

**Adviesaanvraag**

Vraagsteller	Vice-eersteminister en Minister van Sociale Zaken en Volksgezondheid Frank Vandenbroucke
Datum van adviesaanvraag	14/01/2021
Onderwerp	Internationaal reizen
Vraag	- Welke additionele maatregelen zou het land kunnen nemen op vlak van internationaal reizen om (verdere) verspreiding van COVID-19 tegen te gaan?
Reden	

**Adviesverstrekking t.a.v. het Minister Frank Vandenbroucke**

Datum van adviesverstrekking	15/01/2021
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GEMS' RECOMMENDATIONS TO MINIMISE THE FURTHER SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN BELGIUM,  
IN PARTICULAR OF NEW VARIANTS  
15/01/2021

**1. Recent epidemiological evolution and concerns**

- Over the past days and weeks, it has become clear that several new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus circulate internationally. Preliminary data suggest that not only the B 1.1.7, but also the South-African (B. 1.351) and Brazilian variants may be associated with higher viral transmission rates. This is a major concern, as this could ignite a large third wave in Belgium.
- In neighbouring and other Western-European countries, we note high incidences (e.g. Netherlands, UK, Ireland, Germany, East and South of France, ...). Particularly in the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands, the impact of this new wave on the healthcare system is dramatic. These new waves are probably caused by a dangerous mix of the following: (1) the increased spread of these new variants (mainly B 1.1.7 and emergence of B. 1.351), (2) recent interpersonal contacts during festive seasons, (3) seasonal aspects (cold and dry weather; this is 'peak'-season for respiratory viruses), (4) intense international travel during the recent holiday season.
- The major concern about the risks of international travel in further spread of the virus and its variants has also been highlighted at the IHR EC 14 January 2021 (formal report pending). Appendix 4 summarises a benchmark of actual travel regulations and restrictions by our neighbouring and other European countries.
- It is evident that we wish to keep this alarming epidemiological trend as much as possible outside Belgium; nevertheless, we have observed a worrisome increase of the number of new cases over the past days. This is particularly the case in the Brussels' region, as well as in the province of Namur and Hainaut (see Annex 1). An important part of these new cases is probably to be attributed to returning travellers, this is shown in Annex 5.
- Given the significant differences in incidences between the Belgian and our neighbouring countries, we have considerable concern of new infections spreading on Belgian territory in border regions (e.g. through contacts at school, shops, workplace, families... in border regions). This is particularly the case in e.g. the provinces of Antwerp and Limburg.
- Over the past weeks, the laboratories at the sequencing consortium (KU Leuven, UAntwerpen, U Gent, U Liège) noted jointly a significant and fast increase in the number of samples with identification of B 1.1.7, as well as the emergence of the South African variant (B. 1.351). Details can be found in the RAG-report dd. 15/1/2021, which includes also findings from the NRC, the consortium and the pilot project in Antwerp). Several, but not all of these cases have links with recent travel: to the UK, but also to other countries (e.g. Lebanon, Dubai). Some cases were acquired on Belgian territory. In addition, a steady increase of isolates with the S-gene dropout (a possible marker for presence of the B1.1.7-variant) has been noted by the NRC, in particular in the Brussels' area.
- In addition, several large outbreaks have been noted in Belgium over the past days and weeks, in hospitals (i.e. St-Truiden, Lier, Geel...) as well as in workplaces and at a residence of seasonal workers. These are not necessarily linked to the new variants, but several are still under investigation. They highlight the ongoing risk of the actual circulating virus (with or without new variants).
- Taking together all the above elements, the GEMS members think it is essential to maximise efforts to (1) avoid additional import of cases and variants, (2) to detect and quarantine a maximum of newly detected infected persons and their close contacts (irrespective of



whether they were caused by a new variant) of COVID-19 to slow down as much as possible their further spread through secondary cases, to prevent a massive third wave as noted now in e.g. the UK, Ireland, Czech Republic. Also, the Netherlands has seen a rapid rise, and the variant is said to be circulating at low percentage; currently, the figures seem to be stabilising.

- Besides the medical and societal impact of a third wave, it is extremely important to buy time to allow the vaccination strategy to be fully deployed, and at least have the vulnerable population vaccinated. With a smaller vulnerable population, circulating variants are likely to have less impact on morbidity, mortality, and health system capacity.
- The recently strict rules on quarantine and testing post-travel through the set-up testing centres are clearly of important help, yet too many exceptions still ‘escape’ the system.
  - o This document aims to explore different possibilities to further strengthen our travel-related policy and thus to slow down the importation and subsequent domestic transmission causing new generations of numerous infections, including the new variants, over the next weeks and months.

## 2. Recommendations

In order to avoid further import of new cases and variants, the GEMS propose the following:

1. Focus on increasing risk awareness among the entire population and motivation, in order to adhere to the measures, as this is key to stop transmission. This includes:  
(1) discourage all kinds of travel (see below), (2) sensitise employers to keep imposing telework, including for international activities, (3) highlight positive effects of joint efforts of past weeks which should not be jeopardised by the import of new cases, (4) highlight the negative impact of a new third wave on the speed of the vaccination campaign and on the health care system at large.
2. Avoid non-essential international travel by Belgian citizens: non-essential travel is now ‘discouraged’, but not forbidden. Many people have travelled or are planning a trip for leisure purposes in the upcoming weeks or two months. Consider limiting all international travel to the ‘essential’ travel for a well-defined period, e.g. early April (as was done during the first lockdown). This could allow for a significant number of vulnerable people to have been vaccinated already. A significant spread of the new variant after travel relaxations could then hopefully have less impact on the population.  
This could be done through a formal negative travel advice for all non-essential travel. Alternatively, measures could be taken to strongly demotivate people who plan a non-essential travel trip (e. g. expensive or demanding travel permit).
3. Critically revise the list of essential travel (see Annex 2 and 6). The GEMS want to highlight the particular risks associated with professional travels by persons working for international organisations, business, sports and other ‘highly qualified professionals’... as their activities often include networking activities with or without a combination with family visit. In light of the spread of these new variants, it is essential to restrict temporarily all ‘essential’ travels to those which are genuinely urgent and cannot be replaced by telework.
4. Abolish the 48-h rule for PLF-waiver for all incoming travellers, e.g., to be reduced to 24 h (allowing cross-border travel for work or school purposes), or even reduced to 8 h while



allowing attestation of written waiver for up to 24h through PLF. Ideally, this measure should be taken in agreement between Belgium and its neighbouring countries. Given the problem of incoming variants is not confined to the UK and Ireland, we propose this to be a general rule

5. Temporarily stop or strongly demotivate non-essential incoming travel from non-Belgian citizens (with exceptions for citizens living in the border regions: see below).
6. Strengthen testing and quarantine efforts (GEMS-propositions, to be revised by the RAG testing-group):
  - a. Extend testing upon arrival for all incoming travellers from 'hot spots' (e.g. UK, Ireland, South Africa, Brazil, ...), without exceptions. Non-residents should have proof of a negative test result of max. 72 h old prior to boarding transportation. Look into the possibility of performing an additional rapid test upon arrival in the airport, harbour, train station or bus station. This additional rapid test could also be implemented for Belgian residents, at least if they come back from a specific high-risk country.
  - b. Strengthen supervision of quarantine, in particular travellers from 'hot spots' and/or those identified with a variant under consideration, by strengthening already existing systems (e.g. corona coaches) and/or enforcement (for which the legal framework has now been established by the federated entities). It is essential that the follow-up of quarantine is monitored closely and regularly reported on by the responsible authorities as a major 'KPI'.
  - c. Consider prolonging the duration of the quarantine and isolation periods to 10 days (with testing at d1 and d7 for high-risk contacts and returning travellers). This needs to be discussed and endorsed at the RAG-testing group.
  - d. Strengthen follow up of testing and quarantine in incoming seasonal workers - see Appendix 3.
  - e. Screen/test more intensively and systematically in border communities e.g., border with Netherlands in provinces of Antwerp and Limburg by for example more systematic screening of teachers and/or pupils. This could be a possible indication for antigen-testing on a regular (e.g. 2 x /week) basis (to be further discussed with Task force Testing and RAG testing-group). - See also below at point 7
  - f. Screen/test more intensively among international transportation staff (i.e. truck drivers, crew at planes, ferries, trains). For instance, Belgium has about 43 000 truck drivers, of which 80% drive across borders (i.e. about 34 400 drivers), whether or not on a regular basis. This could be a possible indication for antigen-testing on a regular (e.g. 2 x /week) basis. (to be further discussed with Task force Testing and RAG testing-group).
  - g. Strengthen sensibilisation campaigns and initiatives among the general public and health care staff, to decrease the delay between onset of symptoms and test done, as this is currently the largest reason of 'time lost' in the entire testing cycle.



7. The following proposed measures are predominantly affecting neighbouring countries and should be discussed with them:

a. Specific measures around essential travel:

i. Work commuters: upon proof of employment abroad, work commute is allowed if telework is not possible. In the case of international travel, however, it should be considered to adapt the self-assessment tool to reflect the risk and enforce the same testing and quarantine measures as for other kinds of travel.

ii. School commuters:

1. Certificate required.

2. Overcrowded school bus transportation to be avoided.

3. Face mask required also on transportation – agreement with neighbouring countries needed.

4. Consider face masks even in primary schools when there are outbreaks.

5. Boarding schools: strictly follow Belgian protocols

iii. Higher education commuters:

1. Certificate required.

2. Strongly encourage online educational activities, except where not possible.

3. International students in student rooms or dormitories in Belgium should follow the test and quarantine rules.

iv. Cross-border *mantelzorgers*, people in relationships, plus-families: exemption of regular test and quarantine rules.

1. All categories above that regularly cross the border (e.g., not the students that are in residence for weeks in row): at least a weekly test is needed.

b. Ostbelgien: Given the very specific and strong relationship between Ostbelgien and Rheinland-Pfalz & Nordrhein-Westfalen, travel between Ostbelgien and these Länder is allowed on the basis of a test that is not more than a week old, and the rules applicable in Germany. The same arrangement should be sought for with Luxemburg.

**Appendix 1. Transnational and international situation****Transnational situation: 14day incidences in selected contiguous provinces and regions**

<b>Province</b>	<b>14day incidence (8/12 → 15/12 → 20/12 → 28/12 → 5/1 → 15/1)</b>	<b>Neighbouring province/region</b>	<b>14-day incidence (8/12 → 15/12 → 22/12 → 29/12 → 5/1 → 15/1)</b>
Oost-Vlaanderen	303 → 346 → 313 → 349 → 250 → 242	Zeeland (NL)	268 → 354 → 510 → 542 → 629 → 554
West-Vlaanderen	319 → 398 → 353 → 394 → 276 → 276		
Antwerpen	248 → 266 → 298 → 309 → 217 → 211	Noord-Brabant (NL)	474 → 605 → 823 → 838 → 861 → 593
Limburg	228 → 234 → 254 → 266 → 218 → 217	Limburg (NL)	422 → 655 → 988 → 1024 → 1143 → 777
Luxembourg	400 → 392 → 369 → 311 → 231 → 265	Luxembourg (LUX)	1182 → 1197 → 1206 → 1037 → 643 → 339
Namur	291 → 268 → 305 → 316 → 205 → 200	Dept. des Ardennes (FR)	419 → 527 → 639 → 669 → 572 → 572

The foreign incidences are coming from the Working Group on colour codes. The Belgian incidences come from Sciensano daily reports.

In the Dutch provinces of Noord-Brabant (NL) and Limburg (NL), the incidences have been increasing rapidly and are well above the Belgian level (5/1/21): 4 times for North Brabant, and 5 times for Dutch



Limburg. In Zeeland, the increase is also rapid, and is at 2.5 times the level of Oost- and West-Vlaanderen. Recently, the figures are decreasing again.

International situation: 14day incidences, measures taken, and considerations

	Belgium Spain	Germany	France	Luxembourg	Netherlands	UK	Ireland	
21/12/2020	296	399	283	975	804	497	117 250	
28/12/2020	263	376	282	631	872	680	212 273	
4/01/2021	207	313	278	384	746	946	562 299	
11/01/2021	220	320	345	348	637	1165	1329 497	
15/01/2021	229	304	355	330	583	1139	1444 607	
	Portugal	Czechia	Switzerland	Turkey	Italy	Sweden	Denmark	Norway
21/12/2020	502	753	690	427	366	840	777	104
28/12/2020	448	871	621	351	332	825	739	115
4/01/2021	543	1113	554	251	334	791	574	127
11/01/2021	908	1504	534	206	385	925	466	153
15/01/2021	1021	1381	468	185	379	806	414	151
	Serbia	Bulgaria	Romania					
21/12/2020	1139	407	398					
28/12/2020	841	238	306					
4/01/2021	630	167	259					
11/01/2021	487	159	285					
15/01/2021	443	125	274					

We observe worrisome evolutions in terms of 14day incidences in the UK, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Czechia.



<b>Part of London</b>	<b>29/12/20</b>	<b>05/01/21</b>	<b>15/01/21</b>
<b>Inner London – West</b>	<b>1777</b>	<b>2262</b>	<b>1792</b>
<b>Inner London – East</b>	<b>2445</b>	<b>3242</b>	
<b>Outer London – East and North East</b>	<b>3211</b>	<b>4011</b>	
<b>Outer London - South</b>	<b>2341</b>	<b>3280</b>	
<b>Outer London – West and North West</b>	<b>2044</b>	<b>3029</b>	

Though not at the same rate, incidences are considerably increasing in Spain and Portugal as well.





## Appendix 2. List of essential travels<sup>1</sup>

De tijdelijke reisbeperkingen worden niet toegepast op personen die essentieel werk verrichten of een dwingende reden hebben, zoals:

1. De professionele verplaatsingen van gezondheidswerkers, onderzoekers op het gebied van gezondheid en beroepskrachten uit de ouderenzorg;
2. De professionele verplaatsingen van grensarbeiders;
3. De professionele verplaatsingen van seizoenarbeiders in de landbouw;
4. De professionele verplaatsingen van vervoerspersoneel;
5. De verplaatsingen van diplomaten, personeel van internationale organisaties en door internationale organisaties uitgenodigde personen van wie fysieke aanwezigheid vereist is voor de goede werking van deze organisaties, professionele verplaatsingen van militair personeel, van personeel van de Federale Politie, personeel van de civiele bescherming, personeel van de openbare ordediensten, personeel van de Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken, douanepersoneel en humanitaire hulpverleners, bij het uitoefenen van hun functie;
6. Passagiers op doorreis ongeacht van waaruit zij reizen
7. Personen die zich om dwingende gezinsredenen verplaatsen, namelijk:
  - a. reizen die gerechtvaardigd zijn door gezinshereniging
  - b. bezoeken aan een wettelijke echtgenoot of partner, wanneer beiden om professionele of persoonlijke redenen niet samen wonen
  - c. reizen naar een niet-geregistreerde partner die niet onder hetzelfde dak woont: zie vraag 4bis voor bijkomende informatie
  - d. reizen in het kader van co-ouderschap
  - e. reizen in het kader van begrafenissen of crematies (verwantschap = eerste en tweede graad)
  - f. reizen in het kader van burgerlijke en religieuze huwelijken (verwantschap = eerste en tweede graad)
8. De professionele verplaatsingen van zeevarenden;
9. Personen die om humanitaire reden reizen;
  - a. hierbij inbegrepen zijn de reizen om dwingende medische redenen of de verderzetting van een dringende medische behandeling
10. Personen die zich om studieredenen verplaatsen;
  - a. Inbegrepen zijn de reizen van leerlingen, studenten en stagiairs, die in het kader van hun studies een vorming volgen en onderzoekers met een gastovereenkomst
11. De verplaatsingen van hooggekwalificeerde personen, als hun werk vanuit economisch standpunt noodzakelijk is (incl. beroepssporters), en niet kan worden uitgesteld; met inbegrip van de verplaatsingen van beroepssporters, bij het uitoefenen van hun professionele activiteit;

OPMERKING: De volgende drie categorieën zijn niet van toepassing voor landen die niet behoren tot de EU, het Schengen gebied en het VK.

12. Verplaatsingen in het kader van professionele activiteiten, met inbegrip van woon-werk verplaatsingen;
13. Verplaatsingen van Belgische onderdanen of buitenlanders naar hun hoofdresidentie in het buitenland;

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi\\_loi/change\\_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&cn=2020102801&table\\_name=wet](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&cn=2020102801&table_name=wet)



14. Verplaatsingen in het kader van de uitvoering van notariële akten (indien nodig en indien dit niet digitaal kan gebeuren).



### Appendix 3. Returning seasonal workers

#### Background

Among returning travellers, we notice that the positivity is very high in certain countries of origin. For example, the positivity for returnees from Romania is 12.5%, despite the fact that the 14-day incidence in that country is 283, higher than Belgium, but lower than in many other European countries.

Returnees from Eastern and Central European countries are often migrant workers, who spend the holidays with their families in their home country, and therefore obviously have a fairly high chance of being exposed to the virus.

In Belgium, they often work in sectors such as the construction industry.

Foreign workers, seasonal and in the construction sector, frequently are housed in from optimal conditions - sometimes even in inhumane conditions – and at least some kind of crowding is the rule rather than the exception. Moreover, a lot of these workers come from Eastern Europe in whom the positivity rate is quite high lately, so outbreaks are seen and are to be expected.

When in isolation or quarantine, these workers do not have a social network in Belgium for external help, and have little to do. So boredom is looking around the corner which has a potential negative impact on quarantine compliance. Special attention from employers who make use of this type of employment, the social inspection and the police are therefore indicated.

Because the government reaches these groups with difficulty or not at all, knowledge about the virus and measures is often limited.

It is important to look at how this group of workers, and their employers, can be reached through the occupational health infrastructure. Note that there are also self-employed workers.

There is thus a need for targeted communication to and motivation of this target group, both for prevention (following up on measures) and for adhering to quarantine and TTI where necessary.

It should be explored how the Commissariat, Cabinets, Administrations, and local authorities can play a role here.

#### Testing of foreign workers?

Identification of foreigners is always difficult because they do not have a National Register number. However, they should be registered as working via LIMOSA or Checkinetwork, which should allow for proper testing and quarantine.



#### Appendix 4. International travel measures of several countries (information kindly obtained through the respective diplomatic posts).

##### 1. Belgium

Restrictions for people coming (or returning) to Belgium from an EU Member State or Schengen Associated Country depend on whether they are returning from a red, orange, or green zone. Any person coming (or returning) to Belgium for at least 48 hours, after a stay of at least 48 hours in a red zone, must be placed in quarantine. The quarantine can only be terminated with a negative PCR test performed on the seventh day of quarantine.

**Non-residents (>12y):** Travelers (from the age of 12) who are not resident in Belgium, must provide a negative PCR test before their travel if they come from a red zone. This test is also mandatory for passengers connecting via Belgium to a Schengen destination (including Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland). The negative test must have been carried out less than 72 hours before departure for Belgium.

**Residents:** Residents of Belgium returning from a red zone after a stay of more than 48 hours must undergo a mandatory test on day 1 and day 7 of quarantine.

There are exceptions in a few strictly limited cases.

##### **Mandatory travel documentation**

All persons coming or returning to Belgium, or travelling through Belgium, must fill out a Passenger Locator Form in advance. A self-assessment tool is integrated into the Passenger Locator Form. There is an exception when the person is travelling by other means than plane or boat and staying less than 48 hours abroad or less than 48 hours in Belgium. This is a very strict exception that can be subject to control.

##### 2. France

International travel is limited in order to slow the spread of the epidemic worldwide. However, it is possible to travel abroad.

During curfew hours it is possible to travel by train, plane or bus.

Depending on the country of departure, the presentation of a negative test carried out less than 72 hours before boarding may be required.

Following the discovery of a new strain of the virus in the United Kingdom, France has taken restrictive measures for travel from that country. After banning all movement of people and transport from the United Kingdom between 20 and 23 December at 00:00 hours, the Government decided to put in place, at least until 21 January 2021, a system limiting the resumption of flows.

Anyone departing from the United Kingdom must report to the transport company and border control authorities before boarding:



- A sworn statement that they have no symptoms of Covid-19 infection and that they are not aware of having been in contact with a confirmed case of Covid-19 within 14 days prior to travel.
- If she is 11 years of age or older, and regardless of nationality, the result of a PCR test performed less than 72 hours before boarding does not conclude that she is infected with Covid-19. Antigenic tests, the list of which is published by the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, are also authorised.

### 3. Germany

Germany is implementing the commonly agreed EU "traffic lights" approach to travel restrictions, which applies to EU and EEA countries.

Entry from EU Member States and Schengen Associated countries is allowed without restrictions unless a country or region is defined as a high-risk area by the Robert Koch Institute.

Travellers entering Germany, who have been in a risk area at any time within the last 10 days before entry, are obliged to self-isolate in accordance with the testing and quarantine regulations obligations of the competent Federal State. The entry rule is based on the country from which the traveller is coming from, and not on nationality.

Specific rules for Unmarried partners from third countries are available.

- Travellers from the Republic of Ireland over the age of six also have to present a negative test before they are allowed to board the plane(/boat). Therefore, they are not allowed to only get tested upon arrival in Germany.. This is in addition to existing measures such as quarantine and mandatory reporting.
- The general transport ban that applies to South Africa and the United Kingdom has implications for transit to Belgium. Indeed, until 20 January 2021, there is a general ban on transporting people to Germany for transport companies: exceptions must be applied for separately and in advance and only apply to those who live in Germany. This means that transit to Belgium via Germany is prohibited (except, *sensu stricto*, for those who live in Germany but want to go to Belgium), which was also confirmed to us by the police authorities in Frankfurt Airport.

More details about Germany:

Naast de reeds bestaande **risicogebieden**, wordt nu een nieuwe categorie toegevoegd: **hoogrisicogebieden**. Men maakt bovendien een verder onderscheid tussen enerzijds hoogrisicogebieden met een bijzonder **hoge infectiegraad** (200+ besmettingen/100.000 inwoners/7 dagen), de *Hochinzidenzgebiete*, en anderzijds hoogrisicogebieden waar gevaarlijkere **mutaties** van het virus verbreid zijn (o.a. B117), de zogenaamde *Virusvarianten-Gebiete*. Als *Virusvarianten-Gebiete* gelden momenteel het gehele VK, de gehele Republiek Ierland en heel Zuid-Afrika. Zoals u weet, geldt **België** al sinds 30 september 2020 als risicogebied.

De regels worden nu als volgt:



Voor wie uit (hoog)risicogebied komt of er tien dagen voor inreis was, geldt een **meldplicht** (*Digitale Einreiseanmeldung*). Er is ook een **testplicht**. Voor risicogebieden bestaat de testplicht uit zich laten testen ten vroegste 48u voor vertrek en het certificaat kunnen voorleggen ten laatste 48u na inreis (men kan zich dus voor óf na de inreis laten testen). Voor hoogrisicogebieden is de testplicht stringenter: de test, die niet ouder mag zijn dan 48u bij inreis, moet reeds afgenomen en gepresenteerd worden vóór inreis. Noteer dat Duitsland naast de PCR-test – onder bepaalde voorwaarden – ook LAMP-tests (*loop-mediated isothermal amplification tests*) en TMA-tests (*transcription-mediated amplification tests*) accepteert. Er is in de overgrote meerderheid van de gevallen een **quarantaineplicht**. Die blijft onverminderd voortbestaan onafhankelijk van meldplicht en testplicht of testresultaat.

Ook de deelstaatmaterie 'quarantaineregeling' wordt herbekeken. Pro memorie: de quarantaineplicht is in principe tien dagen, maar kan vanaf dag 5 van de quarantaine worden ingekort door een negatieve test afgenomen ten vroegste op dag 5. Er is dus geen dubbele testplicht, maar een enkele testplicht en een tweede testmogelijkheid om zich vervroegd vrij te testen. Worden in overweging genomen: een inperking van de mogelijkheid zich vervroegd vrij te testen; een dubbele testplicht voor hoogrisicogebieden; mogelijk ook andere varianten. In het Duitse debat mag bovendien nooit uit het oog verloren worden dat er weliswaar coördinatie is tussen de deelstaten (en de bond), maar dat het de deelstaten zijn die deze besluiten uiteindelijk bekrachtigen (of niet!) en omzetten.

There are 2 exceptions :

- Exception concerning the "Anmeldepflicht" : it is not required for "die Personen, die sich im Rahmen des Grenzverkehrs weniger als 24 Stunden in einem Risikogebiet aufgehalten haben oder bis zu 24 Stunden in die Bundesrepublik einreisen ( §2,(1) 3)
- Exception for tests :a test is not required for "Personen für die eine Ausnahme von der Anmeldepflicht nach §2 Absatz 1 gilt ( §4, (1) 1."

The combination of those § results in the fact that the 24h rule is applicable : the travellers who stay less than 24 h have not to register and not to be tested. This applies to Belgians.

#### 4. Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, there are no isolation or quarantine measures for travellers arriving from abroad. Such a measure will only be applied in the event of a positive result to the COVID-19 test.

Those who test positive must isolate themselves for 10 days. During this period of confinement, contact with other people must be avoided and a surgical mask must be worn whenever they are in the presence of other people. Failure to comply with an isolation measure is punishable by a fine of up to 500 euros. Accommodation facilities for tourists who test positive are available for cases identified by the health inspectorate and who require it.

Persons who have had contact with a person who has tested positive are subject to a quarantine measure: they must avoid all social contact and stay in their home or temporary accommodation for a period of 7 days from the last contact with the person who has tested positive. These people receive a prescription to perform the test from the 6th day onwards.



However, it should be noted that for all passengers on a scheduled flight from the United Kingdom, specific measures have been put in place following the lifting of the temporary suspension of scheduled passenger flights on 23 December 2020. These specific measures are in addition to the rules established in the context of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU and apply to all passengers arriving from the UK on a scheduled passenger flight, irrespective of the nationality of the persons concerned.

Since 14 August 2020, the Luxembourg State has offered residents returning to Luxembourg after a trip or stay abroad the possibility of a free test.

Luxembourg refers to the measures taken in Germany: Déplacements internationaux des Luxembourgeois : <https://covid19.public.lu/fr/voyageurs/luxembourgeois-etrananger.html>. A noter que DE impose des règles plus strictes à partir du 14 janvier pour les personnes en provenance du Luxembourg/zones rouges : présentation d'un test covid négatif au plus tard 2 jours après l'arrivée. Le test doit être réalisé avant le voyage. Les courts séjours ne sont pas concernés.

## 5. The Netherlands

As of 29 December all people aged 13 or more must be able to present a negative COVID-19 test result, if they are coming from a high-risk area in the EU/Schengen area (with the exception of Iceland) to the Netherlands. The government provides a list of countries concerned. This measure concerns passenger transport by aircraft, ferry or international intercity train or coach, travelling more than 30km into the Netherlands from the border. This requirement applies to all passengers, including Dutch nationals and nationals of other EU and Schengen countries. If a passenger is unable to present a negative test result, they may not travel to the Netherlands and will not be permitted to board the aircraft or ferry.

International train and coach passengers must be asked to present a recent negative test result before boarding or during the journey but at any rate before the first stop in the Netherlands. If they are unable to do so they will be asked to leave the vehicle at the first stop after the border.

In addition, everyone arriving in the Netherlands remains strongly advised to self-quarantine for a period of 10 days. The negative test required for boarding is not a substitute for self-quarantining on arrival. Once in the Netherlands, travellers can self-quarantine at home or in temporary or holiday accommodation.

Several exceptions to the testing requirement exist and for some areas of the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom, certain restrictions apply.

### **Mandatory Travel Documentation**

The negative test result must be in English, German, French, Spanish or Dutch. The test must have been conducted no more than 72 hours prior to the passenger's scheduled arrival in the Netherlands. The result must be known before the passenger departs for the Netherlands. The document must include the following information:

- Type of test: the test must be a molecular PCR test and must be for SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19. No other type of test, including a rapid test, is valid;



- Test result: the test result must be negative (or not detected);
- Passenger's first and last name as stated in their passport;
- Date and time the test was conducted: the test must have been conducted no more than 72 hours prior to the passenger's arrival in the Netherlands.
- Name and contact information of the institute or laboratory that conducted the test.

Passengers arriving in the Netherlands by air must also have filled in a health declaration. Please note: this is not the same as a "negative test declaration" which is required for non-EU/Schengen travellers.

### Update about the Netherlands

Nederlands **Minister-president Mark Rutte en Minister van Volksgezondheid De Jonge kondigden gisteravond een verlenging van de lockdown aan tot 9 februari**. De Nederlandse regering is heel erg bezorgd om de Britse variant, die al op enkele plekken in Nederland is vastgesteld. Bovendien zijn de huidige besmettingscijfers te hoog om enige versoepeling te kunnen toelaten. Een grafisch overzicht van de maatregelen zit in bijlage. Op dinsdag 2 februari beslist men over eventuele vervolgmaatregelen na 9 februari.

Een overzicht van de verlengde huidige maatregelen vindt u [hier](#), of in MM 2020/0989 in bijlage.

De verlenging betekent dat ook scholen tot zeker 8 februari afstandsonderwijs geven. NL wacht nog op advies van experts om te bepalen of de Britse variant zich onder kinderen in primair onderwijs en kinderopvang verspreidt. Mogelijk kan dat deel van het onderwijs al vanaf 25 januari terug open.

Een beslissing over een eventuele avondklok in Nederland wordt begin volgende week verwacht. De Nederlandse regering overweegt een avondklok en staat tegelijkertijd terughoudend tegenover de maatregel omdat hij zo ingrijpend is. Het zou een effectieve manier zijn om de vele besmettingen tussen jongeren te verminderen. Het Outbreak Management Team (OMT) zal de regering zo snel mogelijk adviseren over hoe de avondklok er in de praktijk uit kan zien.

Door de zorgen over Britse variant zijn er meer vragen van journalisten over grens- en vliegverkeer. Rutte verdedigt echter het openhouden van de grenzen omwille van de professionele, sociale en familiale gevolgen voor grensbewoners en het economisch belang van bepaalde zaken- en vrachtluchten. Hij wees op het belang van de controle bij binnenkomst en het moeten tonen van een negatieve PCR-test.

Alle reizen zijn afgeraden tot maart en Rutte deed een moreel appel aan de Nederlanders om niet voor plezier op reis te gaan. Zij die dat wel doen, vertonen heel asociaal gedrag en moet je daar op aanspreken, aldus Rutte.

Minister van Volksgezondheid De Jonge zei dat 25% van de mensen in Nederland die positief getest zijn, zich niet volledig houden aan de quarantaineregels. Omdat quarantaine niet verplicht is in Nederland, louter sterk aangeraden, komen er quarantainecoaches die mensen zullen helpen om zich aan de quarantainemaatregelen te houden. Deze coaches kunnen dan bijvoorbeeld boodschappen doen voor positief geteste mensen die hiervoor op niemand anders beroep kunnen doen.





## 6. Austria

Entry is prohibited to third-country nationals when arriving from any states except the Schengen area and the countries listed above as safe countries. Exemptions apply.

Hotels are closed to leisure travellers/tourists; only essential travel (e.g. for business that cannot be delayed) is permitted.

All travellers need to register digitally before entering Austria and obtain a so-called pre-travel clearance (PTC). At the border, they will need to show their PTC (either digitally or as a hard copy). There are exemptions for unexpected travel due to emergencies. A 10-day self-quarantine is mandatory when arriving from a risk area. Currently, almost all countries worldwide are considered risk areas. When arriving, travellers need to present a "Declaration of Quarantine" form. After 5 days of quarantine at the earliest, they can get a PCR or antigen test. If the test is negative, they do not need to quarantine further. Travellers may leave quarantine for the express purpose of getting tested. They will have to pay for their own test.

Some exceptions:

- When arriving from countries considered as safe (and if they have not been in any other countries in the last 10 days), travellers do not need to quarantine or show a negative COVID test. Like all travellers, a pre-travel clearance is needed.
- There are certain other exemptions from the quarantine requirement, including transit journeys without stopover, regular cross-border commuters, and people travelling to the towns of Vomp-Hinterriss, Mittelberg (Kleinwalsertal), and Jungholz. In these instances, no negative test and no quarantine is necessary to enter Austria.
- Business travellers do not need to quarantine. They do however need to present a medical certificate verifying a negative COVID test that has been taken in the 72 hours before entering Austria. Like all travellers, they need to obtain pre-travel clearance.

## 7. Denmark

Les restrictions de voyage pour endiguer la propagation des nouvelles variantes du Covid-19, initialement en place jusqu'au 17 janvier, ont été **prolongées jusqu'au 9 février**. Les autorités restent inquiètes, car les chiffres (obtenus grâce au séquençage des tests positifs) indiquent que la variante B.1.1.7, déjà présente au Danemark, continue sa progression, même si les chiffres globaux des infections et des hospitalisations sont en baisse.

**Tous les pays étrangers** sont considérés « **zone rouge** ». Il n'y a donc plus de mesures distinctes en fonction du pays de départ du voyageur. Seules les régions limitrophes bénéficient de mesures plus souples (voir ci-dessous).

Toutes les personnes voyageant en avion doivent pouvoir présenter **un test Covid-19 (PCR ou antigénique rapide) négatif réalisé dans les 24 h** précédant le passage de la frontière ou l'embarquement (ne concerne pas les enfants de moins de 12 ans). Le gouvernement interdit aux compagnies aériennes de transporter un passager qui n'a pas présenté de test. **Cette mesure peut donc empêcher des résidents au Danemark ou des Danois de rentrer au pays.**



Les personnes entrant dans le pays par un autre moyen de transport sont soumises aux mêmes exigences, sauf si elles sont danoises ou résidentes dans le pays.

A noter qu'une personne testée positive **entre 2 et 8 semaines avant son entrée dans le pays est considérée comme non-contagieuse et sera autorisée à entrer dans le pays.**

En ce qui concerne les voyages en avion, pour les voyageurs qui transitent par d'autres aéroports avant d'arriver au Danemark, un test réalisé dans les 24 h avant l'embarquement pour le premier vol est accepté. Un test réalisé lors d'une escale est aussi accepté.

Les voyageurs transitant par le Danemark ne doivent pas présenter de test négatif.

Les transporteurs de marchandises sont exemptés de l'obligation de présenter un test négatif.

**Les voyages d'affaires ainsi que les voyages dans le cadre des études sont désormais interdits.** En plus d'une raison valable, le voyageur étranger doit pouvoir présenter un **test Covid-19** (test antigénique rapide ou PCR) datant de moins de **24 h (voir MM 2021/0019 dd. 14/i)**.

#### 8. Switzerland

Meer dan 88 gevallen van de **variant B117** (de zgn. Britse variant) zouden intussen gedetecteerd in CH. Deze worden gelinkt aan Britse toeristen die op skiverlof kwamen tijdens de kerstvakantie. Het meeste ophef veroorzaakte de ontsnapping uit quarantaine van 200 Britse toeristen in Verbier. De autoriteiten zouden de situaties onder controle hebben zodat een bredere verspreiding voorlopig verhinderd is. De media is niet overtuigd.

#### 9. Ireland

Après que l'IE ait atteint le taux d'incidence le plus élevé du monde (1.448,8/100.000 habitants), tout indique que le pic est dépassé car le nombre de cas quotidiens et le taux de positivité des tests sont désormais en diminution.

Les autorités sanitaires IE appellent toutefois les Irlandais à la plus grande vigilance et à une résilience, car elles s'attendent à une augmentation des chiffres d'hospitalisations, y compris en soins intensifs, et de décès dans les prochaines semaines.

**Voyages** : pour limiter les risques, le gouvernement IE a décidé de généraliser des mesures déjà imposées aux voyageurs venant de UK et d'Afrique du Sud : à partir du samedi 16/01, tous les voyageurs arrivant en Irlande devront présenter un **test PCR négatif de moins de 72 heures**. Cela vaut donc pour les voyageurs en provenance de BE (NB : notre avis de voyage a été modifié le 13/01). Ces mesures s'ajoutent à l'obligation de quarantaine à l'entrée.

#### 10. Norway

De door Folkehelseinstituttet (FHI) gepubliceerde statistieken voor week 1 van 2021 (4-10/01/2021) tonen een **stijging** met 19 procent tegenover week 53 van 2020. Uit de dagelijkse cijfers zien we voor 13/01: 667 nieuwe gevallen, 156 in het ziekenhuis (36 op intensieve zorgen en 24 die beademd worden) en 27 doden. De 14-daagse infectieratio per 100.000 inwoners staat op 154,1 per 13/01. De



trend zet zich verder met een **sterke toename in het aantal testen** (met meer dan 70%) en een **daling van de positiviteitsratio** van 3,6 % in week 53 naar 2,5% in week 1. De R-waarde wordt op 13/01 op 1,2 geschat. Het totaal aantal doden bevindt zich op 13/01 op 509 (+32 t.o.v. week 1, de hoogste stijging sinds april 2020).

De stijging wordt **geweten aan een combinatie van hogere testafnames (+70%**, inclusief iedereen die in Noorwegen aankomt vanuit het buitenland) en **meerdere actieve uitbraken** verspreid over het land.

Van de **Britse virusvariant** zijn er in Noorwegen **25** gedetecteerde gevallen en **1** geval van de **Zuid-Afrikaanse virusvariant**. Deze zijn **importgevallen** of gelinkt aan nauwe contacten van deze personen met importgeval. Geen gevallen ontdekt door algemeen toezicht in Noorwegen, maar de 2 nieuwe virusvarianten kunnen naar Noorwegen komen via andere landen dan UK en Zuid-Afrika. Hoge waarschijnlijkheid voor verder verspreiding van deze 2 nieuwe virusvarianten in Noorwegen, die een grotere epidemie en nog strengere maatregelen om de epidemie te beperken als gevolg zullen hebben.

NO neemt verdere maatregelen om de **importbesmetting** te voorkomen. De testen bij binnenkomst blijven verplicht. Gemeenten met grensovergangen worden dringend verzocht de testcapaciteit op te drijven zodat testen aan de grens steeds mogelijk zijn en de wachttijd voor de reiziger om zich te laten testen beperkt blijft tot 1 u. **Boetes** voor zich niet te laten testen kunnen oplopen tot 20 000 kronen. Buitenlanders met een vervalst attest van een Covid-test worden uitgewezen en beboet. Een **nationaal callcenter** zal opgericht worden die binnenkomende reizigers moet opvolgen. Het callcenter zal de **gemeentes bijstaan in controle van de opvolging van testen en quarantaine** bij reizigers na aankomst in Noorwegen. Het **digitaal registratieformulier** voor reizigers wordt **vereenvoudigd, beschikbaar in meer talen** en men zal ook verplicht worden om volledige contactinformatie op te geven, anders kan men niet verder gaan in het formulier met de registratie. Nu reeds is het digitale formulier beschikbaar in 6 talen: Noors, Engels, Russisch, Pools, Litouws en Roemeens.

**Het algemeen negatief reisadvies** van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken **is verlengd van 15 januari tot 1 maart**. De Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken waarschuwt ook de Noren dat er nog steeds reisrestricties zullen zijn rond Pasen en raadt af om buitenlandse reizen met Pasen te boeken.

#### 11. Sweden

Depuis lundi dernier, **le pays a battu son record de nouvelles infections sur une semaine** avec plus de 7000 nouveaux cas. Selon le Ministère de la Santé, cette situation s'explique probablement par le rassemblement des familles lors de la période des fêtes de fin d'année. En outre, **le gouvernement a confirmé la découverte d'un premier cas de la variante UK du virus**. Selon le Centre de la Prévention, il s'agit d'un citoyen letton qui aurait voyagé vers l'Angleterre. Aucun cas de la variante de l'Afrique du Sud n'a été découvert, cependant par mesure de précaution toute personne qui provient de ZA devra également se mettre en quarantaine pendant 2 semaines et faire un test après le 10<sup>ième</sup> jour.

#### 12. Croatia

De overheid in Kroatië (HR) is gisteren overgegaan tot een verstrenging van bepaalde maatregelen voor het overschrijden van de grens.



Reizigers komende uit landen met een nieuwe virusstam en die voorkomen op een lijst van het Kroatisch Instituut voor Openbare Gezondheid (HZJZ), moeten een negatief PCR-testresultaat van niet meer dan 48 uur voorleggen en zijn verplicht om 14 dagen in quarantaine te blijven, die kan worden verkort als betrokken reizigers op zijn vroegst op de zevende dag van de quarantaine op eigen kosten een PCR-test doet bij een instelling die bevoegd is om PCR-tests uit te voeren, en het resultaat negatief is. Op vermelde lijst, die kan geconsulteerd worden op de website van het HZJZ en voor het ogenblik alleen in het Kroatisch beschikbaar is, komen thans enkel het Verenigd Koninkrijk en Zuid-Afrika voor.

Anderzijds heeft de overheid beslist dat reizigers die naar HR komen om humanitaire redenen die verband houden met het verlenen van bijstand aan de door de recente aardbevingen getroffen gebieden (Provincies Sisak-Moslavina, Karlovac en Zagreb), ongeacht hun nationaliteit en het gebied van waaruit zij aankomen, HR binnen mogen komen zonder dat zij een negatief PCR-testresultaat hoeven voor te leggen, noch dat zij verplicht zijn zich bij binnenkomst te isoleren. Voorwaarde is evenwel dat zij hiervoor een voorafgaande toestemming bekomen vanwege het Hoofdkwartier van de Civiele Bescherming.

Nadere uitleg is terug te vinden op de website van het Kroatisch Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken via volgende link : <https://mup.gov.hr/uzg-covid/english/286212>.

### 13. United Kingdom

Comme annoncé vendredi 08/01, UK va imposer de nouvelles mesures avant l'arrivée sur le territoire anglais. À partir du 18/01 à 04h00, tous les voyageurs arrivant en Angleterre de toutes les destinations internationales à l'exception de la zone de voyage commune (Royaume-Uni, Irlande, île de Man, Jersey et Guernesey) seront tenus de **présenter un test COVID-19 négatif, effectué pas plus de trois jours (72h) avant le départ**. L'Écosse a déjà indiqué vouloir en faire de même (voir [annonce](#)).

A défaut de pouvoir présenter un tel test avant de monter à bord d'un avion, train ou ferry, les passagers peuvent être refusés ou se verront infliger des amendes (GBP 500). Il y aura un nombre très limité d'exemptions, y compris pour les enfants de moins de 11 ans, les transporteurs pour permettre la libre circulation du fret et des équipages aériens, ferroviaires et maritimes internationaux.

De plus amples informations, y compris sur les types de tests autorisés, peuvent être trouvées sur : <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-for-people-travelling-to-england>.

Si cette mesure était initialement prévue à partir du 15/01, elle a été **reportée au 18/01** pour donner plus de temps de préparation aux opérateurs et ports d'arrivée de mettre en place les dispositifs nécessaires. Ce report a été annoncé par le Secrétaire d'Etat aux transports sur [Twitter](#) le 13/01 au soir.



## Appendix 5. Effect of returning travellers

Prov.	50% positive returning travellers 19/12-03/01	Positive returning travellers 04-10/01	Positive returning travellers 04-10/01 if all INSZ had been tested	Reported positive cases 29/12-04/01	Reported positive cases 05/01-11/01	Percentage increment from (4) to (5)	Positive cases 29/12-04/01 without returning travellers (5) – (1)	Pos. cases 05/01-11/01 without returning travellers (6) – (2)	Percentage increment from (7) to (8)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Belgium	500	771	1309	11751	14600	24%	11251	13829	23%
Antwerpen	67	97	160	1922	2017	5%	1855	1920	4%
Brabant Wallon	43	41	66	401	534	33%	358	493	38%
Hainaut	33	49	78	1262	1543	22%	1229	1494	22%
Liège	36	41	65	1002	1043	4%	966	1002	4%
Limburg	7	19	32	865	1037	20%	858	1018	19%
Luxembourg	6	8	12	319	441	38%	313	433	38%
Namur	16	21	30	429	562	31%	413	541	31%
Oost-Vlaanderen	35	59	92	1733	1965	13%	1698	1906	12%
Vlaams Brabant	51	82	140	926	1131	22%	875	1049	20%
West-Vlaanderen	33	56	86	1576	1741	11%	1543	1685	9%
Brussels	174	305	563	1080	1999	85%	906	1694	87%

## Notes:

- All data are extracted from the weekly Sciensano reports of 8 and 15 January 2021, respectively.
- Column (1) is half the number of positively tested returning travellers over the two-week period 19/12-03/01, to obtain a rough estimate of the weekly number. This is an assumption and might be questioned. It can be replaced by the proper number as soon as extracted from the Paloma database.
- Column (2) is the number of positively tested returning travellers over the one-week period 04-10/01



- Column (3) gives an indication of what the number in column (2) could have been, had all returning travellers been tested, over the week of 04-10/01. Over this week, 58.9% of the people with an INSZ have been tested.
- Columns (4) to (6) repeat the standard columns from the Sciensano report with the number of positive cases over two consecutive weeks and the increment there from.
- Columns (7) to (9) give the modified numbers of column (4) to (6), when the returning travellers are subtracted.

### Interpretation.

Because in both periods there is a substantial number of returning travelers, the percent increase does not considerably change.

Of course, we should be aware that only a relatively small fraction is tested among all returning travellers, as is clear from the following table (for Belgium as a whole).

Category of returning traveller to Belgium	Total number over 04-10/01	Estimated number of positives, should they be tested and the positivity rate where 3.6% in all categories	Percentage of positives relative to all positive tests over this period
All arrivals	78345	2820	17%
All arrivals from red zones	67781	2440	15%
All arrivals from red zones with INSZ	36356	1309	9%
All arrivals from red zones actually tested	21413	771	5%

Of course, it is currently not the idea to have people tested that do not come from other than a red zone – even though risk may be associated with this group (e.g., travellers returning from tourist areas that are in an orange zone). Foreign nationals coming in with a negative test are not tested but are still arrivals.

Should all arrivals from red zones with INSZ be tested, not 5% but 9% of the total number of positive cases over this period, i.e., 14600, would be realized, a fraction that could potentially further increase if every returning traveller, also from non-red zones, would be tested. In addition, there is a fraction of travellers returning (often by road) without a PLF filled in. This group is the most difficult one to estimate in terms of size and positivity rate.



We should keep in mind that foreign nationals should have a recent negative test when they enter the country, and therefore this group should have a lower than 3.6% positivity rate. An estimate of the size of this group is  $67781 - 36356 = 31425$ .

So, in conclusion, over the recent week, from 5% of positive tests, but potentially 3 to 4 times this fraction, could be due to returning travellers.



### 3. Appendix 6. Essential vs. non-essential travellers

The following table gives an indication of some essential and non-essential travel categorised in either professional or private context. It is not an exhaustive list.

	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Non-essential</b>
<b>Professional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Travel for healthcare workers, frontier workers<sup>a</sup>, Border Force Officers from the UK<sup>a</sup>, seasonal workers, international transport workers<sup>a</sup></li><li>- Travel for diplomats and personnel of international organisations</li><li>- Travel for transit passengers</li><li>- Travel for sailors<sup>a</sup></li><li>- Travel for highly qualified person in the context of economic essential profession</li><li>- Travel for professional activities, including commuting</li><li>- Travel within the framework of the execution of notarial acts (if necessary and if this cannot be done digitally)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Travel for work while telework is possible</li></ul>
<b>Private</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Travel for (urgent) family reasons, e.g. persons travelling to Belgium in the context of cross-border co-parenting<sup>a</sup>, person attending funeral<sup>b</sup></li><li>- Travel for humanitarian reasons (e.g. medical)</li><li>- Travel for educational reasons, e.g. border pupils who travel to Belgium within the framework of compulsory education<sup>a</sup></li><li>- Travel of Belgian nationals or foreigners to their main residence abroad</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Leisure travel</li></ul>

<sup>a</sup>These categories of travellers do not need to have a negative test result to enter the country, even when returning from a red zone.

<sup>b</sup>A person travelling to a funeral can attend the funeral but must stay in quarantine for the remainder of his/her stay.