

EU moves to bloc-wide recognition of antigen tests

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EU envoys on Thursday struck preliminary agreement on having antigen tests for COVID-19 carried out in any member country recognised by all 27 countries in the bloc, diplomats told AFP.

The move, to be followed with a written procedure and discussed at an EU leaders' summit on Thursday, aims to make COVID-19 testing more widespread and faster.

Unlike PCR ([polymerase chain reaction](#)) tests that involve getting a swab from the [nasal cavity](#) behind the nose that is analysed in a lab, [antigen testing](#) can be done from saliva with a result given on the spot within 30 minutes.

That makes it easier and faster to test large numbers of people, though antigen tests are less reliable in detecting COVID-19 in people who are not showing symptoms.

The European Commission says it could use antigen tests in specific situations to rapidly detect outbreaks or monitor "high-risk" individuals such as frontline workers in the health sector.

Large-scale antigen tests could also be used to screen travellers coming back from countries outside the European Union.

France's European affairs minister, Clement Beaune, said on Sunday that, for example, "between France and Ireland PCR tests work because we use the same ones, but the antigen tests don't because Ireland doesn't yet recognise them".

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