

Travel restrictions: Council adds Japan 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 Japan. 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 3 June 2021 member states should **gradually lift the travel restrictions at the external borders for residents of the following third countries:**

- Australia
- Israel
- Japan
- 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 20 May 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 20 May, the Council adopted an amending recommendation to respond 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, the amendments take 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.

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.