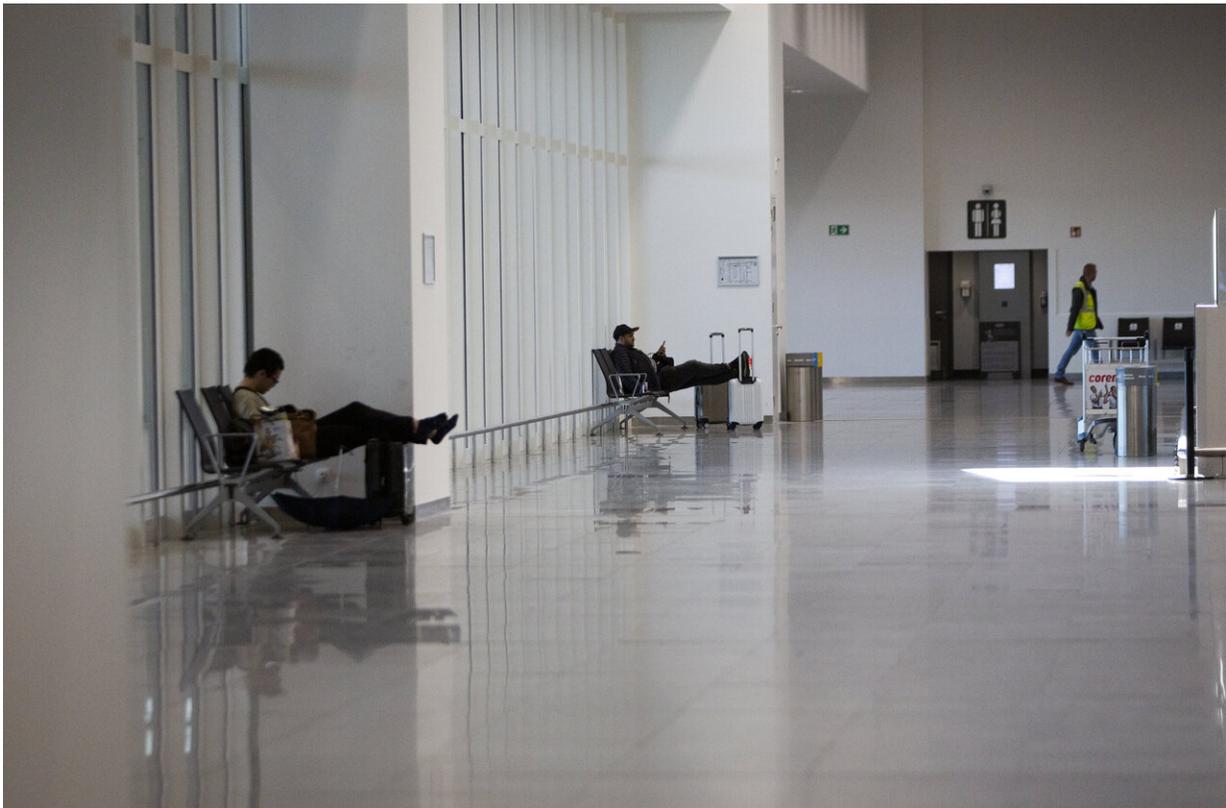# EU seeks unified action against virus as case count mounts

March 13 2020, by Lorne Cook and Samuel Petrequin

Two people sit at a distance from each other in the main terminal of Brussels International Airport in Brussels, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The European Union has slammed the new anti-virus travel ban announced by U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.(AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

European Union interior ministers on Friday were trying to coordinate their response to the novel coronavirus as cases spread throughout the 27-nation bloc and countries took individual measures to slow the disease down.

With Italy at the epicenter of Europe's outbreak, some of its neighbors, like Austria and Slovenia, have begun taking steps to restrict traffic at their borders, raising questions about the movement of food and medical equipment. But other nations, like the Czech Republic and Poland, are taking action too.

"The problem is on different levels in different countries," Swedish Interior Minister Mikael Damberg told reporters in Brussels, but he said "we hope that all countries that take new measures also inform other European countries."

"The transportation system must work when it comes to food and to health care materials and these kinds of things that are important to all European countries so that we don't make problems for each other handling the crisis," Damberg said.

The coronavirus is now present in all 27 EU countries. More than 22,000 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed across Europe, and more than 1,000 people have died on the continent.

EU member countries are responsible for health and public safety, and the bloc's institutions have a very limited role to play in halting the spread of the disease.

The exterior of the La Cambre retirement home in the Watermael Boitsfort section of Brussels, Thursday, March 12, 2020. Two residents at the retirement home have tested positive for the COVID-19 coronavirus, prompting city's authorities to place other patients in quarantine. (AP Photo/Mark Carlson)

Lavez-vous soigneusement et régulièrement les mains à l'eau et au savon.

Toussez ou éternuez dans un mouchoir en papier ou dans le creux de votre coude.

Utilisez des mouchoirs et jetez-les dans une poubelle refermable.

Restez à la maison, si vous êtes malade.

Évitez de vous toucher le visage.

Évitez les poignées de mains.

Évitez les contacts étroits avec des personnes malades.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

En cas d'urgence, veuillez appeler le +32 2 753 69 50
Plus d'infos sur le site officiel www.info-coronavirus.be

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A woman wears a protective mask as she walks in the main terminal of Brussels International Airport in Brussels, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The European Union has slammed the new anti-virus travel ban announced by U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.(AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

People wait to check in to a flight to Chicago at the United Airlines counter in the main terminal of Brussels International Airport in Brussels, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The European Union has slammed the new anti-virus travel ban

announced by U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.(AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

A man wears a protective mask as he checks in at a kiosk in the main terminal of Brussels International Airport in Brussels, Thursday, March 12, 2020. The European Union has slammed the new anti-virus travel ban announced by U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

Croatian Interior Minister Davor Bozinovic, who is chairing the talks because his country currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, said "this crisis shows that as a European Union we need to have models to act in a more coordinated way."

"If we are acting in one way it would be much better for all of us," he said.

Many EU meetings have been canceled due to the virus, with these talks being among the rare exceptions.