

COVID-19: Council updates recommendation on restrictions to travel from third countries



The Council today adopted an amending recommendation on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU. This amendment responds to the ongoing vaccination campaigns by introducing certain waivers for vaccinated persons and easing the criteria to lift restrictions for third countries. At the same time, it takes into account the possible risks posed by new variants by setting out an emergency brake mechanism to quickly react to the emergence of a variant of interest or concern in a third country.

Criteria to lift restrictions for all travellers from a third country

For restrictions on non-essential travel to be lifted for 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 25 to 75. The progress in having the population vaccinated against the virus should also be taken into account. At the same time, to respond to the risk posed by new variants, the detection in a country of variants of interest should now be considered together with variants of concern.

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

Lifting of restrictions for vaccinated persons

If member states accept proof of vaccination to waive travel restrictions such as testing or quarantine, they should in principle lift restrictions on non-essential travel for third-country travellers who have received the last recommended dose of an EMA approved vaccine at least 14 days before arrival. Member states could also lift the restriction on non-essential travel to those who have received at least 14 days before the last recommended dose of a vaccine having completed the WHO emergency use listing process.

Where lifting these restrictions, member states should take into account reciprocity on a case by case basis.

Once adopted, the digital green certificate regulation will provide the basis, through a Commission implementing act, for treating third country vaccination certificates equivalent to digital green certificates. Until then, member states should be able to accept third country certificates

containing at least a minimum data set, in accordance with national law and taking into account the need to be able to verify the authenticity, validity and integrity of the certificate.

Emergency brake mechanism

Where the epidemiological situation of a third country or region worsens quickly, in particular if a variant of concern or of interest has been detected, member states should adopt an urgent, temporary restriction on all travel into the EU. This emergency brake should not apply to EU citizens, long-term EU residents and certain categories of essential travellers, who should nevertheless be subject to appropriate testing and quarantine measures, even if fully vaccinated.

When a member state applies such restrictions, the member states meeting within the Council should urgently review the situation in a coordinated manner and in close cooperation with the Commission. Such restrictions should be reviewed at least every two weeks.

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.

On 2 February 2021, the Council adopted an amending recommendation which updated the criteria to lift restrictions, set out measures for travellers and provided for the rapid reintroduction of restrictions in worsening situations or where 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.

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

[Visit the meeting page](#)

ESMA appoints Natasha Cazenave as

Executive Director

The Board of Supervisors confirmed the appointment at its meeting on Thursday 20 May, following the European Parliament's confirmation of Ms. Cazenave's candidature in its plenary session on 18 May.

Anneli Tuominen, Interim Chair, said

"I welcome today's appointment of Natasha Cazenave as ESMA's new Executive Director. She brings with her a wealth of experience from the public and private sectors, which will benefit ESMA as it enters its second decade.

"The members of the Management Board and the Board of Supervisors are looking forward to working with Natasha in implementing its ambitious Work Programme and preparing for future challenges and responsibilities.

"On behalf of the Board of Supervisors I would like to warmly thank Verena Ross for her role over the past ten years in making ESMA the successful EU authority it is today."

Natasha Cazenave, incoming Executive Director, said

"I am honoured by this appointment and eager to work with the members of the Board and ESMA's committed staff as the organisation begins a new phase of development."

Ms. Cazenave replaces Verena Ross, the outgoing Executive Director, and is appointed for a five-year term, renewable once. She is currently Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Policy and International Affairs Directorate at the Autorité des Marchés Financiers (AMF).

ESMA proposes lowering the reporting threshold for net short positions to 0.1% on a permanent basis

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU's securities markets regulator, [recommends](#) to the European Commission (EC) to permanently lower the threshold to notify net short positions on shares to national competent authorities (NCAs) from 0.2% to 0.1%.

ESMA has examined the evidence gathered after its successive emergency decisions, beginning in March 2020, which lowered, for the first time, the notification threshold to 0.1% on a temporary basis.

The analysis showed that a substantial amount of additional and essential information became available to NCAs due to the reporting of net short positions at the level of 0.1%. This additional transparency to NCAs of the real level of net short positions established in the market translates into an improved ability by NCAs to conduct market oversight. ESMA therefore considers it essential to lower the reporting threshold to 0.1% on a permanent basis.

Next steps

The EC may adopt a delegated act modifying the notification threshold in Article 5(2) of the Short Selling Regulation.

Further information:

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Media advisory – Foreign Affairs Council (Trade) of 20 May 2021



Indicative programme

from 08.00

Arrivals ([live streaming](#))

+/- 08.15

Doorstep by Augusto Santos Silva, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Portugal

+/- 09.00

Beginning of the Foreign Affairs Council (Trade)

Adoption of the agenda

Other business: Current legislative proposals (IPI) (+/- 09.00 [public session](#))

Conclusions on the trade policy review

WTO reform and preparations for the next Ministerial Conference

EU-US trade relations

Other business:

- a) Steel safeguards
- b) EU-Mercosur

Approval of "A" items

Informal exchange with the WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Informal exchange with the United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai

At the end of the meeting (+/- 16.15) press conference in [live streaming](#).

Arrangements for the press conference

Please note that there will be no physical press conference. EU accredited journalists will be able to ask questions remotely using [this link](#).

Journalists who already registered for previous Trade press conferences do not need to register again.

Deadline: Thursday, 20 May 2021, 15.15

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants approximately half an hour after the deadline.

[Videos and photos from the event](#)

[Visit the meeting page](#)

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