

Lifting of temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU imposed due to COVID-19

Operational guidance



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Contents

A – Key messages	4
B – Background	5
C – Purpose and scope.....	6
D – Target audience	6
E – Implications to border management	6
E.1. List of third countries and chosen criteria.....	8
E.2. Exemptions when travel restrictions from third countries do not apply	9
E.3. Entry for EU citizens who travelled to third countries not on the list / entry for third country nationals residing in the EU.....	9
E.4. Refusal of entry based on threats to public health	10
E.5. Country of residence as a deciding factor	11
E.6. Recognition of third-country documents.....	13
E.7. Other operational considerations.....	13
E.8. Good practices from Member States	15

A – Key messages

- The **COVID-19 pandemic** is at different stages in different regions and countries around the globe and within the European Union (EU). The disease **continues to pose a significant threat to public health** and new infection chains by introduction from travellers originating within and outside the EU should be expected and managed accordingly.
- **Border control authorities at the EU's external borders** will play an important role in safeguarding public health of EU citizens in the coming weeks and months when travel restrictions for travellers originating from third countries will gradually be lifted. In particular, border guards will need to continue applying travel restrictions with regard to residents of certain third countries and to resume the individual assessment of a threat to public health as one of the entry conditions with regard to residents of third countries for which general travel restrictions will be lifted. To fulfil this role, border control authorities should collaborate with **the regional and national public health authorities**.
- Border guards should practice **standard countermeasures**, such as physical distancing, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette. Other **infection and prevention measures**, such as frequent cleaning and disinfection of jointly used equipment (e.g. computers, fingerprint scanners, document readers etc.) as well as other surfaces (e.g. door handles, booths, phones, etc.) should be carried out. Measures introduced in line with the *Guidance on the implementation of the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU, on the facilitation of transit arrangements for the repatriation of EU citizens, and on the effects on visa policy*¹ concerning sanitary and safety measures protecting border guards and other public agents deployed at the external borders should continue to apply.
- Due to the absence of a COVID-19 vaccine and medication as effective treatment for patients against this disease, additionally taking into account the risk of recurring waves of infections, the establishment of a precise timetable to lift all travel restrictions for travel into the EU appears elusive at this point in time.
- Reliable, evidence based, **epidemiological indicators** to trigger or lift travel restrictions at European level do not currently exist. Member States and the Commission are working on the list of third countries for which travel restrictions should be lifted. The list will be updated on a regular basis. Country epidemiological profiles are published on a weekly basis at the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). However, reported cases and deaths related to COVID-19 reflect mainly the testing and reporting policy of each country making any comparisons very difficult.
- The **Schengen Borders Code** (SBC)² stipulates entry conditions, including public health considerations, at the EU's external border (Art. 6(1)(e)) and contains a definition of what constitutes a threat to public health (in Art. 2 Nr. 21). **If a third-country national jeopardises public health, entry can be denied**. A substantiated decision is to be given by means of the standard form for refusal of entry in Annex V Part B, letter I, of the SBC.

¹ [European Commission Communication C\(2020\) 2050 final, 30 March 2020.](#)

² [Regulation 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016](#) on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code) (consolidated version of 11 June 2019).

- Border guards will additionally have to assess the travellers' **country of residence** when determining if the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel still apply to the third-country national or not.
- In order to enable border guards to conduct this assessment in the swiftest way possible, relevant epidemiological information and, once agreed, constantly updated information on the list of third countries for which travel restrictions have been lifted **must be made available via accessible IT systems / information platforms at the border, or any other appropriate means.**
- **For future pandemics**, public health provisions in the SBC and the 'Practical Handbook for Border Guards'³ need to be reinforced. **Policies and legal provisions for travel restrictions should be reviewed** in an after action review process after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides in order to assess their potential effectiveness and efficiency evaluating also the adverse effects. **Standardised templates** for the conduct of health checks within the overall border-check procedures need to be formulated, tested and agreed between EU Member States (MS)/Schengen associated countries (SAC) for the external borders and when checks temporarily reintroduced at the internal borders.
- **The respective roles of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) ought to be strengthened and the cooperation of the two agencies should be enhanced.** The creation of a joint, lean structure able to provide 24/7 support to border guards on the ground in case of a crisis could be envisaged and specific agreements proposed. Frontex stands ready to mainstream public health aspects at the border in core Agency processes such as risk analysis, vulnerability assessments, and operations.

B – Background

In December 2019, the first pneumonia cases in Wuhan, China, were recognised as a cluster, caused by a then unknown agent. In January 2020, the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention reported a novel coronavirus as the cause of this outbreak. The virus 'severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2' (SARS-CoV-2) and the disease are referred to as coronavirus disease 2019 (**COVID-19**).

By mid-March 2020, most MS/SAC were affected by the pandemic and imposed travel restrictions at the **internal borders**, and other measures, affecting around 300 million citizens by late April. The members of the European Council agreed, on 17 March 2020, to adopt **coordinated, temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU** for a period of 30 days.⁴ As explained in the Communication of the Commission of 16 March 2020⁵, *"While travel restrictions are generally not seen by the World Health Organisation as the most effective way of countering a pandemic, the rapid spread of COVID-19 makes it essential that the EU and Member States take urgent, immediate and concerted action not only to protect the public health of our populations, but also to prevent the virus from further spreading from the EU to other countries, [...]Travel restrictions should focus on drastically reducing incoming people flows at the external borders of the Union"*.

³ [Annex to the Commission Recommendation establishing a common 'Practical Handbook for Border Guards'](#) to be used by Member States' competent authorities when carrying out the border control of persons, C(2019)7131 final, 8 October 2019.

⁴ [Conclusions](#) by the President of the European Council following the video conference with members of the European Council on COVID-19, 17 March 2020.

⁵ [European Commission Communication COM \(2020\) 115 final, 16 March 2020.](#)

This **operational guidance** was elaborated following a Frontex situational assessment established in early June, which considered the implications of the lifting of border controls. Based on this earlier work, the present text looks at the implications of the lifting of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel, enacted in the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic for public health reasons at the **EU's external borders** (including SAC). This text was peer reviewed by the European Commission and ECDC.

C – Purpose and scope

This **operational guidance** complements the European Commission's third assessment of the **application of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU**, released on 11 June 2020⁶, and assesses the immediate implications to **border management**.

The guidance aims to facilitate MS/SAC implementation of the required procedural, legal and operational measures at border crossing points (BCPs) at the EU's external borders. The considerations that are being put forward in this document are dependent on EU and national laws. **Good practices from several MS are included under heading E.8. This operational document does not aim to provide guidance on health risks.** Information on the current epidemiological situation and public health guidance can be accessed from the ECDC website: ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19-pandemic

D – Target audience

This operational guidance is intended for **border-control authorities in MS/SAC** and also aims to inform the decision-making of relevant authorities/institutions at both national and European level.

E – Implications to border management

The recent **Commission Communication** (see footnote 6), adopted after discussions with MS/SAC in the 'COVID-19 Information Group' meetings over the past months, invited MS/SAC to prolong the existing travel restrictions of non-essential travel into the EU until **30 June 2020**. From that date onwards, restrictions should be progressively lifted. On 25 June 2020, the Commission adopted a *proposal for a Council Recommendation on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU*⁷ (see also Council document 9147/20, dated 29 June 2020). A **key principle** of the Communication is the proposal to assess the **travellers' country of residence** (in a third country, and not his/her nationality) as the deciding factor in order to decide whether the temporary restriction on non-essential travel still applies.

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a serious public health threat of international concern as defined by the World Health Organisation. The epidemiological situation varies among countries as well as among the different continents.⁸ Physical distancing measures continue to be implemented worldwide at different administration to limit the coronavirus spread. Travel restrictions were

⁶ [European Commission Communication COM \(2020\) 399 final, 11 June 2020.](#)

⁷ European Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation COM (2020) 287.

⁸ http://covid19-country-overviews.ecdc.europa.eu/#1_introduction

implemented extensively in response to COVID-19, with the aim of reducing long-distance transmission and importation.⁹

A **general lifting** of all travel restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU **was not agreed** by the Council. The gradual lifting of temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU and the extension of the categories of exempted travellers means that border-control authorities have a role in **implementing the remaining restrictions** of travel to the EU based on public health risk considerations.

In practice, this implies that **in addition** to the **regular border-check procedures foreseen by European – notably the SBC – and national legislation**, border guards should assess whether the traveller not only **fulfils the conditions of entry** but also can be granted entry in view of temporary travel restrictions imposed in the context of the **still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic**.

It is important to stress that border guards effect border checks **once a traveller has already reached the EU's external borders**. Hence, it is **imperative** that travellers be informed beforehand by MS/SAC competent bodies, **including public health authorities**, of their obligations prior to their travel. Likewise, cooperation with transport providers **should result in** travellers being informed during booking, confirmation and check-in about applicable travel restrictions and the possibility of being refused entry based on a threat to public health as well as to confirm their country of residence **prior to boarding** the means of transport in a third country.

Border guards need to apply any remaining travel restrictions and enforce the **public health risk provisions** of the SBC (where a threat to public health may justify refusal of entry) and also follow the MS/SAC public health authorities' instructions. The shift from almost **total** travel restrictions for travellers towards more **selective** restrictions **adds to the complexity** of border checks and may lead to **capacity issues** and **increased waiting times** at BCPs. Efficient and effective practices need to be introduced to manage transit times while following ECDC and MS/SAC recommended **physical distancing measures**.

Different types of borders will require **different solutions** in close **cooperation with carriers** – most notably airlines but also maritime carriers – and **third-country authorities**, especially at the **EU's external land borders**.

⁹ "ECDC advises, in the risk assessments about the COVID-19 pandemic, that available evidence does not support recommending border closures [travel restrictions], which cause significant secondary effects and societal and economic disruption in the EU. It is therefore essential that, while allowing people to move within or between countries, measures should be in place to minimise the risk of infection when travelling across borders and to prevent the re-introduction of sustained community transmission. The goal is to implement the physical distancing and mitigation measures in the most effective and targeted way possible, minimising the social and economic impact on the regions and in groups that are less likely to experience high morbidity or mortality. ECDC advises that [MS/SAC] adopt a set of actions including enhanced community-based surveillance with comprehensive testing of possible cases, systematic contact tracing, continuation of certain non-pharmaceutical interventions, and reintroduction of additional measures in case of transmission upsurges."

ECDC offers specific guidance on travel-related measures¹⁰, furthermore on passenger locator data, the limited evidence on entry and exit screening, and health declarations, in the context of COVID-19,¹¹ as well as on mobile applications that could be adopted by MS/SAC to assist in their contact tracing activities.¹² The **European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)** provides **practical considerations on safety directives** and how to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission for travellers.¹³ All such information should be made available to all border guards via IT solutions, e.g. via national Intranets.

E.1. List of third countries and chosen criteria

The **list of third countries** for which temporary restrictions for non-essential travel will be lifted is a way for MS/SAC to have a common and coordinated approach based on the same criteria. This list of third countries is **currently being elaborated by MS/SAC, and will be periodically reviewed**.

It is imperative that **border-guards receive the list of third countries from the MS/SAC competent bodies** and that such lists reach all front liners, electronically and in real time via the respective MS/SAC IT systems available for border guards. Moreover, in the event that MS/SAC **individually decide to open their borders** to other third countries which are not on the list of third countries for which temporary restrictions on non-essential travel will be lifted, they ought to **notify the Commission and all the other MS/SAC by the usual means of communication**.

The gradual lifting of temporary restrictions for non-essential travel could partially compensate, because of lower passenger flows, for the increased time needed for border checks, including the verification of the travellers' country of residence. This said, there is a risk that travellers who reside in third countries that are still not on the list would travel to those countries that are on the list to be able to travel to MS/SAC.

Therefore, depending on the expected passenger flows, **resources would need to be bolstered**, as it may occasionally be **difficult and more time consuming** for border guards to **verify the real provenance**, i.e. first country of embarkation or departure, especially in case of travellers in private cars and when bookings are not through tickets and/or if the travellers have previously crossed a different type of border and/or used different means of travel.

Moreover, **travellers might want to conceal their real place of residence** because that particular third country is not yet on the list of third countries whose nationals are allowed travel to MS/SAC. This could result in lengthier border checks as border guards will have to go through passports, ticketing and in extreme cases go through objects in possession of travellers'. **Advance Passenger Information (API)** and **Passenger Name Records (PNR) data** could support MS/SAC border guards to verify individual cases at the air borders. Transmission and handling of such data should be foreseen in EU and national legislation, also to complement the ETIAS Regulation, in respect of public health risks.

¹⁰ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/considerations-travel-related-measures-reduce-spread-covid-19-eueea>

¹¹ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/passenger-locator-data-entry-exit-screening-health-declaration>

¹² <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/covid-19-mobile-applications-support-contact-tracing>

¹³ <https://www.easa.europa.eu/the-agency/coronavirus-covid-19>

Border guards need **up-to-date information** on the state of play of the lifting of travel restrictions and importantly on the **exemptions** in order to implement smooth and non-discriminatory border checks.

E.2. Exemptions when travel restrictions from third countries do not apply

The Commission Communications propose that the temporary travel restrictions to non-essential travel from third countries need to limit the impact of the restrictions to the necessary minimum. **The proposals exclude specific categories of travellers** with an essential function or need and include:

- Healthcare professionals, health researchers, and elderly care professionals;
- Frontier workers;
- Seasonal workers in agriculture;
- Transport personnel¹⁴;
- 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;
- Third-country nationals travelling for the purpose of study;
- Highly qualified third-country workers if their employment is necessary from an economic perspective and the work cannot be postponed or performed abroad.

E.3. Entry for EU citizens who travelled to third countries not on the list / entry for third country nationals residing in the EU

The Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU of 25 June 2020 stipulates that Union citizens within the meaning of Article 20(1) TFEU and third-country nationals who, under agreements between the Union and its Member States, on the one hand, and those third countries, on the other hand, enjoy rights of free movement equivalent to those of Union citizens, as well as their respective family members, should be allowed to travel to the EU+ area¹⁵ for any purpose, not just to return home. Where they **travel from third countries** for which the restrictions for non-essential travel continue to apply, this **may be subject to health requirements**, such as self-isolation or similar measures, of the MS/SAC of destination (provided they impose the same requirements on their own nationals). In this context, travel from third countries for which the restrictions

¹⁴ The Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation includes seafarers.

¹⁵ The 'EU+ area' includes all Schengen Member States (including Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania), as well as the four Schengen Associated States. It also includes Ireland and the United Kingdom if they decide to align.

for non-essential travel continue to apply should also include any travel to **third countries visited before the last embarkation / entry point**. The MS/SAC competent bodies, importantly the responsible public health authorities, need to further qualify the required measures.

The same proposal for a Council Recommendation also **exempts from the travel restriction third country nationals who are long-term residents under the Long-term Residence Directive¹⁶**, persons deriving their right to reside from other EU Directives or national law or who hold national long-term visas, as well as their respective family members. This should apply also to third country nationals with temporary entry permit [issued for the purpose of crossing the border and exercising the right of legal residence in a Member State upon collecting the residence permit], where appropriate.

Border guards need to check the respective documentation (i.e. travel documents, residence permits and any other official documents) in order to ensure that the above conditions are fulfilled.

E.4. Refusal of entry based on threats to public health

The **Schengen Borders Code (SBC)** provides for the possibility of **refusal of entry to persons who constitute a threat to public health¹⁷** (see the text box on the notion of 'threat to public health'). This has been also reflected in the Annex to the Commission Recommendation establishing a common '*Practical Handbook for Border Guards*'¹⁸. Thus, in the context of COVID-19, **the third-country of residency criteria is linked to the protection of public health in MS/SACs**.

On checks on third-country nationals upon entry, Part II, Section I, Point 3.6., states that third-country nationals must be subject to a **thorough check**. The entry conditions to be fulfilled by third-country nationals include:

"...the verification regarding the points of departure and destination of the third-country national concerned and the purpose of the intended stay and, where necessary, checking the corresponding supporting documents;"

On threats to public health, Part II, Section I, Point 8.1., lists the conditions when third-country nationals must be **refused entry**, including when:

"...they are a threat to public policy, internal security, public health or the international relations of one or more Schengen States."

While third country nationals refused entry may lodge an appeal against such a decision, it will not have any suspensive effect on the decision to refuse entry. In line with Article 6 (5) (c) of the SBC, MS/SAC

¹⁶ Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents, OJ L 16, 23.1.2004, p. 44.

¹⁷ The Schengen Borders Code Practical Handbook for Border Guards states: 'Threat to public health' refers to any disease with epidemic potential as defined by the International Health Regulations of the World Health Organization and other infectious diseases or contagious parasitic diseases if they are subject of protection provisions applying to nationals of the Member States.

¹⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/docs/c2019-7131-annex.pdf>

may decide to authorise entry to a third country national on humanitarian grounds who does not fulfil one or more entry conditions. In such case the standard procedure for own nationals tested positively should apply.

Practical Handbook for Border Guards

Guidelines on the notion of 'threat to public health' for the purpose of refusing entry

This notion covers 'any disease with epidemic potential as defined by the International Health Regulations (IHR) of the World Health Organization (WHO) and other infectious diseases or contagious parasitic diseases if they are the subject of protection provisions applying to nationals of Schengen States'.

For the purpose of this Handbook, any threat to the health of the European citizens, as well as decisions on effective measures to be taken, will be assessed and decided through the Community Network set up under Decision 1082/2013/EU and its Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) and the ECDC, set up by Regulation (EC) No 851/2004 establishing a European centre for disease prevention and control. The EWRS authorities comprise the EU Member States' public health authorities and they work at national level together with national recognised surveillance institutes. The ECDC performs the risk assessment of the threat (ecdc.europa.eu).

Therefore, the authorities of each EU Member State which are competent for implementing health measures should always be associated, in accordance with national and Union public health legislation and with the procedures established by each Schengen State, with the assessment of the public health risk for the purposes of allowing or refusing entry at the border.

E.5. Country of residence as a deciding factor

The last Commission Communication proposes that when deciding whether the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to MS/SAC apply to a third-country national, **residence in a third country for which the restrictions on non-essential travel have been lifted should be the deciding factor** (rather than nationality).

Travellers need to be informed before their travel of the need to prove their country of residence, thus the **need for additional documents**, e.g. residence permits, work permits, identity cards or driving licences issued by the third-country of residence, and any other official documents that supports the travellers' claimed country of residence. This is important since third countries' residence or work permit details are not always affixed or indicated on travel documents, especially passports. Non-compliance with the above could result in **refusal of entry**, or lengthy first-line and second-line checks that **slow passenger flows**, or possibly even **failure to check residency**.

In order to minimise such occurrences MS/SAC **airport liaison officers** or liaison officers in those third countries on the list could conduct **pre-boarding checks**. MS/SAC could also deploy border guards on certain flights with third countries, whose role would be to fly on outgoing flights from Europe in order to conduct pre-boarding checks on return flights. **Private companies which perform pre-boarding checks** for certain carriers could also verify residency.

Once a third-country national has been allowed to board the aircraft and arrive at the EU's external borders the issue is no longer of 'travel' but rather of 'entry' or 'refusal'. While carriers' liability in principle does not concern verification of document of residence, MS/SAC ought to persuade the carriers to carry out such checks **before travel** by other means (more details below).

As an example, to facilitate "...travel arrangements to Cyprus and ensure the capture of all necessary information required by the health authorities", the Cypriot authorities launched an **online portal** [<https://cyprusflightpass.gov.cy/>] where travellers can complete all the necessary formalities in order to receive an authorisation to fly. MS/SAC could adapt such a measure for the **land and maritime borders**.

MS/SAC central authorities and consular authorities must **ensure wide dissemination of information to all travellers, carriers, relevant stakeholders** (in particular in the travel and tourism sectors on the travel restrictions in place at any point in time).

The EU application **RE-OPEN EU** and the portal [<https://reopen.europa.eu>] should include a notification for third-country travellers of the **need to prove their country of residence**. Both IT solutions should be promoted amongst travellers as they aim to provide travellers with **COVID-19 and health-related information for each MS/SAC**. Another useful portal is: [<https://www.healthygateways.eu>].

In order to **streamline border checks and minimise delays** travellers could be **reminded by carriers' announcements** before landing of the need to prove their country of residence. MS/SAC authorities could remind travellers, via signage or announcements, e.g. at air border BCPs, before border checks.

MS/SAC should facilitate border guards' duties, also to manage delays, by **deploying health inspectors and/or medical personnel directly at BCPs** to screen travellers, review health declarations etc.¹⁹

Council Directive 2001/51/EC of 28 June 2001²⁰ on **carrier sanctions** allows for checks on travel documents, including enforcing the carriers' obligation to return third-country nationals who are refused entry. The Directive also allows MS/SAC the freedom '*...to retain or introduce additional measures or penalties for carriers*'. In the case where MS/SAC legislation does not go beyond the Directive – and thus carriers are currently not obliged to check other documents besides travel documents – MS/SAC could consider using **public health** and **other legal provisions that oblige carriers** to deny boarding to travellers who do not fulfil the preannounced criteria, e.g. health related and residency conditions.

As a **deterrent**, MS/SAC should enact legislation that imposes **finances against those travellers who defy the residency criteria**. Likewise, **carriers should be obliged to inform travellers of the residency criteria** during booking, confirmation, and check-in and to confirm residency prior to boarding. This would entail that the **MS/SAC competent authorities, including health, and carriers unequivocally inform travellers of their obligations**.

At the air borders, **Automated Border Control** (ABC) gates have an important role in facilitating smooth passenger flows at the main air BCPs; however, e-Gate systems **cannot verify the residency** of third-country nationals. MS/SAC which allow third-country citizens to use of ABC gates should consider

¹⁹ See footnote 11.

²⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0051&from=EN>

implementing **spot checks** for those travellers who use the e-Gates or else to **temporarily disable ABC gates for third countries**. Such an action would require an impact assessment which, if need be, would facilitate the allocation of more front-line resources.

E.6. Recognition of third-country documents

Point 3 of the proposal for a Council Recommendation on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU of 25 June 2020 stipulates that *“When deciding whether the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU applies to a third-country national, residence in a third country for which the restrictions on non-essential travel have been lifted should be the determining factor (and not nationality).”* For the purpose of residence in the third country, residence or work permits should be sufficient proof for residence or any other official document, which can confirm the residence of the traveller in this country.

Therefore, MS/SAC border guards will need to familiarise themselves with what **third countries’ residence and work permits** look like plus have a basic understanding of such documents’ **printing techniques and security features**. Besides third countries’ residence or work permits, travellers could also possibly present **third countries’ identity cards and/or driving licences**, plus other official documents, in support of their claimed country of residence.

Depending on the circumstances and the type of documents presented, MS/SAC border guards will need to make best use of all that is available to them as reference material, e.g. **FADO / iFADO / PRADO**²¹, **Frontex Reference Manual** and use the resources in conjunction with **national document databases** plus other **commercial options**.

E.7. Other operational considerations

- **A common and coordinated approach is essential to secure border guard capacities at the EU’s external borders.** If a MS/SAC, or a group of countries, opts to remove travel restrictions with third countries outside a common and coordinated framework, then this could affect other MS/SACs and the Schengen area, especially when applied to air travel from third countries. Increased threats to public health by the spreading COVID-19 to/from third countries could result in affected and/or neighbouring MS/SAC to possibly reintroduce internal border checks, thus deflecting border guard resources from the EU’s external borders. A single information portal, available to authorities and citizens alike, should keep track of the updated list of third countries from/to which travel is possible.
- **Mechanisms need to be in place for MS/SAC competent authorities to be aware of COVID-19 cases linked to travellers, especially those going through the EU’s external borders.** API or passenger locator data may be of assistance in this case. **MS/SAC competent authorities** need to be prepared to reintroduce travel restrictions for specific third countries in case the conditions in the checklist are no longer met, or if the epidemiological situation is assessed as a risk that can be mitigated by travel restrictions, or in case the situation with regard to reciprocity of unhindered travel changes. This entails a continuous collaboration with the regional and/or national health authorities.

²¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/prado/en/search-by-document-country.html>

- MS/SACs need to prepare for a situation where their **resources at the EU's external border are increasingly tied to public health-related activities** (e.g. verifying residency, informing or directing passengers to quarantine, refusing entry/return of passengers whose travel may be restricted, etc.) thus creating vulnerabilities to core border-control tasks. For example, unless swift procedures and sufficient support functions are in place, border-control functions may be slowed down, especially if/when a considerable number of travellers with COVID-19 symptoms arrive at any given BCP.
- The **land BCPs in the Member States adjoining Western Balkan countries** are amongst the busiest in terms of regular passenger flow. Thus, the lifting of travel restrictions on non-essential travel from the Western Balkan countries/partners as of 1 July 2020 poses a capacity challenge if additional procedures to verify residency are added to the border checks. Land BCPs lack the benefit of carriers informing travellers in advance on the need to provide additional documents. Significant delays at these border sections might occur and concerned MS should verify the opportunity of staff increases at affected BCPs.

Therefore, the focus should at a minimum see the implementation of systematic first-line checks according to the Schengen Borders Code, including additional questions on residency during the border check procedure. If indications suggest that the traveller's residence is not in a third country that is on the list, then the traveller should be **swiftly referred to further second-line checks in order to verify the residency**, while at the same time aiming to maintain smooth passenger flows.

- **Frontex must be cognizant of the prospective of increased migratory pressure at the external borders**, chiefly upon the (further) lifting of restrictions in key transit countries. The operational requirements at the external border may change to some extent to add currently uncalculated demands on border guard resources. Additional COVID-19-related challenges concerning the resourcing, for instance of Joint Operations (outlined in the Agency's COVID-19 Situational Assessment entitled *Member States' support to Joint Operations*), must be considered here, too, and add complexity to the competing demands on limited border guard resources at external and internal borders.
- The lifting of COVID-19 induced border controls at the internal border, which were introduced earlier this year, should be seen as an occasion by MS/SACs to finally do without, at the same time, border controls for other reasons applied since 2015 **so as to fully restore a normal functioning** of the Schengen area. A continuation of selective internal border controls will not allow the Schengen area of free movement to function and **will lead to (or exacerbate existing) capacity gaps** at the external borders.

E.8. Good practices from Member States

Good practices in Greece

From 1 July, all visitors coming via air, land or sea, will be subject to random tests upon arrival. Upon being tested, the passengers are free to move to their final destination. In the event of a positive result, they will be contacted and placed on 14-day quarantine, with expenses covered by the Greek state. The use of face masks is obligatory after entering the airport terminal; the mask will be kept throughout the passenger's stay in the airport areas. All visitors are strongly recommended to download the Visit Greece app for free prior or upon arrival. Visitors should complete (ideally before travel) a Passenger Locator Form (PLF) with their contact details in Greece. This can also be found on the Visit Greece app in hardcopy during the flight and at a designated web-based form [<https://travel.gov.gr/>].

Good practices in Poland

At the first line of control, body temperature is measured before the border check. Border checks are performed with the use of PPE equipment and measures. Agreements with medical entities and special zones for travellers suspected of being infected are in place. At the second line of control, third-country nationals who are subject to special second-line procedures are waiting in a separate place and are not allowed to enter BCP premises. PPE and social distancing is in place. Back office officers should not have unnecessary contact with line officers and vice versa. Shifts should be changed without unnecessary contact.

Good practices in Portugal

- Coordination structures in place
- Responsibilities of the coordination structures and escalation and de-escalation proceedings
- Information structures, channels and flows of communication for all Covid-19-related matters
- Identification of units needed to remain open/closed and with reduced services
- Effective distribution and use of PPEs
- Reinforced hygiene plan and preventive measures
- Established an isolation room in all organic units
- Validation proceedings for suspected cases

The Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) has started to use a pilot system, SEF Mobile application, which allows border guards to perform border controls and inspections in a swift and secure way without entailing physical contact. Additionally, it allows the capture of digital fingerprints as well for biometric searches. Currently, this system allows an efficient documentary control without Immigration and Border Service inspectors having to unnecessarily handle travel and supporting documents. The project was under a quality testing phase when its usefulness for border controls became clear in the context of COVID-19.

LIMITED



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