

COVID-19

Bus lines cancelled due to staff shortage

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Some buses in the north of the grand duchy will not operate as rising covid-19 infections cause staff shortages. Photo: Shutterstock

As the number of infections soar all over the country--authorities recorded 3,064 new cases last week, with 26,318 active infections--public transports have had to be cancelled in parts of the country.

Bus routes 403, 575, 605, 610, 682 and 686, which are part of the RGTR network, will be cancelled on Saturday or Sunday, the public transport administration has announced. This mainly affects villages and towns in the north of the country, including Kautenbach, Diekirch, Wiltz and Goebelsmuehle.

“As a result of the impact of the Omicron variant on the workforce of the RGTR network, public transport operators are obliged to put in place related plans to maintain an appropriate level of service,” the press release states.

Earlier this month, schools had encountered similar issues as 15% of education staff in the country was either isolated or in quarantine. The fast spread of the omicron variant--which can also infect non-boostered people--was again cited as the cause.

At the start of the month, the government had shortened the isolation period for vaccinated staff to avoid shortages. Under the current rules, people who have contracted the virus must isolate for 10 days. This is being cut to six days for people who are fully vaccinated and who have received a booster jab, provided that two rapid antigen tests taken on day five and six of isolation are both negative.

Whether or not other essential services like waste removals will also be impacted by the growing number of infections and ensuing staff shortage is unknown so far.

Emile Eicher, head of the communes syndicate Syvicol, in an interview with Delano, explained that, while the issue of staff shortage touched mainly services with direct contact to the public and children, solidarity was one of its strategies. For instance, competent staff members could give a hand at another commune if needed, he explained. Syvicol also has a list of retired but experienced staff that could cover--for a week or so--the staff shortage.

However, when it came to maisons relais, “there are no replacements because the replacement is already in action,” Eicher said. He added that the decreasing number of staff available for childcare centres and maisons relais was accompanied by a decrease in children, who are also susceptible to be infected, meaning that for now, a balance had been found.

Delano has reached out to the city of Luxembourg administration and the communes syndicate (Syvicol) for further details. A modification was made on 27 January to include the comment by Emile Eicher.
