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*Unofficial English translation of the French-language information sheet dated 22 July 2020*

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

In addition to the circular *notes verbales* sent by the Swiss Mission in relation to the measures taken in connection with covid-19, this information sheet aims to clarify the rules of access to the Swiss territory which are currently into force. It is intended for people 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 rules of entry are closely linked to the evolution of the health situation, this information sheet may be updated. The information available on the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) website prevails.<sup>1</sup>

### **A. Entry conditions into Switzerland**

This information sheet only concerns the conditions of access into Switzerland following the measures taken in connection with covid-19 and is without prejudice to the other applicable requirements (visa, travel document, etc.). 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. Regarding the crossing of the borders of other Schengen States, the following website can be consulted: <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 from<sup>2</sup> a Schengen State<sup>3</sup> and the following countries.<sup>4</sup>

- |              |                 |                        |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Algeria   | 8. Georgia      | 15. Romania            |
| 2. Andorra   | 9. Ireland      | 16. San Marino         |
| 3. Australia | 10. Japan       | 17. South Korea        |
| 4. Bulgaria  | 11. Morocco     | 18. Thailand           |
| 5. Canada    | 12. Monaco      | 19. Tunisia            |
| 6. Croatia   | 13. New Zealand | 20. Uruguay            |
| 7. Cyprus    | 14. Rwanda      | 21. Vatican / Holy See |

<sup>1</sup> 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>

<sup>2</sup> It is the country from which direct entry into Switzerland takes place that is decisive. In the case of transit, it is therefore the (last) transit country that is predominant and not the initial airport of departure. For example: direct entry from a country that is not subject to entry restrictions is possible. On the other hand, entry from a country that is not subject to restrictions via a country with restrictions is not possible, as direct entry would be from the country with restrictions. See "examples" on the following website:

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

<sup>3</sup> 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, (Switzerland), and the United Kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> This list being evolutive, please do refer directly to the following site:

<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

The ordinary procedures prior to covid-19 apply for taking up office and for family reunification subject to visa requirements.

- ➔ For long-term stays subject to visa requirements, persons must be able to justify the reason and duration of their stay at the border, with a verbal note/invitation letter in support. In such cases, the Swiss Mission no longer issues attestations "to whom it may concern".
- ➔ The Swiss Mission no longer issues attestations "to whom it may concern" for long-term stays by EU and EFTA nationals.
- ➔ The Swiss Mission continues to issue attestations "to whom it may concern" for long-term stays of third country nationals (= neither EU nor EFTA) who are exempted from visa requirements and arrive directly from a country which is not on the list of countries not subject to restrictions (see above). These requests have to be addressed to the Swiss Mission, *Service Visas Genève internationale* ([geneve.visa@eda.admin.ch](mailto:geneve.visa@eda.admin.ch)).

## 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 from a country not included in the above list and who do not benefit from the rights of free movement.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

### Delegates and official visits

**Urgent official visits resulting from Switzerland's international obligations** are among the exceptions.

- ➔ Procedure for exceptions that fall within the responsibilities of the FDFA (**urgent and important official visits**, lasting less than 90 days, by a permanent mission or an international organisation having concluded a headquarters agreement with Switzerland): the inviting party announces the arrival of the person to the Swiss Mission ([geneve.visa@eda.admin.ch](mailto:geneve.visa@eda.admin.ch)) in advance. This announcement is made by *note verbale*/invitation letter, and is required even if the person is not subject to the visa requirement. The said *note verbale* must be sent to the Swiss Mission at least 5 working days before the planned date of travel and must contain the following information:
  - Last and first names of the person (as they appear in his/her passport) ;
  - Purpose and duration of the stay ;
  - Brief justification as to the urgent and absolutely necessary nature of the person's presence/activity in Geneva.

If applicable, the Swiss Mission issues an attestation "to whom it may concern" to confirm the person fulfills the conditions for crossing the Swiss borders in accordance with covid-19 provisions in force and authorises the issuing of the appropriate visa when necessary.

### Private visits

**Private visits are not allowed, except in exceptional cases.** They fall within the responsibilities of the SEM.

- ➔ Procedure for exceptions that fall within the responsibilities of the SEM (e.g. **visits to nuclear family ("spouse, registered partner and minor child") domiciled in Switzerland**): the persons concerned must obtain an authorisation from the SEM, which verifies on a case-by-case basis whether an exception to the refusal of entry according to Art. 1.5 of the above-mentioned directive is justified. Applications should be sent to [corona@sem.admin.ch](mailto:corona@sem.admin.ch).

<sup>5</sup> The following people benefit from the free movement of persons :

a) Nationals of the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the United Kingdom (until 31.12.2020), 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 an enterprise 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.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.sem.admin.ch/content/dam/data/sem/aktuell/aktuell/einreisestopp/weisung-covid-19-f.pdf> (in French)

## B. Additional information (quarantine measures)

The quarantine measures are not directly linked to the conditions of access to Swiss territory. Travellers from countries and regions with a high risk of coronavirus infection, who are authorised to enter Swiss territory in accordance with the above must put themselves in quarantine for 10 days if they have been in a risk zone at any time during the 14 days preceding their entry into Switzerland.<sup>7</sup> **The purpose of this measure is to prevent the spread of the virus and to protect the population.** The persons concerned must notify the competent cantonal authorities of their entry into Switzerland within 2 days and follow their instructions. For the canton of Geneva,<sup>8</sup> please refer to the instructions available on the following website: <https://www.ge.ch/en/new-covid-19-cornavirus-ex-ncov>.

Exemptions to quarantine are possible for persons whose presence is absolutely necessary for the continued operation of international organisations and permanent missions. Further information on this subject is available in the circular note verbale No. 26/2020 of 3 July 2020 and on the website of the Federal Office of Public Health: <https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home.html>. With regard to participation in international meetings/conferences, an exception may be considered only if that the visit cannot be replaced by virtual interviews.

- ➔ Procedure for exemptions' requests: all requests for exemption to quarantine must be sent to the Swiss Mission ([geneve.visa@eda.admin.ch](mailto:geneve.visa@eda.admin.ch)) in the form of a detailed *note verbale* at least 5 working days before the planned date of travel. **The examination of such requests is extremely restrictive in view of the precautionary recommendations issued by the competent health authorities.** Only reasons demonstrating an imperative need for face-to-face activity will be taken into account.
- ➔ In view of the risk of a resurgence of a second wave of the covid-19 pandemic, it is recommended that people from States and areas with a high risk of infection who do not reside in Switzerland postpone their travel if it is a short-term stay.

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<sup>7</sup> The regularly updated list of States and zones with a high risk of infection is contained in the COVID-19 Ordinance: <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20201948/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> 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/quarantaene-einreisende.html>