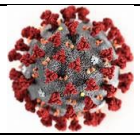
National COVID-19 Science Task Force (NCS-TF)



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Contact person: Antoine Flahault, Nicola Low, Marcel Tanner	
Comment on planned updates : 2-3 weeks after opening the borders on 15 June and when first effects can be measured	

SARS-CoV-2 prevention in Switzerland and open borders from 15 June 2020 onwards

Summary of original request/problem

From 15 June 2020 onwards, Switzerland will re-open its borders, particularly to the European Union Schengen area. Switzerland is a land-locked country, with travelers arriving and leaving by road, rail and air. It is essential to prepare for the arrival of travelers with SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Which conditions should apply to opening the borders with regards to preventing importing SARS-CoV-2 by the different travelers arriving by road, rail and air?

Executive summary

Switzerland's efforts to control transmission of SARS-CoV-2 resulted in a low level of ongoing domestic transmission until mid-June 2020. The re-opening of international borders means that there will be imported cases of infection. Travelers are a sentinel population for monitoring SARS-CoV-2 transmission in Switzerland because new outbreaks resulting from imported infection may be hard to control by the time they are detected. Control measures at the border will not identify all imported cases, but active measures for detection, contact tracing and follow-up reduce the risk of transmission, and will provide information for travelers on SARS-CoV-2 control measures that should be observed in Switzerland.

The objective of this policy brief is to describe an approach that allows for travel between countries whilst managing the public health risk and controlling the spread of SARS-CoV-2 transmission in Switzerland.

The policy brief includes: 1) operational recommendations to classify countries into four categories of risk, according to the epidemiological situation of COVID-19, which will be updated monthly, 2) recommendations for management of travelers, according to the presence or absence of symptoms, at the border, and 3) recommendations for persons leaving Switzerland and traveling to countries where the risk of SARS-CoV-2 is higher than in Switzerland.

The recommendations include: 1) symptom screening before landing and temperature measurement at the border for all air travelers; 2) provision of written information in multiple languages; 3) flow charts for virological testing and isolation or quarantine; 4) a recommendation to download the SwissCovid digital proximity tracing app, unless they have another app based on Google/Apple Exposure Notification (GAEN).

This update has the following changes: 1) information from the Swiss Federal Council, published on 1 July 2020, about mandatory quarantine and the list of countries classified as having a high risk of COVID-19; 2) a revised method to classify countries, based on data about testing for SARS-CoV-2 and numbers of new cases; 3) recommendation for enhanced surveillance and active follow-up of imported SARS-CoV-2 cases; 4) recommendation to wear a mask on all modes of transport.

Background

The Swiss Federal Council issued relevant statements about travel restrictions on 15 May, 27 May, and 1 July 2020.

15 May, 2020 (1): "*Thanks to the positive developments regarding the coronavirus pandemic, reflected in a sharp drop in the number of infections, Germany, Austria and Switzerland have decided to lift the travel restrictions that currently apply to unmarried couples in cross-border relationships. The easing of these restrictions will come into effect at midnight tonight.*" However this opening has some conditions, e.g. "*To enter Austria, property owners will still be required to produce a medical certificate, not more than four days old, stating that the holder has tested negative for SARS-CoV-2*." It is also specified that "*the public health requirements and recommendations valid in the relevant state will of course apply to those entering the country during their stay*." The situation is continuously evolving: "*As long as the epidemiological situation allows, all remaining travel restrictions between Switzerland, Germany, Austria and France should be lifted from 15 June*". Unilaterally, Italy decided to open its border on June 3.

27 May, 2020 (2): "*In light of the positive trend with respect to the coronavirus in all four countries, the FDJP, in consultation with the FDHA and the Federal Departmenf of Foreign Affairs FDFA, will take the necessary steps to reopen the borders from 15 June, as previously announced, thereby abolishing all travel restrictions to these countries and re-establishing the free movement of persons*." However, reservations remained with Italy: "*Italy declared the lifting of internal border checks with its neighbours with effect from 3 June. Switzerland has informed Italy that in its view it is too early to lift border controls with Italy on that date*." It specified: "*If developments with respect to the pandemic in Switzerland and in the EU/EFTA permit, restrictions on entering, working and living in Switzerland will be lifted for all Schengen states from mid-June and no later than 6 July. The FDJP therfore plans to successively update the list of high-risk countries, in agreement with the FDHA, the FDFA and the EU/EFTA member states. The aim is to lift all travel restrictions and re-establish the complete free movement of persons across the Schengen area by this date.*" And finally, a decision on lifting further border restrictions (i.e. for third countries) will not be taken by the Swiss Federal Council alone but "*in consultation with Schengen member states*".

1 July, 2020 (3): "*Since mid-June, the number of new cases of coronavirus has been rising in Switzerland as infected persons have entered the country. Anyone entering Switzerland from a country or area with a high risk of infection now has to go into quarantine for ten days (as of 6 July).*"

Switzerland's efforts to control transmission of SARS-CoV-2 resulted in a low level of ongoing domestic transmission until mid-June 2020. The re-opening of international borders means that there will be imported cases of infection. Spread of imported SARS-CoV-2 can cause new outbreaks that may be hard to control by the time they are detected. The announcement of the opening of borders on 15 June, 2020 with the Schengen area was accompanied by general advice, but few specific measures for early detection and control of SARS-CoV-2 in arriving travellers (3). The announcement on 1 July 2020, introduced mandatory quarantine for people arriving in Switzerland from certain countries and areas (Appendix 1). Travelers are responsible for paying the costs incurred for being in quarantine (3).

Control measures at the border will not identify all imported cases, but active measures for detection, contact tracing and follow-up reduce the risk of transmission, and will provide information for travelers on SARS-CoV-2 control measures that should be observed in Switzerland.

The objective of this policy brief is to describe an approach that allows for travel between countries whilst managing the public health risk and controlling the spread of SARS-CoV-2 transmission in Switzerland.

Two questions are addressed:

(1) How can the epidemiological status with regard to SARS-CoV-2 transmission in any country be classified?

(2) What measures should be proposed for countries, according to their epidemiological status?

Recommendations

We recommend an approach to the identification of countries with a high risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission and to the management of travelers arriving from or going to such countries, which takes into account the changing epidemiology of COVID-19 in different countries and differences in the availability of data for surveillance and monitoring. The approach is compatible with Switzerland's established COVID-19 surveillance-response strategy and with internationally accepted approaches and/or procedures.

Rapid risk assessment of countries according to COVID-19 surveillance data

Response to question 1, "How can the epidemiological status with regard to SARS-CoV-2 transmission in any country be classified?"

The level of COVID-19 risk for travelers to a country depends on the incidence of SARS-CoV-2 infection. Methods that can be applied to a large number of countries or territories depend on the availablilty and quality of data items that allow a meaningful interpretation of the pattern and level of risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission. Data about the number of new cases detected and reported depends, in turn, on the level of testing. If the number of tests is very low, or unknown, the trend in the number of reported cases cannot be interpreted.

The proposed method is based on the overall number of virological tests for SARS-CoV-2 detection done in a country or territory, on the number of new reported COVID-19 cases each day and on the shape of the epidemic curve. The data are accessible on the dashboard of the website COVID-19 Daily Epidemic Forecasting (ISG-UNIGE-SDSC-EPFL-ETHZ https://renkulab.shinyapps.io/COVID-19-Epidemic-Forecasting/) (5). The classification of countries is done in three stages; data were accessed on 1 July 2020 (Appendix 1).

1. The country or territory status is categorized as unknown (grey) if there are no data about the level of testing, or if the overall number of tests is below 2,000 tests per million population, as recorded in Our World in Data (https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus);
2. For all countries or territories in which the overall number of tests is above 2,000 per million population, data on the numbers of new cases, reported by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) database or Johns Hopkins University (JHU) database are used,
    a. if the number of daily new cases is below 1.5 per 100,000 population, the category is green;
    b. if the number of daily new cases is equal to or higher than 1.5 per 100,000 population and the epidemic curve is descending, the category is orange;
    c. if the number of daily new cases is equal to or higher than 1.5 per 100,000 population and the epidemic curve is ascending or plateauing, the category is red;
3. For France, China, Brazil, Lichtenstein and Monaco, no test data were reported in the dashboard, so an alternative source was used (Worldometers, https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/). For Saint Pierre et Miquelon and Saint Martin, the figures from France were applied.

The thresholds for levels of testing and of daily new cases are not fixed. The categories in this update were based on data available on 1 July 2020, but could in future take into account a longer time period. For practical purposes, the combination of thresholds for testing and news cases produces a pattern that mostly coincides with the European Union criterion of proposing free movement in the Schengen area and countries with fewer than 2 new cases per million population per day. The Swiss Federal Council list of countries at high risk applies a threshold of 6 new cases per million per day, reported in the previous 14 days (https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20201948/index.html).

The method described here replaces the last version of the policy brief (25.06.2020), which used the number of new cases and the effective reproduction number, as a measure of the pattern of spread of SARS-CoV-2. The method was changed because of uncertainty in the interpretation of the effective reproduction number, which is derived from a mathematical model, when numbers of cases are small. The

trend in the effective reproduction number is available on the COVID-19 Daily Epidemic Forecasting website (5).

Figures 1-8 show examples of the four categories and their epidemiological patterns. Figure 9 summarises the assessment for all countries and territories, as of 1 July 2020. The approach is based on whole country assessments and does not consider regional variations in a given country.

Green category: A country has passed through a first wave of COVID-19 cases since January 2020, has a level of new daily cases below 1.5 per 100,000 population and overall testing of more than 2,000 per million population. Switzerland (Figure 1) and Italy (Figure 2) are examples of countries in the green category.

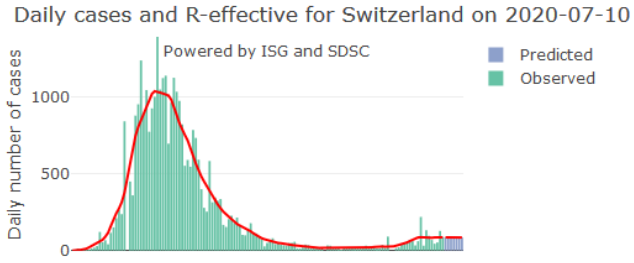

Figure 1: Daily new cases in Switzerland.

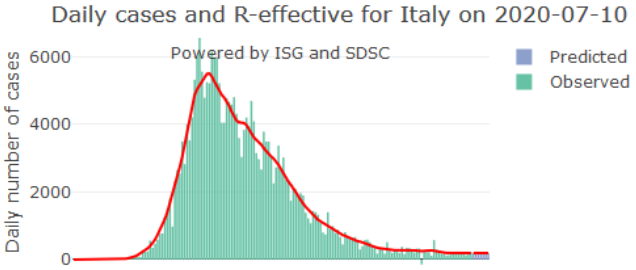

Figure 2: Daily new cases in Italy.

Orange category: A country has passed a peak of new daily COVID-19 cases, but epidemic activity is ongoing and new cases are at a level of equal to or higher than 1.5 per 100,000 population new cases per day, with overall testing of more than 2,000 per million population. Russia (Figure 3) and Turkey (Figure 4) are examples of countries in the orange category.

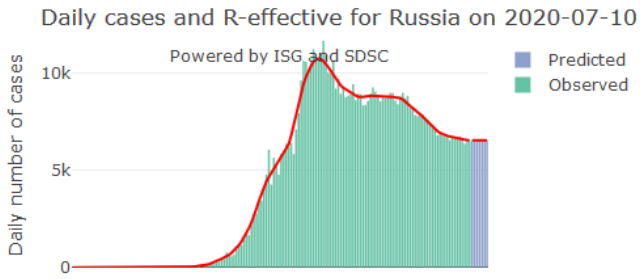

Figure 3: Daily new cases in Russia.

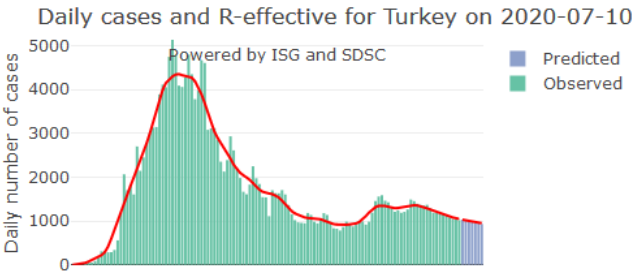

Figure 4: Daily new cases in Turkey.

Red category 3: The level of new cases per day is equal to or higher than 1.5 per 100,000 population and the epidemic curve is ascending or plateauing, with overall testing of more than 2,000 per million. The United States of America (USA, Figure 5) and India (Figure 6) are examples of the red category.

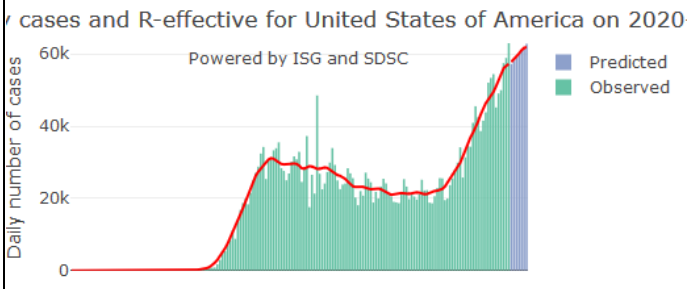

Figure 5: Daily new cases in the USA.

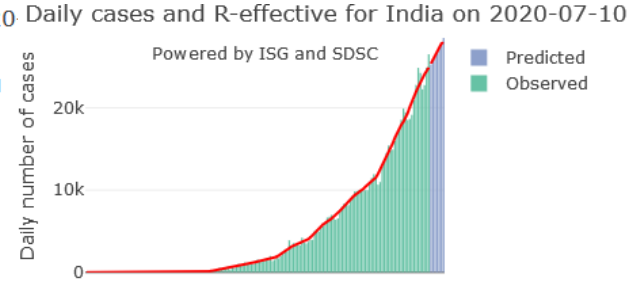

Figure 6: Daily new cases in India.

Grey category: There are no data about the level of testing, or there are fewer than 2,000 tests per million population. Egypt (Figure 7) and Albania (Figure 8) are examples of countries in the grey category.

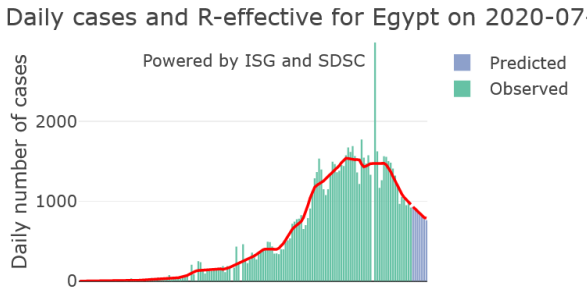

Figure 7: Daily new cases in Egypt.

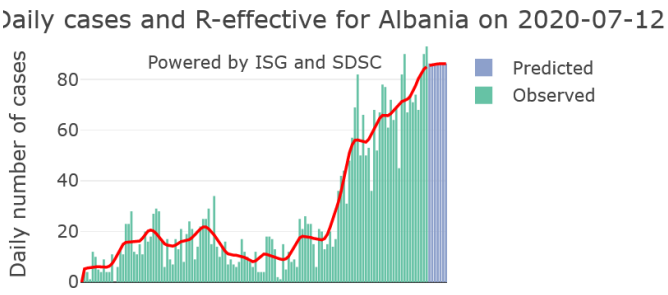

Figure 8: Daily new cases in Albania.

Figure 9 shows the colour-coded category for each country. As of 1 July 2020, there are 44 countries in the green category, 136 in the grey category, nine in the orange category, and 33 in the red category. All countries and their category, as of 1 July, 2020, are listed in Appendix 1. All countries that the Swiss Federal Council has designated as high-risk, and for which quarantine is mandatory, are categorized as orange, red or grey. The large number of countries categorized as grey shows the limited data available about the number of new COVID-19 cases per day.

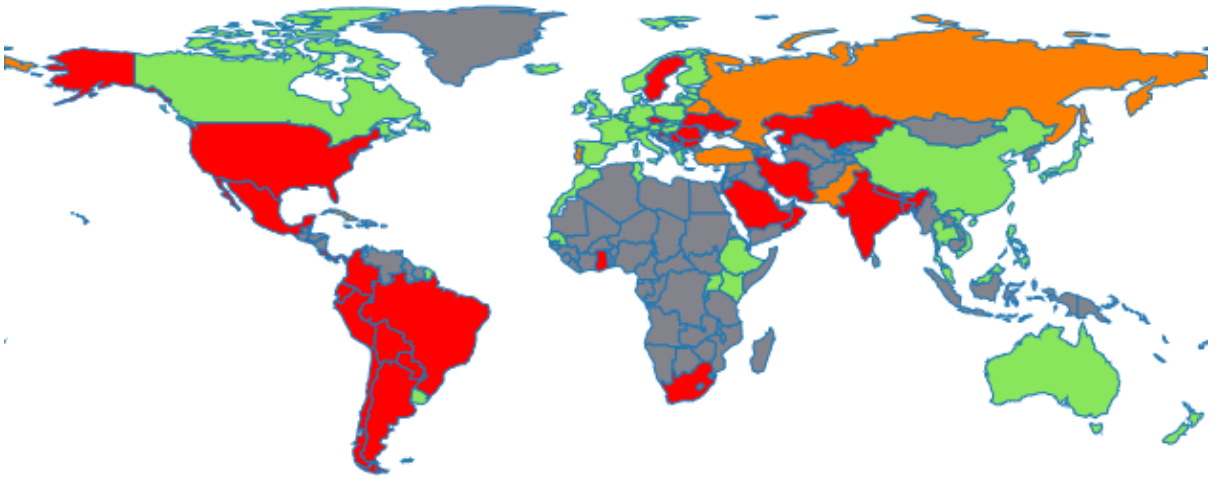

Figure 9: COVID-19 monthly risk map, global; categorization on 30.06.2020. To be updated monthly.

A larger map for which each country name can be displayed is available on the COVID-19 Daily Epidemic Forecasting website https://renkulab.shinyapps.io/COVID-19-Epidemic-Forecasting/)

2. Measures for Swiss travelers and visitors arriving from or traveling to countries in each category

Response to question 2, "What measures should be proposed for countries, according to their epidemiological status?"

General information

Active measures at the border for detection of SARS-CoV-2 infection, contact tracing and follow-up of people in quarantine or isolation should aim to minimize the risk of new SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks arising from undetected imported infection. The destination of incoming travelers should be able to tracked. A travel history should be documented for all people with newly diagnosed SARS-CoV-2 infection and their contacts.

A clear communication strategy should provide information to potential travelers. Swiss embassies, air, bus and train companies should be provided with clear and regularly updated information about the risk category for all countries and territories. All travelers arriving in Switzerland by any mode of transport are strongly advised to wear a mask where physical distance cannot be reliably or consistently achieved, in accordance with the Task Force policy brief (file:///C:/Users/low/AppData/Local/Temp/COVID19TaskForce_PolicyBrief_BenefitsOfMaskWearing.pdf).

Recommendations apply to the country or territory from which people arrive, or to where they are going. The categorization of a country refers to the risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in that country, irrespective of the nationality or country of origin of an individual.

Recommendations for travelers should apply to arrivals by road, rail, or air. It is recognized that it is not possible to test or to monitor all incoming travelers, particularly by road and rail.

We recommend two specific measures for arriving travelers. For practical reasons, these cannot be implemented for travelers in private cars and are most feasible at airports:

- **Temperature** should be measured at the border. A temperature ≥37.5 C is a symptom suggestive of COVID-19 (see below), although not all people infected with SARS-CoV-2 have a temperature. Temperature screening is an unreliable screening tool in the general population (policy brief, 'Usefulness of temperature screening', https://ncs-tf.ch/de/policy-briefs), but has higher sensitivity for border screening (7, 8, 9).
- **Symptom checklist** should be handed out before landing and completed by all air passengers, reporting the presence or absence of the six most common symptoms name by the FOPH (fever or feeling hot, dry cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, muscle pain, recent loss of smell or taste).
- Information about the procedure upon arrival Switzerland should be made available to all travelers in advance.

Using the categories described above, travelers arriving from countries in orange, red and grey categories, who have stopped over in a green category country for fewer than 14 days (determined from passport or landing card) are considered as coming from countries in orange, red and grey categories.

Travelers with symptoms (see above):

Travelers who have COVID-19 symptoms on arrival should have an immediate medical assessment in a separate room.

- **Green, orange, red or grey categories:** provision of mask and virological testing by RT-PCR. While waiting for the results, isolation at a documented, registered address at home, in a hotel, or dedicated isolation facility. Follow flow chart (Appendix 2). If RT-PCR test positive, follow FOPH rules of conduct and medical follow-up while in isolation (6). Contact tracing among other travelers from the same coach (train, bus) or plane with the help of the Federal Service Contact Office (see below). If RT-PCR test negative, stay in isolation and repeat test at day 5-7 (Appendix 2).

Travelers with no symptoms (no fever or other named symptoms):

- **Green category:** for all travelers, leaflet with regulations for prevention of SARS-CoV-2 transmission in Switzerland (one page, with pictograms). Except for cross-border commuters, named tickets are recommended, including train tickets, to facilitate contact tracing if cases are identified in the same coach, bus, train or plane.

Orange, red and grey categories:

- **Persons entering Switzerland:** quarantine for 10 days at a documented, registered address at home, in a hotel or other dedicated quarantine facility. Follow FOPH rules of conduct for people in quarantine (6). Recommend use of SwissCovid App, unless they use another GAEN app. Virological testing by RT-PCR on arrival in Switzerland. Follow flow chart (Appendix 3). Virological testing is used to detect people with pre-symptomatic of asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection and to initiate contact tracing as early as possible. The possibility of false negative RT-PCR results in early infection is acknowledged; if initial RT-PCR is negative, remain in quarantine and repeat test at 5-7 days (Appendix 3). Monitor symptoms and repeat RT-PCR if symptoms develop.
- **Persons leaving Switzerland:** travel is not advised except for essential reasons (as defined by the Federal Council); in case travel takes place, registration of name, purpose of visit, date of exit and expected date of re-entry should be collected and stored in a dedicated database of a **Federal Service Contact Office** (see details below).

Virological testing by RT-PCR for SARS-CoV-2: Travelers are a sentinel population in whom enhanced surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 infection should be conducted. In accordance with our recommendations on the testing strategy of 11 June 2020 (recommendations to be read together with the Policy Briefs on surveillance-response- strategy and contact tracing), all samples with positive RT-PCR results, detected in connection with border control, should be submitted for genetic sequencing to improve understanding of SARS-CoV-2 importation and spread in Switzerland.

Federal Service Contact Office: There should be a service contact point at the federal level through which adherence to requirements for quarantine or isolation of arriving travelers is enforced and contact tracing across borders is conducted. The cantonal doctor's office must notify the service point if a person tests positive and had close contacts with people in the country of origin. This service point is also notified by any foreign country in which an inhabitant from these countries had close contacts to someone in Switzerland. This service will retrieve contacts in coaches, trains and planes when cases are identified since it will have access to the passenger lists from travel companies. The service point is in regular daily exchange with the cantonal physicians.

Refugees and asylum-seekers entering the country

All migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers follow the procedures for entering Switzerland outlined above and then follow the procedures of border health controls that involves (i) comprehensive information about measures, risks, and legal rights and protections; complemented by the recommendation to download the SwissCovid, unless they use another GAEN app and (ii) RT-PCR-testing as part of TTIQ and (iii) TTIQ-procedures.

Conclusion

The re-opening of international borders means that there will be imported cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection in Switzerland. New outbreaks of SARS-CoV-2 arising from imported infection may be hard to control by the time they are detected. This policy brief includes: 1) operational recommendations to classify countries into four categories of risk, according to the epidemiological situation of COVID-19, which will be updated

monthly, 2) recommendations for management of travelers at the border, according to the risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in a country, and the presence or absence of symptoms, and 3) recommendations for persons leaving Switzerland and traveling to countries where the risk of SARS-CoV-2 is higher than in Switzerland.

Recommendations for detection at the border of SARS-CoV-2 infection, contact tracing and follow-up of people in quarantine or isolation to minimize the risk of new SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks arising from undetected imported infection include: 1) symptom screening before landing and temperature measurement at the border for all air travelers; 2) provision of written information in multiple languages; 3) flow charts for virological testing and isolation or quarantine; 4) a recommendation to download the SwissCovid digital proximity tracing app, unless they have another app based on Google/Apple Exposure Notification (GAEN).

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Appendix 1. Colour coding of countries according to risk of COVID-19, as of 1 July 2020

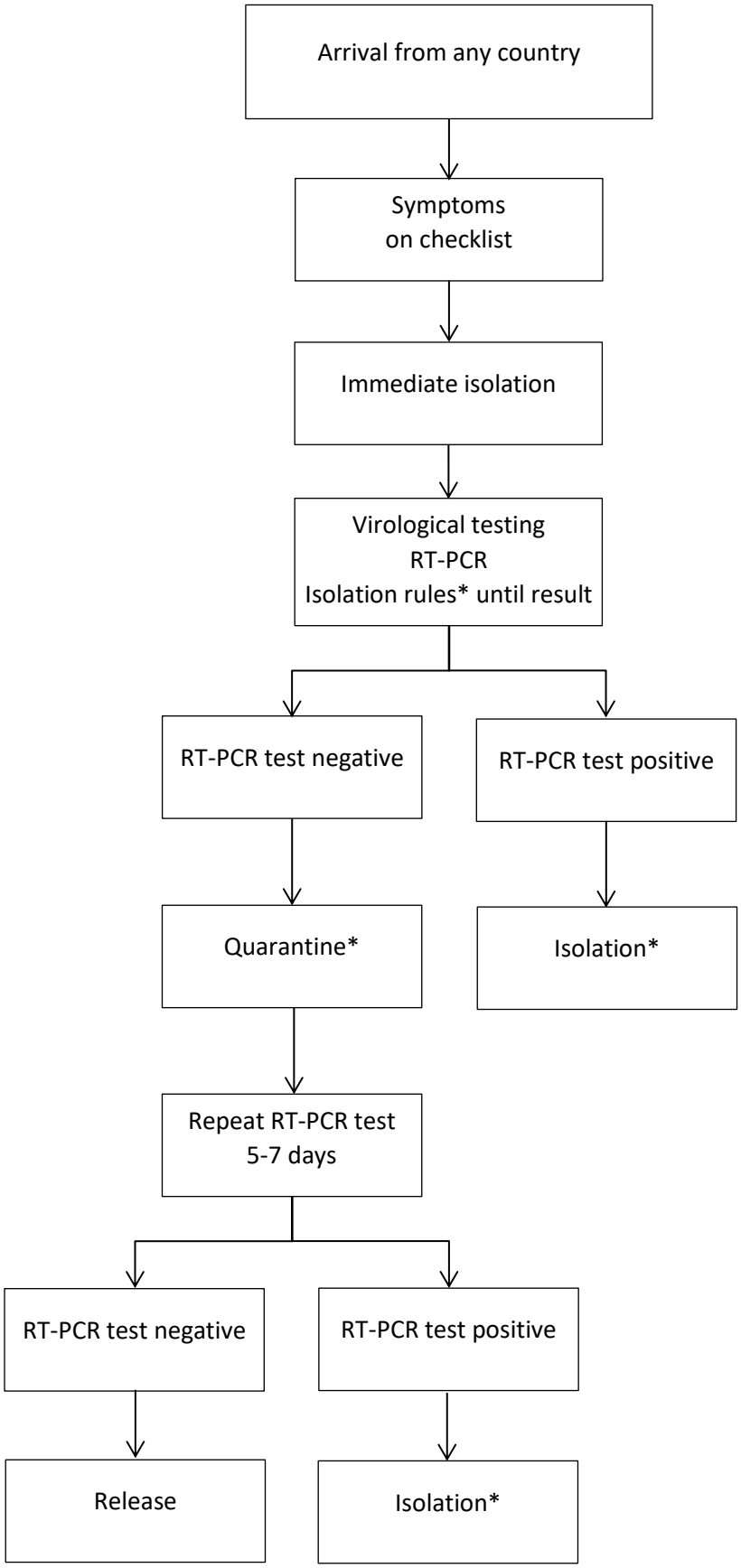
Category	Country
Green	Australia
Green	Austria
Green	Belgium
Green	Canada
Green	China
Green	Denmark
Green	Estonia
Green	Ethiopia
Green	Finland
Green	France
Green	Germany
Green	Greece
Green	Hungary
Green	Iceland
Green	Ireland
Green	Italy
Green	Japan
Green	Kenya
Green	Korea, South
Green	Latvia
Green	Liechtenstein
Green	Lithuania
Green	Malaysia
Green	Monaco
Green	Morocco
Green	Netherlands
Green	New Zealand
Green	Norway
Green	Philippines
Green	Poland
Green	Rwanda
Green	Saint Martin
Green	Saint Pierre and Miquelon
Green	Senegal
Green	Slovakia
Green	Slovenia
Green	Spain
Green	Switzerland
Green	Taiwan
Green	Thailand
Green	Tunisia
Green	Uganda
Green	United Kingdom
Green	Uruguay
Grey	Afghanistan
Grey	Jordan
Grey	Kiribati
Grey	Korea, North
Grey	Kosovo*
Grey	Kyrgyzstan
Grey	Laos
Grey	Lebanon
Grey	Lesotho
Grey	Liberia
Grey	Libya
Grey	Macau
Grey	North Macedonia*
Grey	Madagascar
Grey	Malawi
Grey	Mali
Grey	Malta
Grey	Marshall Islands
Grey	Mauritania
Grey	Mauritius
Grey	Micronesia, Federated States of
Grey	Moldova*
Grey	Mongolia
Grey	Montenegro
Grey	Mozambique
Grey	Namibia
Grey	New Caledonia
Grey	Nicaragua
Grey	Niger
Grey	Nigeria
Grey	Niue
Grey	Northern Mariana Islands
Grey	Palau
Grey	Papua New Guinea
Grey	Puerto Rico
Grey	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Grey	Saint Lucia
Grey	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Grey	Samoa
Grey	San Marino
Grey	Sao Tome and Principe
Grey	Seychelles
Grey	Sierra Leone
Grey	Sint Maarten
Grey	Solomon Islands
Grey	Somalia

Grey	Albania
Grey	Algeria
Grey	American Samoa
Grey	Andorra
Grey	Angola
Grey	Anguilla
Grey	Antigua and Barbuda
Grey	Armenia*
Grey	Aruba
Grey	Azerbaijan*
Grey	Bahamas, The
Grey	Barbados
Grey	Belize
Grey	Benin
Grey	Bermuda
Grey	Bhutan
Grey	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Grey	Botswana
Grey	British Virgin Islands
Grey	Brunei
Grey	Burkina Faso
Grey	Burma
Grey	Burundi
Grey	Cabo Verde*
Grey	Cambodia
Grey	Cameroon
Grey	Cayman Islands
Grey	Central African Republic
Grey	Chad
Grey	Comoros
Grey	Congo, Democratic Republic of the
Grey	Congo, Republic of the
Grey	Cook Islands
Grey	Cote d'Ivoire
Grey	Curacao
Grey	Cyprus
Grey	Djibouti
Grey	Dominica
Grey	Dominican Republic*
Grey	Egypt
Grey	Equatorial Guinea
Grey	Eritrea
Grey	Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)
Grey	Faroe Islands
Grey	Fiji
Grey	French Polynesia
Grey	Gabon
Grey	South Sudan
Grey	Sri Lanka
Grey	Sudan
Grey	Suriname
Grey	Swaziland
Grey	Syria
Grey	Tajikistan
Grey	Tanzania
Grey	Timor-Leste
Grey	Togo
Grey	Tonga
Grey	Trinidad and Tobago
Grey	Turkmenistan
Grey	Tuvalu
Grey	United Arab Emirates
Grey	Uzbekistan
Grey	Vanuatu
Grey	Venezuela
Grey	Vietnam
Grey	Virgin Islands
Grey	West Bank
Grey	Yemen
Grey	Zambia
Grey	Zimbabwe
Orange	Belarus*
Orange	Cuba
Orange	Maldives
Orange	Pakistan
Orange	Portugal
Orange	Qatar*
Orange	Russia*
Orange	Singapore
Orange	Turkey
Red	Argentina*
Red	Bahrain*
Red	Bangladesh
Red	Bolivia*
Red	Brazil*
Red	Bulgaria
Red	Chile
Red	Colombia*
Red	Costa Rica
Red	Croatia
Red	Czech Republic
Red	Ecuador
Red	El Salvador
Red	Ghana

Grey	Gambia, The	Red	India
Grey	Georgia	Red	Iran
Grey	Gibraltar	Red	Israel*
Grey	Greenland	Red	Kazakhstan
Grey	Grenada	Red	Kuwait*
Grey	Guam	Red	Luxembourg
Grey	Guatemala	Red	Mexico
Grey	Guernsey	Red	Nepal
Grey	Guinea	Red	Oman*
Grey	Guinea-Bissau	Red	Panama*
Grey	Guyana	Red	Paraguay
Grey	Haiti	Red	Peru*
Grey	Honduras*	Red	Romania
Grey	Hong Kong	Red	Saudi Arabia*
Grey	Indonesia	Red	Serbia*
Grey	Iraq*	Red	South Africa*
Grey	Isle of Man	Red	Sweden*
Grey	Jamaica	Red	Ukraine
Grey	Jersey	Red	United States of America*

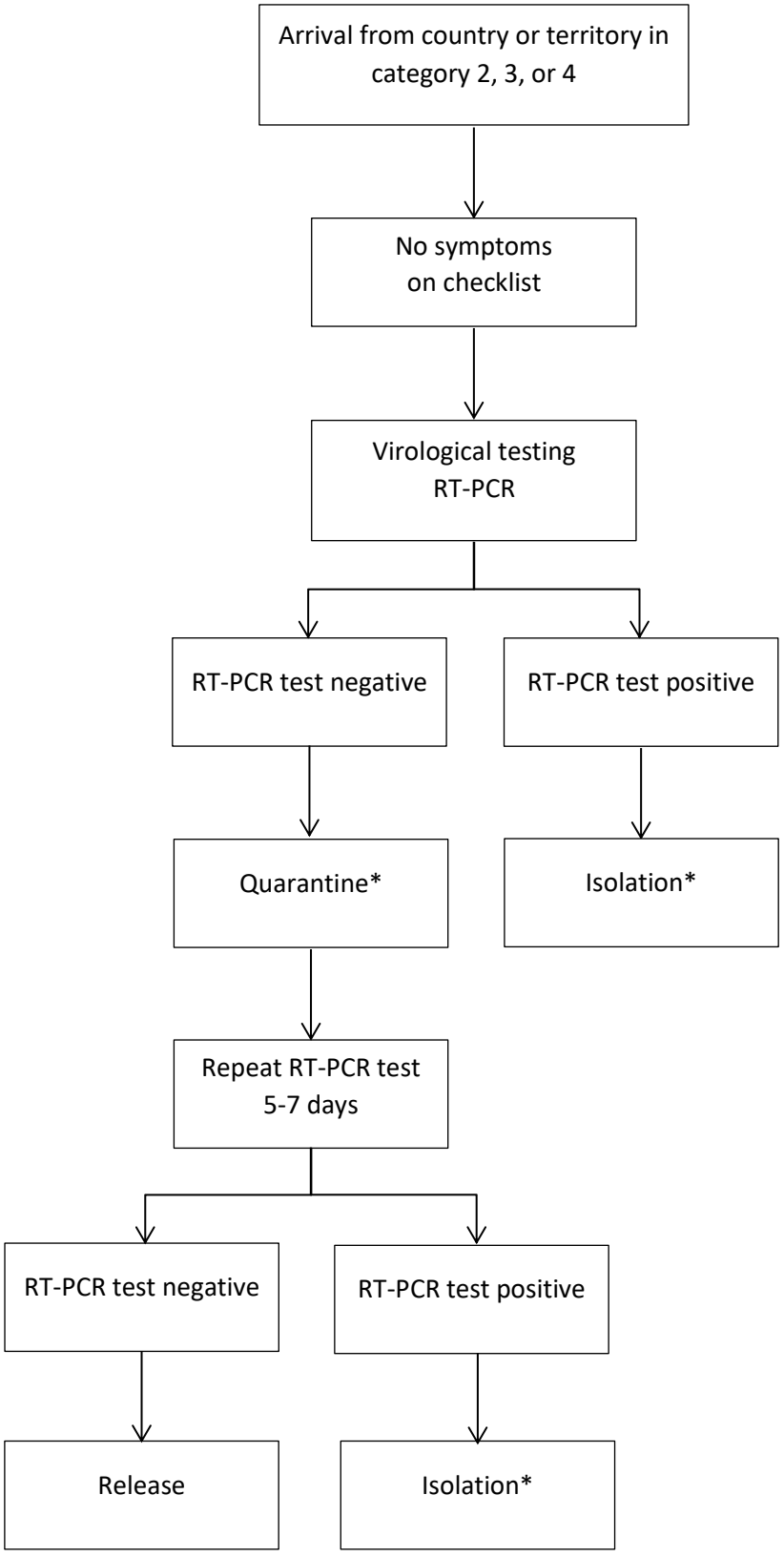
* Countries that the Swiss Federal Council categorizes as high-risk and requires mandatory quarantine (https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home/krankheiten/ausbrueche-epidemien-pandemien/aktuelle-ausbrueche-epidemien/novel-cov/empfehlungen-fuer-reisende/quarantaene-einreisende.html)

Appendix 2. Flow chart for travellers with symptoms



* Follow rules of conduct published by Federal Office of Public Health (6)

Appendix 3. Flow chart for travelers with no symptoms from country categories 2-4



* Follow rules of conduct published by Federal Office of Public Health (6)