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How to code decisions made by and about EU+ countries: a Manual for the COVID Border Accountability Project

Author:	Lukas Feddern
Affiliation(s):	University of Konstanz and Universitätsklinikum Hamburg Eppendorf
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Context

Throughout the 2020-21 coronavirus pandemic, European countries followed different approaches to both external and internal border traffic. In order to code their decisions systematically for the COVID Border Accountability Project (COBAP), it is helpful to know some basic definitions of the groups often referred to in policy texts.

First, the **European Union (EU)** currently includes 27 member-states following the exit of the United Kingdom. The territory which makes up the EU is mostly found in continental Europe but also encompasses regions outside of "mainland" Europe, as well as other territories related to EU countries. For instance, island territories that are part of the EU include the Åland Islands, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, Réunion, Mayotte, and Saint-Martin. Thus, unless explicitly exempt from a particular policy, these countries should be considered part of the EU. Similarly, citizens of Monaco, San-Marino, Andorra, and the Holy See are considered EU residents according to EU Commission recommendations. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, these states should be coded as if they were part of the EU.

On October 2020, the EU laid out a non-binding traffic light systems to regulate non-essential travel of EU member states to all EU+ countries. Each EU+ state's region is ranked according to the number of COVID cases per 100,000 people in the last 14-days. Initial categories included green, orange, red, and grey; since February 2021, dark red has been added. Although the traffic light system does not specify restrictions, it recommends mandatory testing or quarantine for orange and (dark) red regions. In general, entry should not be denied to any member state's citizen. Furthermore, all rules applying to other member states' citizens must also apply to returning citizens, because EU law prohibits discrimination of other member states' citizens.

Second, the **Schengen Area** comprises 26 countries, many of which are also part of the EU. Notably, Ireland, Romania, Croatia, Cyprus, and Bulgaria are EU member-states but not part of the Schengen Area. This means that border checks are in place but normally, EU citizens can enter the country freely. Countries not part of the EU but included in the Schengen Area are bound by the Schengen Code to follow EU immigration policies. Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Iceland are part of the EFTA and Schengen. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, it should be assumed that travel is possible between these countries, and what this means for the coding process is that careful distinctions between closures and additional checks and screenings at borders should be made. The COBAP dataset only records actual closures, defined as restrictions on entry across international borders.

Collectively, all Schengen and EU countries are sometimes referred to as **EU+ countries** (see list below).

Third, there are specific border agreements within Europe that should be heeded when coding policies. For instance, Liechtenstein's border policies follow Switzerland's migration policy, because the countries have open borders with each other. Similarly, Ireland and the United Kingdom share a de facto open border in Northern Ireland. Moreover, in almost all cases in which (semi-)autonomous territories are attached to a larger governing region, the two territories share reciprocally unrestricted border traffic. This includes, inter alia, the Åland Islands with Finland, Greenland, Faroe Islands with Denmark, EU passport holders from Caribbean parts of the Netherlands.

For coding countries related to cases like these, research assistants (RAs) should assume travel is permitted between the entities unless explicitly prohibited. For an example of how this might be applied while coding, if Denmark were to prohibit all travel from outside the EU, the RA should exclude Greenland and the Faroe Islands from the list of banned countries--although they are not part of the EU. As part of (the Kingdom of) Denmark, citizens of Greenland and the Faroe Islands are allowed to enter Denmark unless explicitly prohibited.

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Common coding mistakes to avoid (when coding decisions made *by* EU+ countries)

An incredible variety of border controls and screening were introduced during the coronavirus pandemic. It is easy to read these border checks as border closures.

> Solution ➔ double-check that the border policy text explicitly prohibits travel, as an actual restriction on entry.

Moreover, a policy text might refer to a border closure at a set of specific locations, which most often we record as a "partial closure" instead of a "complete closure." However, if all points of entry were listed as closed, the COBAP database should reflect a complete closure. Without contextual knowledge of your assigned country, this mistake is easy to make.

> Solution ➔ review all points of entry (land, air and sea) into the country you're coding before recording new policies. The third source in the list provides further information on air, sea, and land border regulations per EU+ country.

Common coding mistakes to avoid (when coding decisions made *about* EU+ countries)

Because the COBAP database works with country names, separated by commas, please explicitly list the countries in the relevant sections of the Qualtrics survey, avoiding abbreviations (i.e. Schengen, or EU+) even if listed as such in the policy text.

> Solution ➔ double-check what region the policy is directed at and list all member countries. Unless the policy explicitly excludes certain countries, the lists provided below can be used to replace the abbreviation. If you feel a caveat is needed when you make the change from a sweeping term to a list of countries, please add this to the "notes" section of the survey.

Relatedly, a policy is only coded as a complete closure if the number of states exempt from closures is below 11.

Solution → Please count individual states and collectives (i.e. all (27) member states instead of the EU as single exception).

Sources

Restrictions on travel from third countries to the EU: https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/travel-during-coronavirus-pandemic_en#restrictions-on-travel-from-third-countries-to-the-eu

EU notifications of temporary reintroduction of border control: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control_en

Travel regulations in EU+ countries: https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/travel-and-covid/

EU traffic light system: https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19/situation-updates/weekly-maps-coordinated-restriction-free-movement

EU Report on effects of COVID-19 induced border closures on cross-border regions: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/46250564-669a-11eb-aeb5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en (see report's footnotes)

EU study on Schengen Internal Border Controls and Travel Restrictions in the EU https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/659506/IPOL_STU(2020)659506_EN.pdf (see report's footnotes)

European flight data: https://www.public.nm.eurocontrol.int/PUBPORTAL/gateway/spec/

Lists of countries

EU:

Åland Islands, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, French Guiana, Germany, Greece, Guadeloupe, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Martinique, Mayotte, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Réunion, Romania, Saint Martin (French part), Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden

Schengen:

Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland

EU+ as per the EU Commission's COVID travel recommendation include:

Andorra, Åland Islands, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, French Guiana, Germany, Greece, Guadeloupe, Holy See (Vatican City State), Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Martinique, Mayotte, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Réunion, Romania, San Marino, Saint Martin (French part), Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland

Non-EU+ countries as per the EU Commission's COVID travel recommendation include:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, American Samoa, Angola, Anguilla, Antarctica, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Aruba, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bermuda, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bonaire Sint Eustatius and Saba, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bouvet Island, Brazil, British Indian Ocean Territory, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cayman Islands, Central

African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Curaçao, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), Fiji, French Polynesia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Greenland, Grenada, Guam, Guatemala, Guernsey, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Isle of Man, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, North Korea, South Korea, Kuwait, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Macao, North Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia Federated States of, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Montserrat, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Niue, Norfolk Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Palestine State of, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Pitcairn, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Helena Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sint Maarten (Dutch part), Solomon Islands, Somalia, Somaliland, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Svalbard and Jan Mayen, Syrian Arab Republic, Taiwan, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste (East Timor), Togo, Tokelau, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Turks and Caicos Islands, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Virgin Islands British, Virgin Islands U.S., Wallis and Futuna, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara), Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe