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Unofficial English translation of the French-language information sheet

Covid-19 information note: rules of entry into Switzerland for persons expected in an official capacity by international organisations and permanent missions

This note complements verbal notes and circular communications sent by the [Swiss Mission](#) concerning the measures taken by the Swiss authorities in response to the coronavirus (covid-19). It clarifies the rules to enter the Swiss territory that are currently in force.

This information is intended in particular for persons who are expected in an official capacity by a permanent mission/representation/delegation or by an international organisation. Those concerned are mainly:

- staff members and persons authorized to accompany them;
- State delegates or other official representatives who are officially invited.

States and regions at risk subject to the principle of refusal of entry

In principle, third-country nationals who wish to enter Switzerland from a country at risk are refused entry. All states outside the Schengen area are considered to be at risk, except those mentioned below.

List of States which are not subject to entry restrictions:

Persons entering Switzerland directly from¹ a Schengen State² and the following countries³ for both short-term and long-term stays have access without restrictions to Swiss territory (provided that other applicable entry requirements - visa, travel document, etc.- are met):

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

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/>.

¹ Under the rules which apply from 31 August 2020, the country of departure (and no longer the stopover country) 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/einreisebeschraenkungen-drittstaaten.html>

² 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).

³ 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/einreisebeschraenkungen-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 abroad may issue a 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.

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

Third-country nationals who do not benefit from the rights of free movement⁴ and who are subject to the principle of a ban on entry may, in a situation of absolute necessity, benefit from an exception if it is a case of hardship or public interest. They are then authorised to enter Switzerland, provided that the usual conditions for entry are met. The list of exceptions is mentioned in point 1.5 of the Directive implementing Ordinance 3 COVID-19.⁵

Delegates and official visits

Urgent official visits resulting from Switzerland's international obligations are listed among the above mentioned exceptions.

It is to be mentioned that the travel of delegates from capitals should, as far as possible, be reserved for situations where participation cannot be in virtual mode or delegated to a state representative posted in Switzerland.

In the context of the examination of the visa application, the delegate must credibly establish with supporting documents (mission order, explanatory note verbale) the compelling reason for the professional travel. In particular, he or she will be asked to specify the function performed at the meeting (e.g. board member, panelist, etc.) and to demonstrate the absolute necessity of his or her presence in Geneva.

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

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 laissez-passer free of charge (see point 3 below).

It is the immigration authorities on arrival in Switzerland that examine whether the conditions for exceptional entry are met and decide, on the basis of the evidence presented, whether the person is authorised to enter Switzerland. Persons must therefore travel with a verbal note or a mission order justifying the reason of their stay in Switzerland.

⁴ 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-einreiseverweigerung.html>

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

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 [Directive implementing Ordinance 3 COVID-19](#) are examined 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:

- 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, it is the immigration authorities on arrival in Switzerland who examine whether the conditions for exceptional entry are met and decide, on the basis of the evidence presented, whether the person is authorised to enter Switzerland.

3. Supporting documents and certificates for access to Swiss territory

Supporting documents

The control authorities at the Schengen external borders (airports) decide on the basis of supporting documents whether the requirements of necessity laid down in the Ordinance 3 COVID-19 and in the [Directive implementing Ordinance 3 COVID-19](#) have been met.

For official stays, persons must travel with a verbal note or a mission order justifying the reason of their arrival in Switzerland

For private visits, corresponding to a case of hardship justifying an exception to the refusal of entry, according to the above mentioned Directive, the persons must present the supporting documents necessary to support the decision.

In case of doubt as to the compatibility of the reason for the trip with the regulations in force, please contact the [Swiss Embassy or Consulate responsible for the place of residence](#).

Laissez-passer/certificate of entry

The Swiss Mission and the SEM no longer issue certificates of entry.

Swiss Embassies/Consulates abroad may, on a case-by-case basis, issue a 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.

Some airlines require such a laissez-passer to allow boarding.

It is the responsibility of the person concerned to inquire and, if necessary, to contact the [Swiss Embassy or Consulate responsible for the place of residence](#).

Updates to this notice are made on a regular basis according to changes in the rules. However, the information available on the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)⁶ and the [Federal Office of Public Health \(FOPH\)](#) websites prevails.

Please note that an [Information note on health measures and border controls](#) is available on the Swiss Mission's website.

⁶ 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>