of August.

Even before the adoption of these tougher measures, their mere announcement by President Emmanuel Macron accelerated vaccination: 58% of the total population (39 million people) had received at least one dose by Friday (and 48% are fully vaccinated), compared to 53% and 40% respectively on 10 July.

A provision of the new text, currently being examined by the Senate after a first reading in the National Assembly, opens the way to dismissal for workers in establishments receiving the public who refuse to obtain a health pass.

The bill also provides for compulsory vaccination for health care workers, firefighters and those working with the elderly.

Source:

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