

## **COVID-19: Council updates recommendation on non-essential travel from third countries**

The Council adopted an updated recommendation today on the temporary restriction of non-essential travel into the EU. The amendments introduced respond to the evolution of the pandemic, the increasing vaccination uptake and administration of booster doses, and the recognition of a growing number of certificates issued by third countries as equivalent to the EU digital COVID certificate. The new recommendation will start to apply on 1 March 2022.

Under this recommendation, COVID-19 restrictions should be applied taking into account both the situation in the third country and the individual status of the person. Member states should allow non-essential travel for persons vaccinated with an EU- or WHO-approved vaccine, recovered persons and all persons travelling from a country on the EU list. For some of these travellers, additional measures such as PCR testing before travel could apply.

### **Vaccinated and recovered persons**

Member states should lift the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU for persons vaccinated with an EU- or WHO-approved vaccine, provided they have received the last dose of the primary vaccination series at least 14 days and no more than 270 days before arrival or they have received a booster dose.

Member states should also lift the temporary restriction on non-essential travel for persons who have recovered from COVID-19 within 180 days prior to travelling to the EU.

For persons vaccinated with a WHO-approved vaccine, member states could also require a negative PCR test taken at the earliest 72 hours before departure and could apply additional measures such as quarantine or isolation. A negative PCR test before departure could also be required for persons who have recovered from COVID-19, as well as for persons who have been vaccinated with an EU-approved vaccine but do not hold an EU or equivalent certificate.

### **Children**

Children over 6 and under 18 who fulfil the conditions set out for adults should be allowed to travel.

In addition, all other children over 6 and under 18 should be allowed to travel with a negative PCR test taken at the earliest 72 hours before departure. Member states could require additional testing after arrival, as well as quarantine or isolation.

No test or additional requirements should be applied to children under the age of 6.

### **Countries on the EU list**

For restrictions to be lifted for all travellers from a given third country under the new rules, the number of COVID-19 cases per 100 000 inhabitants over the last 14 days is raised from 75 to 100. The weekly testing rate per 100 000 inhabitants is also increased from 300 to 600.

Other existing criteria continue to apply, including a stable or decreasing trend in new cases, a 4% positivity rate among all tests carried out, progress in vaccination, the presence of variants of interest or concern and the overall response to COVID-19 in the country. Reciprocity should continue to be taken into account on a case-by-case basis.

However, the updated recommendation also indicates that it is appropriate to start to consider moving to a purely person-based approach. To give time to third countries to increase their vaccination rates, the recommendation should be reviewed by 30 April 2022, by the Commission, to consider the deletion of the list of countries. The Commission should report to the Council and could submit to it a proposal to delete the list, if appropriate.

### **Background**

On 30 June 2020 the Council adopted a recommendation on the gradual lifting of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU. This recommendation included an initial list of countries for which member states should start lifting the travel restrictions at the external borders, which is reviewed every two weeks.

The main elements of the recommendation were last updated on 20 May 2021. This included a modification of the criteria for adding a third country to the list, the introduction of the possibility for member states to accept proof of vaccination, and the creation of an emergency brake mechanism to react to variants of concern or interest.

The Council recommendation is not a legally binding instrument. The authorities of the member states remain responsible for implementing the content of the recommendation.

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