Italy orders virus tests on Croatia, Greece, Malta, Spain arrivals

August 13 2020

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Italy has imposed mandatory coronavirus testing for all travellers arriving from Croatia, Greece, Malta and Spain, and banned all visitors from Colombia, in a bid to rein in new infections.

"We must continue to be cautious in order to protect the results obtained thanks to sacrifices made by all in recent months," Health Minister Roberto Speranza said after issuing the new rules, which will last until September 7, late Wednesday.

Health authorities worry in particular that Italians returning from vacations abroad may be bringing home the virus and passing it on when people are crowding outdoors, on beaches, at festivals or parties during the summer.

Travellers arriving at an airport, port or border crossing can choose from a number of options, including rapid tests on the spot, or the presentation of a certificate obtained within the last 72 hours which shows they are COVID-19 free.

They can also choose to carry out a test within two days of entering Italy, but will have to stay in isolation until the results arrive.

Anyone found to be positive, including asymptomatic cases, must report to the local health authorities.

Over 251,000 people have been infected by coronavirus and more than 35,000 have died in Italy, once of the worst affected countries in Europe. Over 13,000 people are currently infected.

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