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Unofficial English translation of the French-language information sheet

Information sheet: rules of entry into Switzerland during covid-19 for persons expected in an official capacity by international organisations and permanent missions

In addition to the circular *notes verbales* sent by the [Swiss Mission](#) concerning the measures taken in response to covid-19, this information sheet aims to clarify the rules to enter the Swiss territory which are currently in force. It is intended for persons expected in an official capacity by a permanent mission/representation/delegation or by an international organisation. Those concerned are mainly staff members from these entities, their family as well as delegates or other representatives who are officially invited.

As the entry rules are closely linked to the evolution of the health situation, this information is subject to being updated. The information available on the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) website prevails.¹

This information sheet only concerns conditions to enter Switzerland following measures taken in response to the covid-19 situation and does not prejudice other applicable entry requirements (visa, travel document, etc.) (letter A). It also specifies the quarantine measures, as well as the exceptions to them (letter B).

A. Entry conditions into Switzerland

In case of transit through another country, it is the traveller's responsibility to check the other countries' immigration regulations in light of the current health crisis. The following website provides information on the crossing of the borders of other Schengen States: <https://reopen.europa.eu/en/>.

List of States which are not subject to entry restrictions:

The normal entry requirements apply to any persons entering Switzerland (for both short-term and long-term stays) directly from² a Schengen State³ and the following countries.⁴

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Andorra | 7. Japan | 13. Singapore |
| 2. Australia | 8. Monaco | 14. South Korea |
| 3. Bulgaria | 9. New Zealand | 15. Thailand |
| 4. Croatia | 10. Rwanda | 16. Uruguay |
| 5. Cyprus | 11. Romania | 17. Vatican / Holy See |
| 6. Ireland | 12. San Marino | |

¹ See in particular the website *Corona: Questions and answers on entry and stay in Switzerland, the exceptions and suspension of visas*: <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/aktuell/aktuell/faq-einreiseverweigerung.html>

² Under the rules which apply from 31 August 2020, it is the country of departure (and no longer the stopover country) that is taken into account. By stopover, it is understood that the person does not leave the international transit zone of the airport concerned. See "examples" on the following website:

<https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/aktuell/aktuell/einreisebeschaenkungen-drittstaaten.html>

³ Schengen States (26): Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden (and Switzerland).

⁴ Please refer to the following website as this list is subject to amendment as the situation evolves:

<https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/aktuell/aktuell/einreisebeschaenkungen-drittstaaten.html>

1. Long-term stays (more than 90 days) – taking office/family reunification

Ordinary procedures prior to the covid-19 situation apply to persons subject to visa requirements who are taking up office or for family reunification purposes.

Persons who are exempted from visa requirements must inquire about boarding requirements. If necessary, the [Swiss representation responsible for the person's place of residence](#) may issue a certificate of entry free of charge, which confirms that the person fulfils the conditions for crossing the Swiss border in accordance with the conditions laid down in [Ordinance 3 COVID-19](#).

2. Short-term stays (up to 90 days) – delegates and official visits, private visits

The principle of refusal of entry remains in force for third-country nationals who wish to enter Switzerland from a country not included in the above mentioned list and who do not benefit from the rights of free movement.⁵ Apart from the exceptions provided for in Ordinance 3 COVID-19, the issuing of Schengen visas to these persons remains suspended. The list of exceptions is mentioned in point 1.5 of [the Directive implementing Ordinance 3 COVID-19](#).⁶

Delegates and official visits

Urgent official visits resulting from Switzerland's international obligations are listed among the above mentioned exceptions. The sending of delegates from capitals should, as far as possible, be reserved for situations where participation cannot be virtual or delegated to a state representative posted in Switzerland.

Persons subject to visa requirements are invited to submit their application in accordance with the usual procedures to the representation responsible for their place of residence.

In the context of the examination of the visa application, they must be able to demonstrate their role within the meeting (e.g. board member, panelist, etc.) and the absolute necessity of their presence in Geneva.

Persons in possession of a valid visa as well as persons exempted from visa requirements must inquire about boarding requirements. If necessary, the Swiss representation responsible for the person's place of residence may issue a certificate of entry free of charge, which confirms that the person fulfils the conditions for crossing the Swiss border in accordance with the conditions laid down in Ordinance 3 COVID-19.

⁵ The following individuals benefit from the free movement of persons :

a) Nationals of the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), as well as their family members, regardless of their nationality. Family members include the spouse and descendants (of the said national or spouse) who are under 21 or are dependent, as well as dependent relatives in the ascending line of the spouse (does not apply to students).

b) Nationals of third countries also benefit from the rights of free movement if they are posted to Switzerland for a maximum of 90 days by a company established in the EU/EFTA and if they have previously been admitted to the regular labour market of an EU/EFTA Member State for at least one year.

From January 1st 2021, UK citizens and their family members are considered third-country nationals and do no longer benefit from the free movement of persons. The rights acquired under the [Agreement](#) on the Free Movement of Persons (FMPA) pursuant to the [Agreement](#) of February 25th 2019 between the Swiss Confederation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland remain valid. Acquired rights under the FMPA must be attested by a residence permit or a border permit. For more details, see the above mentioned website of the SEM and the website of the Swiss Embassy in London:

https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/sem/aktuell/faq-einreiseverw_eigerung.html

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/united-kingdom/en/home/representations/embassy-in-london/embassy-tasks/political-affairs/brexit-faq.html>

⁶ These exceptions do not, in principle, apply to persons coming from a country subject to a [general entry ban](#) (the United Kingdom and South Africa). For further information on this matter, please contact the responsible Swiss Embassy (London or Pretoria) and explain the extremely urgent nature of your request.

Private visits

Private visits are not allowed, except in exceptional cases. The State Secretariat for Migration SEM (Federal Department of Justice and Police, FDJP) is responsible for processing applications for private visits.

Exceptions to the refusal of entry according to Art. 1.5 of the above-mentioned directive are assessed on a case-by-case basis. For private visits, this directive includes the following exceptions: 1) **visit to nuclear family ("spouse, registered partner and minor child") domiciled in Switzerland** ; (2) **visit of 1st and 2nd degree relatives (grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter) living in Switzerland, in case of major family reasons (birth, marriage, serious illness).**

Procedure for exceptions that fall within the responsibility of the SEM/Swiss Embassy or Consulate abroad (e.g. private visits):

- Persons who require a visa must apply for one at the [Swiss Embassy or Consulate responsible for their place of residence](#), explaining why they are a case of special necessity.
- For persons who do not require a visa, the border control officers at the Schengen external border (i.e. at the airport) decide on the basis of supporting documents whether the requirements of necessity have been met. For persons who do not require a visa, a Swiss Embassy/Consulate abroad may issue a laissez-passer free of charge if it is not possible for the person to enter Switzerland without such a document.

3. Supporting documents and certificates for access to Swiss territory

The Swiss Mission and the SEM no longer issue certificates of entry. The control authorities at the Schengen external borders (airports) decide on the basis of supporting documents. Persons must therefore travel with a verbal note or a mission order justifying the reason of their arrival in Switzerland or, if it is a case of hardship justifying an exception to the refusal of entry, present the supporting documents necessary to support the decision.

Swiss Embassies/Consulates abroad may, on a case-by-case basis, issue free of charge laissez-passer, which confirms that the person fulfils the conditions for crossing the Swiss border in accordance with the conditions laid down in Ordinance 3 COVID-19. It is the responsibility of the person concerned to find out about boarding requirements and, if necessary, to contact the Swiss Embassy/Consulate responsible for his or her place of residence.

B. Additional information (quarantine measures)

Guiding principle

The quarantine measures are not linked to the conditions of access to Swiss territory. They are governed by the [COVID-19 Ordinance on International Passenger Transport Measures of 2 July 2020](#).

Travelers coming from countries and regions with a high risk of coronavirus **infection must put themselves in quarantine for 10 days** if they have been in a risk zone at any time during the 10 days preceding their entry into Switzerland. [The list of countries and areas at increased risk](#) is regularly updated depending on the evolution of the situation. In this respect, only states or areas with more than 60 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants more than Switzerland are concerned.

Persons subjected to the quarantine must notify the competent cantonal authorities of their entry into Switzerland within 2 days and follow their instructions. For the canton of Geneva,⁷ please refer to the instructions available on the following website: <https://www.ge.ch/en/covid-19-travelling-and-quarantine>

It is recommended that persons from states and zones with a high risk of infection with COVID-19 who do not reside in Switzerland should postpone their journey if they are unable to observe the quarantine measure. Likewise, it is recommended to avoid travelling to high-risk states and areas as far as possible.

⁷ For the other cantons, please refer to the following website:
<https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home/krankheiten/ausbrueche-epidemien-pandemien/aktuelle-ausbrueche-epidemien/novel-cov/empfehlungen-fuer-reisende/guarantane-einreisende.html>

Areas bordering Switzerland are not classified as risk zones. Persons moving in such cross-border area are therefore not subject to the quarantine obligation when they enter Switzerland on daily basis or for up to 5 consecutive days. If they return from a stay in a risk area, however, they are advised to postpone their entry into Switzerland for a period of 10 days, or to telework when possible. Persons domiciled in a border region are also required to comply with the regulations applicable in the border state.

Exceptions to quarantine

Exemptions to the requirement are provided in accordance with article 4 of the COVID-19 Ordinance on International Passenger Transport Measures of 2 July 2020, including for:

1. persons whose work is **essential to maintain the efficiency** of institutional beneficiaries as defined in Article 2 paragraph 1 of the [Host State Act](#) of 22 June 2007 (art. 4, al. 1, let b, ch. 3). These exemptions must be requested according to the procedure explained below, to the Swiss Mission in Geneva for multilateral issues (or to the FDFA Protocol in Bern for bilateral issues) ;
2. persons who enter Switzerland for compelling professional or medical reasons and whose visit cannot be postponed (art. 4, al. 1, let. d);⁸
3. persons who re-enter Switzerland after a stay in a country or area with an increased risk of infection for compelling professional or medical reasons which could not be postponed. (art. 4, al. 1, let. h);⁹
4. persons who re-enter Switzerland after participating in an event in a country or area with an increased risk of infection, provided they prove that their participation and stay took place in compliance with a specific precautionary measures plan; participating in an event includes in particular participating, normally in a professional capacity, in a sports competition or cultural event, or in a professional conference; (art. 4, al. 1, let. g).

A negative test result for COVID-19 does not allow to shorten or to waive the quarantine requirement. Persons presenting COVID-19 symptoms can't either be exempted from the quarantine, unless these symptoms are linked to another factor.

Persons referred to in point 1 above must apply for an exemption from quarantine (see below).

Persons exempted from the quarantine according to the above n° 2 to 4 must be able to submit, at the request of the competent authorities, documents from their employer certifying that their professional or medical imperative cannot be postponed. **These persons are not required to announce their arrival to the authorities.**

In any case, it is further specified that **the exemption from quarantine only applies for compelling professional reason** in application of all protective measures (distance, mask, hygiene) and does not allow other activities to be carried out (e.g. no leisure activities, sightseeing or festive outings).

Procedure for requesting an exemption

Only requests for exemption according to point n° 1 above (art. 4, al. 1, let. b, ch. 3) must be submitted by Note Verbale to the Swiss Mission (geneve.visa@eda.admin.ch) at least 5 working days before the planned date of travel. The latter note will specify :

- The country or zone of origin of the person;
- The dates of stay in, or return to Switzerland;
- For persons based in Switzerland: a description of the circumstances justifying the essential nature of the physical presence at work for the continued functioning of the mission or organisation concerned;
- For delegates to meetings/conferences: title, function, role played in the meeting, number of people in the delegation. In such cases, an exemption may be considered provided that the visit cannot be replaced by virtual meetings or by the participation of diplomatic personnel already based in Geneva. Where appropriate, the size of the delegation should be reduced to the strict minimum.

The examination of requests for exemption is extremely restrictive in view of the precautionary recommendations issued by the competent health authorities. Thus, requests for exemption for family members are not, in principle, accepted by the Swiss Mission. If justified special interests so require, private requests for exemption may be submitted to the competent cantonal authority.

⁸ This provision does not apply to persons arriving from the United Kingdom, South Africa, Ireland, and Brazil.

⁹ This provision does not apply to persons arriving from the United Kingdom, South Africa, Ireland, and Brazil.

Requests for exemption on the ground of compelling private reasons:

If justified special interests so require, requests for exemptions for private reasons may be addressed to the competent cantonal authority:

Geneva : derogation.covid@etat.ge.ch

Vaud : quarantaine.covid19@vd.ch (requests are processed during weekdays only. In case of emergency during non-working days, call 0800 316 00 between 8 a.m and 6 p.m.)

Bern : info.gsi@be.ch

Basel : epi@bs.ch

Persons in transit

Persons who as transit passengers have stayed less than 24 hours in a country or area with an increased risk of infection (art. 4, al. 1, let. e) are not subject to a quarantine obligation upon their return to Switzerland.

Persons who enter Switzerland for the purpose of transiting the country and who intend and are able to travel on directly to another country ((art. 4 al. 1, let. f ; transit through Switzerland) are not subject to a quarantine obligation upon their return to Switzerland.

Further information about quarantine are also available at the following websites:

Geneva

<https://www.ge.ch/covid-19-voyageurs-quarantaine>

Vaud

<https://www.vd.ch/toutes-les-actualites/hotline-et-informations-sur-le-coronavirus/>

Bern

www.be.ch/corona

Basel

<https://www.coronavirus.bs.ch/>