

Questions & Answers for people travelling to and from the EU during the pandemic

What is happening at EU level on travel restrictions?

On 17 March 2020, EU Member States agreed on coordinated action at the external borders based on the [recommendation by the Commission](#) to restrict non-essential travel for a period of 30 days.

On 8 April 2020 the Commission recommended an extension of travel restrictions to the EU+ area by another 30 days. This would expire on 15 May 2020.

What are the restrictions?

Member States and Schengen Associated countries are temporarily suspending **all non-essential travel** from third countries to the **EU+ area**. The “EU+ area” includes 30 countries: 26 out of the 27 EU Member States as well as the four Schengen Associated States: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Ireland does not currently apply the travel restriction.

Why introduce travel restrictions?

Travel restrictions aim to reduce the number of travellers entering the European Union. The aim is to restrict the spread of the coronavirus and protect public health within the EU, as well as to prevent the virus from spreading from the EU to other countries.

Where can I find information on the restrictions?

Information should be available on the websites of the relevant national authorities (e.g. Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs).

A daily summary of flight and passenger restrictions is available on the [Eurocontrol website](#) and is entitled ‘Covid Notam (notice to airmen) summary’.

Who is exempt from the travel restrictions and what is understood by “essential travel”?

The following are exempt from the temporary travel restriction to the EU+ area:

- all EU citizens and citizens of the Schengen Associated States, and their family members for the purposes of returning home;
- non-EU citizens who are long-term residents in the EU.

The temporary travel restrictions should also not apply to people with an essential function or need, including:

- Healthcare professionals, health researchers, and elderly care professionals;
- Frontier workers;
- Seasonal workers in agriculture;
- Transport personnel engaged in haulage of goods and other transport staff to the extent necessary;
- Diplomats, staff of international organisations, military personnel and humanitarian aid workers in the exercise of their functions;
- Passengers in transit;
- Passengers travelling for imperative family reasons;
- Persons in need of international protection or for other humanitarian reasons respecting the principle of ‘non-refoulement’.

Do the restrictions apply to:

- Seasonal workers?

No, temporary travel restrictions should not apply to travel by people with an essential function or need, including seasonal workers in agriculture.

- Medical professionals?

No, temporary travel restrictions should not apply to travelling by people with an essential function or need, including healthcare professionals, health researchers, and elderly care professionals.

- EU citizens' family members?

No, if returning home to the EU. The temporary travel restriction must exempt nationals of all EU Member States and Schengen Associated States, as well as their family members travelling to return to their homes in the EU. EU citizens and their families are considered to be 'returning home' when seeking to reach the Member State of the EU citizen's nationality even if the latter, and his/her family members, do not habitually residence there.

- Transport personnel?

No, the temporary travel restrictions should not apply to transport personnel. This category should be interpreted broadly.

- Someone claiming asylum?

No, the temporary travel restrictions should not apply to travel by people with an essential need, including persons in need of international protection or for other humanitarian reasons.

What if I live in a country that is not my State of nationality?

EU citizens are considered to be 'returning home' when seeking to reach a Member State other than that of their nationality, but in which they have their residence. Residence in a Member State other than that of nationality is not limited to permanent residence but includes residence for periods of less than five years.

I hold a Schengen visa and I am currently in the EU, what are the consequences of the travel restrictions for me?

Visa holders present in the Schengen area who cannot leave at the expiry of their short-stay visa must contact the authorities of the Member State in which they are located to ask for an extension of their visa. A visa may generally be extended to allow for a total stay of 90 days in a 180 days period.

A list of relevant national authorities in Member States is available [here](#).

I am a national of a visa-waived third country and have remained in the Schengen area beyond the permitted 90-day stay. What should I do?

For nationals of visa-waived third-countries who are compelled to stay beyond the extended 90/180 days, the competent national authorities should extend the validity of the authorisations for legal stay, issue a new one or take other appropriate measures ensuring a continued right to stay on their territory.

Information is available on the websites of Member States' national authorities.

Are Irish citizens (and residents) exempted from the restriction, even though Ireland is not part of the Schengen area?

Yes. All EU citizens and their family members must be exempt from the temporary travel restriction.

Does the exemption also apply to citizens of the United Kingdom?

Yes. UK nationals are still to be treated in the same way as EU citizens until the end of the Brexit transition period (31.12.2020). Therefore, during that time UK nationals and their family members are exempt from the temporary travel restriction.

Is it possible to transit through other EU Member States (road transit or transfer at airport) in order to return to my home Member State?

Yes, EU citizens who are returning to their Member State of nationality or residence, as well as their family members, irrespective of their nationality, should be allowed onward transit. Given the reduced availability of commercial flights, 'onward transit' should cover any means of transportation.

Can international airlines refuse boarding to EU citizens returning to their Member State of nationality or residence from a third country?

No. The temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU do not apply to returning EU citizens and citizens of the Schengen Associated States.

What if my travel documents are expired due to an unexpectedly extended stay abroad?

EU citizens and their family members who are not in possession of a valid passport and/or visa should be allowed to enter the EU territory, if they can prove by other means that they are EU citizens or family members of an EU citizen. Possession of an expired passport should be deemed to constitute proof by other means in the current situation. Family members should always be able to prove that they are indeed family members of the EU citizen.

Can passengers transit through the international transit areas of airports located in an EU Member State or Schengen association state?

Yes, passengers travelling from a non-EU country to another non-EU country may transit through the international transit area of airports located in the Schengen area. Rules regarding airport transit visa requirements continue to apply.