

CORONASYS INNOVATION SHEET 8

CORONA TRAFFIC LIGHT

Background

Many European countries have seen surges in Covid- 19 infections after the holiday season¹². This is also true for Austria.³ There are many different approaches to evaluate the severity of the situation and to decide which measures should be taken. Austria has now developed a so-called “Corona traffic light” that has gained a lot of media coverage to inform its decision making regarding the pandemic⁴. Similar concepts have already been implemented for example in Berlin⁵ and the USA⁶.

Features

The Corona situation in Austria is now evaluated weekly with a traffic light system. Four colors from green (low risk) to red (very high risk) correlate with specific measures to apply to the affected region. The Berlin system in comparison does only involve three colors and includes only three parameters (incidence, the R-value, which indicates how many people an infected person infects on average, and the percentage of ICU- beds required for Covid- 19 patients)⁷.

Criteria for traffic light colors in Austria are not only the case numbers over seven days but also their traceability, whether sick people became infected in their home town or elsewhere, the capacity of hospitals, the total number of tests, and other factors such as tourism⁸⁹. The traffic light aims to carry out the risk assessment according to objective criteria and to standardize the response to it. For example, in the case of yellow, the requirement to wear masks is to be tightened in shops, restaurants, and during events. Students will also have to wear a mask in schools if the traffic light turns yellow¹⁰.

Potentials

The traffic light could help officials to make informed decisions, communicate to the public, and provide guidance for the implementation of specific measures according to scientific knowledge, regional differences, and manageability.

Points to consider

However, the traffic light is not excluded from political influence. It is carried out by a commission to which five representatives of the Federal Government and nine representatives of the counties are sent. There will be five experts as well (e.g. virologists) but they are also appointed by the Federal Government.¹¹ Some cities have already criticized the government's strategy. They claim that the traffic light does not consider the differences between regions and does not paint an adequate picture of the situation¹². Another point to ponder is whether there should be a green light at all. One could argue that this leads to a false sense of security. The US- System, for example, does not include a green light¹³. Some accuse Austria's government of using the classification to make local officials look bad and enhance the governing parties (ÖVP) chances in the state elections in autumn. Furthermore, some say there is not yet a jurisdictional basis for the traffic light system¹⁴.

Conclusion

In theory, the Austrian Corona traffic light system is a helpful tool to respond to challenges regarding Corona measures. In practice, however, it needs to be improved and a consensus between state and local authorities as well as leading scientists should be reached.

State of information: 08/09/2020

Launch: September 2020

Country: Austria

Focus area: Monitoring, policy, and public communication

Developers: Austrian government

Beneficiaries: General population, decision makers

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- ¹ WHO. „WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard“, 8. September 2020. <https://covid19.who.int>. [09/08/2020]
- ² ECDC. „COVID-19 Situation Update for the EU/EEA and the UK, as of 7 September 2020“. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 7. September 2020. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/cases-2019-ncov-eueea>. [09/08/2020]
- ³ Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. „Austria - COVID-19 Overview - Johns Hopkins“. Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, 8. September 2020. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region/austria>. [09/08/2020]
- ⁴ Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz. „Karte | Corona Ampel“, 8. September 2020. <https://corona-ampel.gv.at/>. [08/09/2020]
- ⁵ Senatsverwaltung für Gesundheit, Pflege und Gleichstellung. 2020. <https://www.berlin.de/sen/gpg/service/presse/2020/pressemitteilung.977985.php> [09/12/2020]
- ⁶ „PHDMC | - Coronavirus Updates.“ Accessed September 14, 2020. <https://www.phdmc.org/coronavirus-updates>. <https://www.phdmc.org/coronavirus-updates> [09/14/2020]
- ⁷ Senatsverwaltung für Gesundheit, Pflege und Gleichstellung. „Corona-Ampel: Die aktuellen Indikatoren,“ August 23, 2020. <https://www.berlin.de/sen/gpg/service/presse/2020/pressemitteilung.979425.php>.
- ⁸ Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz, „FAQ“. [08/09/2020]
- ⁹ Listner, Astrid. „Österreichs Bundesregierung startet Corona-Ampel“. swr. online, 4. September 2020. <https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/oesterreich-corona-ampel-100.html>. [09/09/2020]
- ¹⁰ Löwenstein, Stephan. „Eine Ampel mit vier Farben: So misst Österreich das Corona-Risiko“. FAZ.NET, 4. September 2020. <https://www.faz.net/1.6938015>. [09/09/2020]
- ¹¹ Löwenstein, Stephan. „Eine Ampel mit vier Farben: So misst Österreich das Corona-Risiko“. FAZ.NET, 4. September 2020. <https://www.faz.net/1.6938015>. [09/09/2020]
- ¹² Deutsches Ärzteblatt. „Österreich startet ‚Corona-Ampel‘“. Deutsches Ärzteblatt, 4. September 2020. <https://www.aerzteblatt.de/nachrichten/116262/Oesterreich-startet-Corona-Ampel>.
- ¹³ PHDMC | - Coronavirus Updates.“ Accessed September 14, 2020. <https://www.phdmc.org/coronavirus-updates>. <https://www.phdmc.org/coronavirus-updates> [09/14/2020]
- ¹⁴ Listner, Astrid. „Österreichs Bundesregierung startet Corona-Ampel“. swr. online, 4. September 2020. <https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/oesterreich-corona-ampel-100.html>. [09/09/2020]

Background on Innovation Sheet Series

As part of a real-time evaluation of the SARS CoV 2 pandemic (with focus on epidemiological, medical, economical, societal, technical, and cultural developments in Germany and Armenia) the CoronaSys research team, under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Martin Voss, is conducting a continuous monitoring of developments and medical, technical, and social innovations concerning Covid-19.

Multiple national and international media outlets, research platforms, and scientific and organizational guidelines, briefs, and updates are screened to feed into this outlet. The rationale behind this is to support the projects' network partners in Armenia and Germany with short summaries of key developments and promising innovations that are shaping the global, German, and Armenian outbreak response and recovery.

The aim of these short briefs is to give condensed and structured information on selected innovations emerging out of the conducted horizon scanning. This could be mainstream big-ticket items or fringe subjects that are easily overlooked in the global flood of information. Some innovations will be followed through their evolution in time while others may only appear once. While subjectively selected, the briefs are descriptive in nature and leave analysis and critical interpretation to the reader. Network partners in both countries are invited to provide feedback on their interest areas and suggest particularly relevant topics for the CoronaSys Workshop series.

The CoronaSys Innovation Sheet Series is published by the [Academy of the Disaster Research Unit](#), which is, as a non-profit limited liability company, a spin-off of the [Disaster Research Unit](#) at the Free University of Berlin. The series is part of the research project "[CoronaSys](#): Addressing the corona pandemic in Armenia through systemic risk management", sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or if you wish to be taken on (or off) the project mailing list for CoronaSys updates, innovation sheets, and workshop invitations, please send a message to Janina Schäfer (schaefer@a-kfs.de). For general project inquiries, you may contact the team lead Sara Merkes (merkes@a-kfs.de) or the project lead Martin Voss (voss@a-kfs.de).

Previous CoronaSys Innovation Sheets

- 1 "New" Antiviral Face Masks
- 2 "Dyphox" Surface Coating
- 3 MOVES SLC Portable ICU
- 4 Portable TRI- KLEEN 500UV
- 5 Convalescent plasma therapy
- 6 ASIC- App
- 7 BinaxNOW antigen test

All previous CoronaSys Innovation Sheets are available online:

<http://coronasys.a-kfs.de/category/innovation-stream/>

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