EU agrees common virus rules in bid to end travel chaos

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EU members agreed Friday on a method to determine safe travel destinations within Europe, hoping to unify the bloc's haphazard patchwork of travel restrictions due to Covid-19.

Envoys from the EU's 27 member states agreed on a list of recommendations, which will include a color code for identifying risk areas: green, orange or red depending on the situation.

The recommendations will remain voluntary, however, with individual countries free to adopt the suggestions or ignore them completely.

The travel industry, which has been ravaged by the [coronavirus](link) pandemic, is hoping the measures will be widely adopted and help to make travel within Europe less chaotic.

The methodology was agreed just as the pandemic is going through a [second wave](link) in Europe, with new infections growing to alarming levels in Madrid, Paris and other major EU destinations.

"This is an important step which, with common risk analysis, will lead to more predictability and transparency when traveling under Covid conditions in the EU," a spokesman for the EU presidency tweeted.

As was already the case at the start of the pandemic last spring, the EU states are currently taking very different approaches to [travel restrictions](link) due to Covid-19.

For example, Germany has issued a [travel](link) warning for Belgium, while France has not. Hungary meanwhile has issued a general ban on all visits, with exceptions for travelers from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

In an attempt to make things simpler for travelers, the European Commission recommended the color code system.

In the plan, member states commit to provide the necessary data on a regional and not just national level.

The EU's criteria include the number of positive cases per 100,000 people as well the test rate in a given population.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control issues an updated map based on this data on a weekly basis, but how member states use the data will remain up to them.

The proposal also urges that "member states should continue their coordination efforts regarding the duration of quarantine and alternative options."

The proposal is due to be formally adopted at a meeting of European Affairs Ministers on Tuesday.

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