

EU agrees new coronavirus travel curbs

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EU member state ambassadors approved a new map of coronavirus danger zones across the bloc on Friday, allowing authorities to impose stricter regional travel restrictions.

The European Commission remains opposed to a blanket [travel](#) ban or

closures of national borders across the European Union, despite some members seeking tougher measures.

But Brussels does want to "strongly discourage non-essential travel" and the map from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control is part of that effort.

The commission recommended adding a new category of "dark red" zones to the weekly European health map published.

These are regions where authorities have detected 500 or more COVID-19 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in the previous two weeks.

Testing and quarantine rules would limit travel to and from these areas, even for journeys deemed "essential" under current guidelines.

Certain exemptions are provided for inhabitants of border areas and transport workers.

According to a preliminary ECDC map seen by AFP on Thursday, 14 of 27 EU countries have at least one region classified as "dark red".

The commission is trying to coordinate member state measures so as to avoid a repeat of the fiasco in May last year, when cascading border closures led to travel and transport chaos.

But Portugal, which holds the rotating EU presidency of the EU, told the ambassadors' meeting that additional national measures were still possible, according to diplomats.

Portugal, where the epidemic is exploding, decided on Thursday to ban non-essential travel abroad for a fortnight.

Belgium had taken the same measure from Wednesday, with a ban until March 1, and Germany is considering a drastic reduction in air traffic with countries it considers at risk.

The European Commissioner for Justice, Didier Reynders, was asked on Friday about the measures taken by his home country, Belgium.

He warned that the generalised scope of it, not taking into account the health situation in the area of origin or destination, was "not in line" with the Commission's recommendations.

"We would prefer this not to be prolonged and especially that, if measures are taken, they are better integrated into the recommendations," he told broadcaster RTBF.

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