

Brussels urges EU to prepare for virus second wave

July 15 2020

European officials warned Wednesday that a feared second wave of coronavirus infections could coincide with the continent's winter flu season, and urged member states to prepare.

EU commissioner Margaritis Schinas admitted the initial response to the epidemic had "not been Europe's finest hour", with national capitals responding in an uncoordinated way.

But, along with Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, he said both the European Commission and member states had learned lessons and would be better prepared for a new outbreak.

"The virus is still with us," he warned, while adding that [public health measures](#) including travel restrictions and lockdowns have won Europe some time "to reinforce our capacity for response".

With new cases already increasing in some areas of Europe, commission officials announced a series of measures to prepare hospitals and set public health policy for the end of summer.

"Today we are looking at reducing risks linked to the coexistence of COVID-19 with the seasonal influenza, as of next fall. You know that this will be the first time that these two cycles will coincide," Schinas said.

And Schinas, the commissioner for promoting the European way of life,

said: "We do not want to see the lack of coordination that governed the initial reaction of our member states at the beginning of the pandemic."

The commissioners said they did not want to see a return to general social and business lockdowns that have plunged the bloc into recession, but urged caution.

"Last month, we saw member states lifting containment measures and citizens returning to what I have always called a new normal much needed by everyone," Kyriakides said.

"However, we know and see that member states are reporting smaller and bigger outbreaks localised in many member states. So we're here today to say that preparedness is key, especially before the autumn and winter months."

In the initial weeks after the first cases of the novel coronavirus arrived in Europe in February, Brussels struggled to coordinate an EU-wide response and many capitals took unilateral measures.

The continent was for a while the worst hit, and Europe overall has now had 203,507 deaths from 2,873,277 cases.

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