

Travel restrictions: Council adds Israel to the list of countries for which member states should gradually lift restrictions on non-essential travel

Following a review under the recommendation on the gradual lifting of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU, the Council updated the list of countries for which travel restrictions should be lifted to add Israel. As stipulated in the Council recommendation, this list will continue to be reviewed every two weeks and, as the case may be, updated.

Based on the criteria and conditions set out in the recommendation, as from 6 May 2021 member states should **gradually lift the travel restrictions at the external borders for residents of the following third countries:**

- Australia
- Israel
- New Zealand
- Rwanda
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Thailand
- China, subject to confirmation of reciprocity

Travel restrictions should also be gradually lifted for the special administrative regions of China: Hong Kong and Macao, subject to confirmation of reciprocity.

Residents of Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican should be considered as EU residents for the purpose of this recommendation.

The **criteria** to determine the third countries for which the current travel restriction should be lifted were updated on 2 February 2021. They cover the epidemiological situation and overall response to COVID-19, as well as the reliability of the available information and data sources. Reciprocity should also be taken into account on a case by case basis.

Schengen associated countries (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, Switzerland) also take part in this recommendation.

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. The list is reviewed every two weeks and, as the case may be, updated.

On 2 February 2021, the Council adopted an amending recommendation which updated the criteria to determine the countries for which restrictions should be lifted. These are the criteria currently applied to the review of the list. The amending recommendation also set out measures for travellers including PCR testing and quarantine and provided for the rapid reintroduction of restrictions where the situation worsens quickly or a high incidence of variants of concern is identified.

On 3 May 2021, the Commission presented a proposal to further ease the current restrictions on non-essential travel, in view of the developments in the epidemiological situation and the progress of vaccination campaigns. This proposal increases the threshold of cumulative COVID-19 cases for countries included in the list and allows for non essential travel of vaccinated persons. At the same time, it introduces an 'emergency break' mechanism to limit the entry of variants of concern into the EU. This proposal is currently under discussion within the Council.

The Council recommendation is not a legally binding instrument. The authorities of the member states remain responsible for implementing the content of the recommendation. They may, in full transparency, lift only progressively travel restrictions towards countries listed.

A member state should not decide to lift the travel restrictions for non-listed third countries before this has been decided in a

coordinated manner.

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