# The impact of coronavirus on Schengen borders

## Border controls to reduce the spread on coronavirus

The rapid and global spread of coronavirus following the outbreak in Wuhan (China) in December 2019 has pushed countries and regions around the world to reinforce border controls and impose limitations to internal movements. In the US, the majority of states have imposed state quarantine measures. Similar measures have been taken in Canada and Australia.
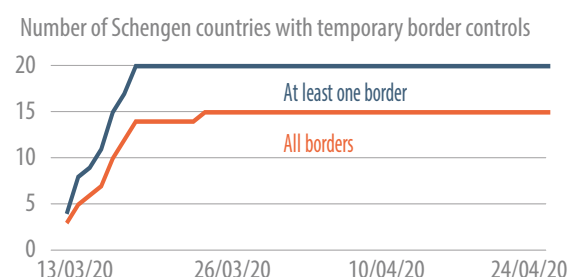
## The Schengen Area

The Schengen Area consists of 26 countries that have agreed to remove regular checks at their internal borders in order to facilitate the free and unrestricted movement of people. The countries include 22 EU Member States (Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden) and 4 associated countries (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein). The Schengen Code lays down the common rules governing the management of internal and external EU borders, including rules and procedures concerning the exceptional introduction of border checks at internal borders. According to the Code, Member States can introduce temporary border checks at their internal borders in cases of a foreseeable threat (e.g. a special event), an immediate threat or in the situation of persistent serious deficiencies relating to external borders.

As of March 2020, the coronavirus outbreak has pushed many Member States to reintroduce border controls at the internal borders on grounds of an immediate threat to public policy. According to Article 28 of the Code, the duration of such exceptional measure must be limited to ten days with the possibility to prolong them by renewable periods of 20 days, up to a maximum of two months. A Member State must notify the Commission and the other Member States before taking action, specifying the reasons, scope and duration of the measures. The information must be submitted to the European Parliament and the Council too. The Commission is supposed to issue an opinion after consulting the other Member States.

In order to ensure the free circulation of goods and services in the single market, the European Commission put forward guidelines for border management measures. On 20 March, the Member States accepted the Commission's proposal on the restriction of non-essential travel into the EU for a period of 30 days. The travel restriction provides for exemptions for nationals of all EU Member States and Schengen Associated States (UK nationals will be treated in the same way as EU citizens during the transition period, until end-2020), for the purposes of returning to their homes and for travellers with an essential function or need. In the 15 April roadmap for lifting coronavirus containment measures, the Commission recommends the coordinated lifting of internal travel restrictions and border controls 'once the border regions' epidemiological situation converges sufficiently'.

The European Parliament has constantly defended the Schengen Area and condemned the unjustified reintroduction of internal borders. On 16 March, Juan Fernando López Aguilar, the Chair of the Civil Liberties Committee (LIBE), called for a coordinated approach and urged Member States to take measures that fully respect the Schengen rules and the principles of proportionality, solidarity among Member States, and non-discrimination.
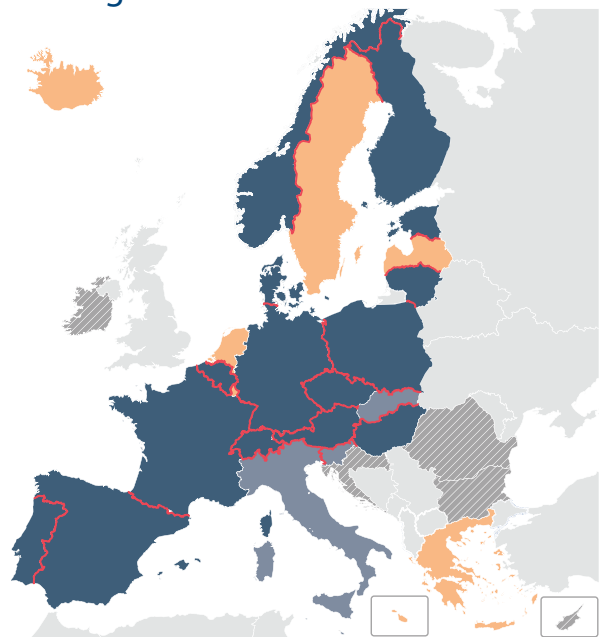
## Internal border measures related to coronavirus in the Schengen Area

As of 21 April 2020, **16 Schengen countries had** notified the European Commission on the reintroduction of controls at internal borders due to threats related to the spread of Covid-19. The countries that have notified the Commission about the reintroduction of controls at all or some sections of internal borders are: Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Finland, Switzerland, and Norway. A number of other Schengen countries have introduced restrictions on movement of persons that affect internal borders, such as temporary bans on non-essential travel. These countries are: Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, and Slovenia.

Note: this is an updated edition of a briefing of 27 March 2020.

Number of Schengen countries with temporary border controls



At least one border

All borders

20
15
10
5
0

13/03/20      26/03/20      10/04/20      24/04/20

## Schengen restrictions on land borders



Schengen countries temporarily reintroducing border controls

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| BE | Notified | All internal borders | 18/03/20 - 08/05/20 |
| CZ | Notified | Land borders with AT and DE | 14/03/20 - 24/04/20 |
| DK | Notified | All internal borders | 12/11/19 - 12/11/20 |
| DE | Notified | Land borders with DK, ES, FR, IT, LU, AT and CH | 16/03/20 - 05/05/20 |
| EE | Notified | All internal borders | 17/03/20 - 01/05/20 |
| ES | Notified | All land borders | 17/03/20 - 26/04/20 |
| FR | Notified | All internal borders | 18/03/20 - 31/10/20 |
| IT | Restricted | All internal borders | 14/03/20 - |
| LT | Notified | All internal borders | 14/03/20 - 27/04/20 |
| HU | Notified | Land borders with AT, SI and SK. | 12/03/20 - 01/05/20 |
| AT | Notified | Land borders with DE, IT, CH and LI | 14/03/20 - 27/04/20 |
| PL | Notified | Land borders with CZ, SK, DE and LT | 15/03/20 - 03/05/20 |
| PT | Notified | Land border with ES | 16/03/20 - 05/05/20 |
| SI | Established | Special conditions of entry from IT and AT | 19/03/20 - |
| SK | Adopted | All internal borders | 13/03/20 - 07/05/20 |
| FI | Notified | All internal borders | 19/03/20 - 13/05/20 |
| CH | Notified | Land border with IT. DE, FR and AT (26/03/20 - 15/04/20) | 13/03/20 - 02/05/20 |
| NO | Notified | All internal borders | 16/03/20 - 05/05/20 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| EL | No reintroduction of border controls | |
| LV | No reintroduction of border controls | |
| LU | No reintroduction of border controls | |
| MT | N/A | |
| NL | No reintroduction of border controls | |
| SE | No reintroduction of border controls | |
| IS | No reintroduction of border controls | |
| LI | No reintroduction of border controls | |

| 16 | 3 | 7 |
|---|---|---|
| Notified the Commission | Not notified the Commission | No reintroduction of border controls |

The red lines on the map represent the controls on land borders as of 22 April 2020

Non-Schengen Member States

## Situation by country

**Belgium** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders, between 20 March and 8 May (initially 30 March). Belgium also introduced a ban on non-essential inbound and outbound travel, as of 18 March. No list of authorised border crossing points has been received by the Commission. Exceptions apply, such as with regard to Belgian citizens returning from abroad, cross-border workers (who are advised to carry a certificate from their employer), health staff, and people involved in the transportation of goods.

**Czechia** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its land borders with Austria and Germany, as well as on its all air borders between 14 March and 24 April (initially 18 March). A list with authorised border crossing points has been sent to the Commission.

**Denmark** notified the Commission on maintaining controls on all its land, sea and air borders. These measures were introduced on 12 November 2019 (for foreseeable events, now including coronavirus) and are set to expire on 12 November 2020. No list of authorised border crossing points has been received by the Commission. As of 14 March, Denmark also introduced restrictions on entry for foreigners (excepting people residing in Denmark, persons transiting through Denmark or having a 'worthy purpose'). These entry restrictions are set to expire on 13 May.

**Germany** notified the Commission of the reintroduction of controls at its land borders with Denmark, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland and Austria until 5 May. As of 19 March, controls were introduced at German air borders for flights from Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, Denmark, Italy and Spain, as well as controls at German sea borders with Denmark. Those controls were subsequently prolonged until 5 May. A list with authorised border crossing points has been been sent to the Commission.
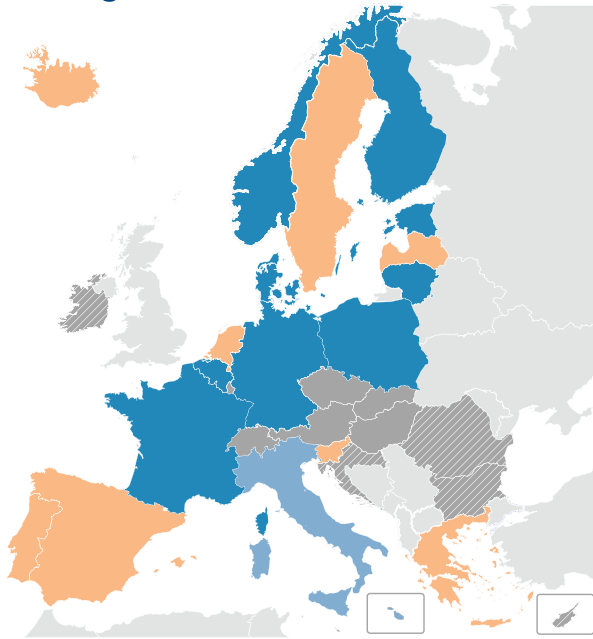
**Estonia** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all its internal borders between 17 March and 1 May. Previous notifications concerned the reintroduction of controls at its land borders with Latvia, as well as on all air and sea borders, between 17 March and 27 March.

**Spain** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all land borders between 17 March and 26 April (initially 26 March). No list of authorised border crossing points has been received by the Commission. Only Spanish citizens are allowed to enter the country by land, as well as persons residing in Spain, cross-border workers and those who prove causes of *force majeure* or a situation of need.

**France** notified the Commission to include the coronavirus threat as a reason for maintaining controls (for foreseeable events) on all internal borders, which it introduced on 31 October 2019 and are set to expire on 31 October 2020.

**Italy** did not notify the Commission though it introduced a ban on non-essential travel in the country, as of 14 March. Persons are allowed to travel abroad, or to return to Italy from abroad, but only for work requirements, health needs or reasons of necessity, or to return home or to their place of residence. Italy established a self-quarantine regime for travelers returning to Italy. The operation of air services is limited to a number of airports.

## Schengen restrictions on sea borders



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| BE | Notified | All internal borders | 18/03/20 - 08/05/20 |
| DK | Notified | Sea borders | 12/11/19 - 12/11/20 |
| DE | Notified | Sea borders with DK | 19/03/20 - 05/05/20 |
| EE | Notified | All internal borders | 17/03/20 - 01/05/20 |
| FR | Notified | All internal borders | 18/03/20 – 31/10/20 |
| IT | Restricted | All internal borders | 14/03/20 - |
| LT | Notified | All internal borders | 14/03/20 - 27/04/20 |
| MT | Announced | Restrictions on border with IT, DE, FR, ES and CH | 13/03/20 - 13/03/20 |
| PL | Notified | Sea borders | 15/03/20 - 03/05/20 |
| FI | Notified | All internal borders | 19/03/20 - 13/05/20 |
| NO | Notified | All internal borders | 16/03/20 - 05/05/20 |
| | | | |
| EL | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| ES | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| LV | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| NL | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| PT | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| SI | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| SE | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| IS | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| | | | |
| CZ | N/A | | |
| LU | N/A | | |
| HU | N/A | | |
| AT | N/A | | |
| SK | N/A | | |
| CH | N/A | | |
| LI | N/A | | |

**Schengen countries temporarily reintroducing border controls**

| 9 | 2 | 8 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Notified the Commission | Not notified the Commission | No reintroduction of border controls | N/A |

Non-Schengen Member States

**Latvia** did not notify the Commission of the reintroduction of controls at internal borders though it has introduced a ban and has prohibited the movement of passengers and vehicles through border-crossing points at airports and ports, on road and railway lines at the external border of the European Union, including through border-crossing points intended for local border traffic, with the exception of the carriage of goods.

**Lithuania** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders between 14 March and 27 April (initially 24 March). A list with authorised border crossing points has been sent to the Commission.

**Hungary** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all its internal borders between 12 March and 1 May. A list with authorised border crossing points has been sent to the Commission. As of 17 March, Hungary imposed an international travel ban, according to which only Hungarian citizens are allowed to enter the country.

**Malta** did not notify the Commission though it announced restrictions on border crossings with Italy, Germany, France, Spain and Switzerland, as of 13 March. Malta also suspended all direct passenger flights to/from Italy, Germany, Spain, France and Switzerland, as of 10 March.

**The Netherlands** did not notify the Commission though it suspended all passenger flights from Italy (as of 13 March), Spain (as of 21 March), and Austria (as of 23 March).

**Austria** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls on its land border with Italy between 11 March and 21 March. The measure was extended to include restrictions on the land borders with Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Liechtenstein between 18 March and 27 April. No list of authorised border crossing points has been received. Austria also included the coronavirus threat as a reason for maintaining border controls (for foreseeable events) on its land borders with Hungary and Slovenia until 12 May.

**Poland** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its land borders with Czechia, Slovakia, Germany, and Lithuania, as well as at all sea and air borders, between 15 March and 3 May (initially 24 March). A list with authorised border crossing points has been sent to the Commission. The borders are closed for all foreigners (except foreigners residing in the country, cross-border workers and other particularly justified cases).

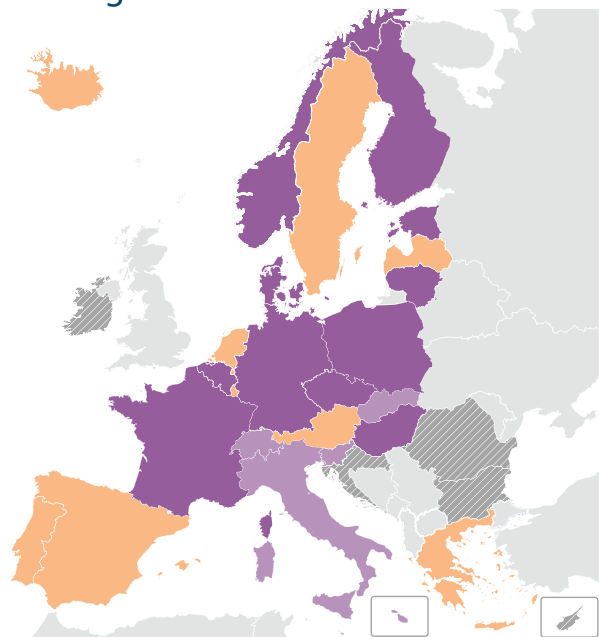**Portugal** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its land border with Spain between 16 March and 5 May (initially 26 March). No list of authorised border crossing points has been received by the Commission. Circulation is permitted for entry of nationals and holders of residence permits in their respective countries, as well as for cross-border workers and the transport of goods. Direct flights from/to Italy and Spain have been suspended.

**Slovakia** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all its internal borders between 8 April and 7 May (initially 17 April). It has already adopted entry restrictions for all non-nationals, as of 13 March. All inbound civil flights have been suspended.
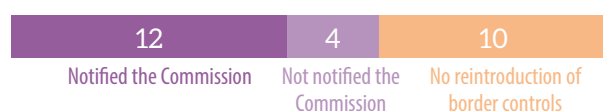
**Slovenia** did not notify the Commission though it established special conditions of entry into Slovenian territory from Italy, as of 19 March. It suspended all international passenger flights, as of 17 March.

**Finland** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders (for foreseeable events) between 19 March and 13 May (initially 13 April). A list with authorised border crossing points has been sent to the Commission.

# Schengen restrictions on air borders

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| BE | Notified | All internal borders | 18/03/20 - 08/05/20 |
| CZ | Notified | Air borders | 17/03/20 - 24/04/20 |
| DK | Notified | Air borders | 12/11/19 - 12/11/20 |
| DE | Notified | Air borders with DK, ES, FR, IT, LU, AT and CH | 19/03/20 - 05/05/20 |
| EE | Notified | All internal borders | 17/03/20 - 01/05/20 |
| FR | Notified | All internal borders | 18/03/20 - 31/10/20 |
| IT | Restricted | All internal borders | 14/03/20 - 00/01/00 |
| LT | Notified | All internal borders | 14/03/20 - 27/04/20 |
| HU | Notified | Air borders | 17/03/20 - 01/05/20 |
| MT | Announced | Restrictions on border with IT, DE, FR, ES and CH | 13/03/20 - |
| PL | Notified | Air borders | 15/03/20 - 03/05/20 |
| SI | Adopted | All internal borders | 17/03/20 - 30/03/00 |
| SK | Adopted | All internal borders | 13/03/20 - 07/05/20 |
| FI | Notified | All internal borders | 19/03/20 - 13/05/20 |
| CH | Notified | All air borders except LI | 25/03/20 - 02/05/20 |
| NO | Notified | All internal borders | 16/03/20 - 05/05/20 |
| | | | |
| EL | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| ES | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| LV | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| LU | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| NL | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| AT | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| PT | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| IS | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| SE | No reintroduction of border controls | | |
| LI | No reintroduction of border controls | | |

Schengen countries temporarily reintroducing border controls

| 12 | 4 | 10 |
|---|---|---|
| Notified the Commission | Not notified the Commission | No reintroduction of border controls |

Non-Schengen Member States

**Switzerland** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal air and land borders except the border with Liechtenstein between 13 March and 2 May.

**Norway** notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders between 16 March and 5 May (initially 26 March). No list of authorised border crossing points has been received by the Commission. Norway also notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders (for foreseeable events, related to coronavirus) between 15 May and 13 August).

## Situation in non-Schengen Member States

The EU countries that are outside the Schengen area have also implemented border measures in view of tackling the spread of coronavirus. Apart from Ireland, all these countries have implemented the joint decision by Member States and the Commission on the temporary restriction of non-essential travel into the EU, as of 20 March.

**Bulgaria** introduced a temporary ban on the entry into its territory of nationals of risk countries (including Spain, Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland). On 20 March, the ban was extended to all foreigners (exceptions apply). The ban was renewed on 6 April. Bulgaria has also established mandatory 14-day home quarantine for all people allowed to enter the country and who arrive from certain risk countries. **Croatia** established 14-day quarantine or self-imposed isolation for people arriving from certain countries. **Cyprus** introduced an entry ban for all persons (except for its citizens, legal residents, and European or third-country nationals working in Cyprus) between 16 March and 20 April. Those allowed to enter should present a recent medical certificate and need to observe a 14-day compulsory quarantine at designated accommodation facilities. On 21 March, Cyprus suspended flights from all EEA countries and Switzerland, except for cargo, ferry, humanitarian, ambulance and repatriation flights to Cyprus. **Ireland** imposed a mandatory 14-day quarantine for all persons entering the country, except for people coming from Northern Ireland and staff working in supply chain services. **Romania** introduced an entry ban for all foreigners (exceptions apply), as of 22 March. Flights from/to Italy and Spain have been suspended.

### Notes
**Internal border:** (a) the common land borders, including river and lake borders, of the Member States; (b) the airports of the Member States for internal flights; (c) sea, river and lake ports of the Member States for regular internal ferry connections (according to Art. 2 of the Schengen Borders Code).

In a number of cases restrictions and reductions in air or sea transport services have had the de facto effect of stopping travel, without the need for formal border controls to be reintroduced.

**Country codes**: Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Czechia (CZ), Denmark (DK), Germany (DE), Estonia (EE), Ireland (IE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), France (FR), Croatia (HR), Italy (IT), Cyprus (CY), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Hungary (HU), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Austria (AT), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Finland (FI), Sweden (SE), Switzerland (CH), Norway (NO), Iceland (IS) and Liechtenstein (LI).

**Data source:** Data collected by EPRS up to 21/04/2020.

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