

EU suggests informing travellers about Ebola at airports

October 15 2014

The EU suggested Wednesday that member states give medical information at airports to travellers from Ebola-hit west African countries but stopped short of recommending full continent-wide screening.

The issue of monitoring is due to come up when EU health ministers meet in Brussels on Thursday after Britain last week became the first European country to introduce [screening](#) at airports and the Eurostar railway stations.

Britain followed the example of the US and Canada.

"The EU is not recommending entry screening as such. This is a decision for member states to take," said an official from the European Commission, the EU's executive branch.

"The main value of entry screening is to provide information to passengers that might have been exposed," he said.

For example, he said, passengers could be given a telephone number to call in case Ebola symptoms appear.

They could also be told not to show up at [hospital emergency rooms](#) without warning in order to avoid the risk of contagion.

The European Commission said the meeting Thursday would focus on

coordinating efforts against the possible spread of Ebola.

Several health workers have been medically evacuated back to Europe from Africa with Ebola, but the only recorded case of transmission on the continent so far is a Spanish nurse in Madrid.

Airports Council International (ACI) has called for European coordination on the issue of screening to avoid stirring panic and introducing ineffective measures.

The commission said few direct air links exist between Europe and the worst-hit countries—Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

For now Air France has flights between Paris Charles de Gaulle airport and Conakry, Guinea, while Brussels Airlines serves Conakry and the Liberian capital Monrovia from Brussels airport.

But African companies, like Royal Air Maroc, serve the affected countries, with connecting flights to Europe.

In all cases, the commission official said, "what is absolutely essential is screening on departure," which is the case for the three west African countries.

Some 36,000 travellers have undergone such screening where they have their temperatures taken and fill in a medical questionnaire, according to ACI.

Some 77 passengers have been prevented from boarding flights, though not one was later determined to have been infected with Ebola, the ACI added.

Citation: EU suggests informing travellers about Ebola at airports (2014, October 15) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-10-eu-ebola-airports.html>

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