



Coronavirus: Commission proposes additional safeguards on travel from outside the EU and updated criteria for applying travel restrictions

Brussels, 25 January 2021

Today the Commission is proposing additional safeguards and requirements for international travellers into the EU. New coronavirus variants and the volatile health situation worldwide call for further action to ensure that any travel to the EU takes place safely. To reflect the latest scientific advice, the Commission is also proposing updated criteria taking into account the testing rate, testing positivity and detection of variants of concern when deciding on the application of restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU to a specific non-EU country.

Additional safeguards on travel from outside the EU

Member States should introduce additional measures to ensure that travel into the EU takes place safely. This concerns those travelling to the EU for essential reasons, EU citizens and long-term residents as well as their family members, and those travelling from countries for which the non-essential travel restriction was lifted:

- **Mandatory testing before departure:** Member States should require travellers to have undertaken a negative COVID-19 PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test before departure, and submit a proof of such a negative test. The test should be taken at the earliest 72 hours before departure; EU citizens, residents and their family members should have the possibility to take the test after arrival. Mandatory testing can be combined with a requirement of self-isolation, quarantine and contact tracing as well as additional testing as needed for a period of up to 14 days, provided that the Member State imposes the same requirements on its own nationals when travelling from the same non-EU country. Exceptions could be decided for some categories of essential travellers if such requirements would impede the very purpose of the travel. In particular, transport and cross-border workers should be exempted from the requirement to present a negative PCR test and may only be requested to present a negative Rapid Antigen Test on arrival. There are also specific rules for aircrew.
- **Stricter measures to address virus variants of concern:** For trips originating from countries where a variant of concern of the virus has been detected, Member States should systematically impose safety measures such as self-isolation, quarantine and contact tracing for a period of up to 14 days. In particular, travellers should be required to quarantine and take additional tests upon or after arrival.
- **Common European Passenger Locator Form:** Member States should require those entering the EU to submit a Passenger Locator Form in accordance with applicable data protection requirements. A common European Passenger Locator Form should be developed for this purpose.

Updated criteria

When considering whether to lift restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU from a non-EU country, the Council should consider the case notification rate, the testing rate, the test positivity rate, as well as the incidence of variants of concern. The following criteria should apply, reflecting the most recent scientific advice:

- 14-day cumulative COVID-19 **case notification rate** (i.e. total number of newly notified COVID-19 cases per 100 000 population in the previous 14 days at regional level) not higher than 25;
- **Testing rate** (i.e. number of tests for COVID-19 infection per 100 000 population carried in the previous seven days) superior to 300;
- **Test positivity rate** (i.e. percentage of positive tests among all tests for COVID-19 infection carried out in the previous seven days) not higher than 4%;
- Nature of the virus present in the country, in particular whether **variants of concern** of the virus have been detected.

Member States should also continue to take account of the **reciprocity** granted to EU countries.

In addition to these updates on travel from outside the EU, the Commission is also [presenting](#) today a proposal to update the [Council Recommendation](#) coordinating measures affecting free movement within the EU.

Next steps

It is now for the Council to consider this proposal. A first discussion is scheduled in the Council's integrated political crisis response (IPCR) meeting taking place this afternoon. Once the proposal is adopted, it will be for Member States to implement the additional safeguards it sets out and review the list of non-EU countries from where restrictions should be lifted in light of the updated criteria. The Council should continue reviewing the list of countries exempted from the travel restriction every 2 weeks, and update it where relevant.

Background

A temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU is currently in place from many non-EU countries. The Council regularly reviews, and where relevant updates, the list of countries from where travel is possible, based on the evaluation of the health situation. The Council last updated that list on [17 December 2020](#).

This restriction covers non-essential travel only. Those who have an essential reason to come to Europe should continue to be able to do so, subject to the safeguards outlined in the proposal. That includes categories of travellers listed in Annex II of the [Council Recommendation](#). EU citizens and long-term residents as well as their family members should also be allowed to enter the EU. Today's proposal does not change the categories of travellers exempted from the restriction.

To assist Member States in consistently applying the restriction, the Commission issued on 28 October 2020 [guidance](#) on categories of persons considered to be essential travellers and therefore exempted from restrictions.

On 19 January, ahead of the meeting of European leaders on a coordinated response to the coronavirus crisis, the Commission set out a number of actions needed to step up the fight against the pandemic.

At their videoconference meeting of 21 January 2021, EU Heads of State or Government acknowledged that the Council may need to review its recommendations on non-essential travels into the EU in light of the risks posed by the new virus variants. Following the meeting, President Ursula von der Leyen announced that the Commission would propose additional safety measures for essential travel from outside the EU.

Today's proposal updates the Council recommendation on the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU.

The latest information on the rules applying to entry from non-EU countries as communicated by Member States are available on the [Re-open EU website](#).

For More Information

[Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction](#)

[Coronavirus: Commission proposes update to coordinated approach on free movement restrictions](#)

IP/21/194

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