
Covid-19 drags French economy into deep recession the likes of which it has not seen since 1945

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The Bank of France said on Wednesday that the country's economy shrank around six percent in the first quarter of this year, its worst performance since the end of WWII.

According to official figures, the economy dropped 0.1 percent in the last three months of 2019 as the coronavirus pandemic decimated business activity. With two consecutive quarters of negative growth, the country is now technically in recession.

Economic activity plunged 32 percent in the last two weeks of March as the crisis deepened, said the French regulator. It has listed construction, transport, restaurants and lodging among the worst affected sectors of the economy.

"You have to go back to the second quarter of 1968, hit by the May [political upheaval], to find a similar fall in activity," it said, noting that even that year the downturn was 5.3 percent. The bank expects the economy to shrink by 1.5 percent for every two weeks the country is locked down by the virus.

The current lockdown started on March 17 and has been extended by two weeks to April 15. The authorities have suggested it could be extended further if the virus shows no sign of at least leveling off. France is now the world's fourth-worst-hit nation by Covid-19, with the number of deaths from the pandemic having exceeded 10,000, while more than 110,000 people have been infected.