



Council of the
European Union

**Brussels, 18 March 2021
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COVID-19 93**

NOTE

From:	Icelandic Mission
To:	Working Party on Frontiers/Mixed Committee (EU-Iceland/Liechtenstein/Norway/Switzerland)
Subject:	Temporary reintroduction of border controls at the Icelandic internal borders in accordance with Article 28 of Regulation (EU) 2016/399 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code)

Delegations will find attached a copy of a letter received by the General Secretariat of the Council on 18 March 2021 regarding temporary reintroduction of border controls by Iceland at the internal borders between 18 and 27 March 2021.

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European Commission
European Parliament
Secretary-General of the Council
Member States of the Schengen Cooperation

DÓMSMÁLARÁÐUNEYTIÐ

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Reykjavík March 18, 2021
Reference: DMR21030078/10.13.1

Subject: Reintroduction of border control at the Icelandic internal border, pursuant to Art. 28 of the Schengen Border Code.

The number of new Covid-19 virus infections in Iceland has declined rapidly over the last few months as measures taken to halt the spread of the virus seem to have been effective resulting in no new cases being reported for several weeks. However, a few cases have been recorded in the last week which can all be traced back to border crossings at the international airport. The Icelandic government is therefore determined to apply all measures to limit the potential of any possible reinfections in society resulting in another wave of the epidemic.

On 19 February, a new regulation was introduced in Iceland in order to combat the further spread of Covid-19. The regulation, which is based on recommendations from the Icelandic Chief Epidemiologist, stipulates that all persons entering the country must present a certificate of a negative PCR test taken at least 72 hours before departure. The certificate must be presented when boarding the aircraft as well as after landing in Iceland. However, Iceland does not have the necessary legal framework to demand that airlines refuse boarding to any passenger who fails to present a certificate. The Ministry of Transportation is currently reviewing the relevant legislation with the aim of establishing a legal basis for a such a duty on all airlines. As it stands, authorities must therefore carry out a thorough check of all passengers entering the country and failure to present a certificate upon arrival may result in a fine of up to aprox. 6000 euros. Non-Icelandic residents can be refused entry or stay.

For Icelandic authorities to be able to enforce the regulation for all travelers to Iceland and to combat further spread of the virus, it is imperative to reintroduce border control at all internal borders in Iceland (air and sea borders). The temporary reintroduction of internal border control in Iceland is unavoidable at this time, based on a risk assessment by the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police. Therefore, pursuant to Art. 28. of Regulation 2016/399 on the rules governing the movements of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code), Iceland kindly informs the Commission that Iceland will reintroduce border controls for a period of 10 days on 18 March. A decision on a possible prolongation for another 20 days is expected to be taken later.

Through the above measures Iceland hopes to contribute to the common objective of the Schengen member states of providing for free movement of people within the Schengen area at the earliest possible date.

In the spirit of the same objective, Iceland has maintained a policy of exempting EU/EEA citizens with prior infection, as well as those who are fully vaccinated, from all border measures. Our experience and data so far indicate very strongly that there is very little risk of infection stemming from individuals who have acquired immunity against the disease, either by vaccination or by prior

infection. Based on this experience, and taking into account the favourable status of the pandemic referred to above, my Government now wishes to expand this exemption to cover also vaccinated individuals arriving from outside the Schengen-area irrespective of the purpose of their travel. As before, only vaccines approved by the European Medicines Agency will be accepted, and all certificates on vaccines and prior infection must meet the requirements defined by the Chief Epidemiologist of Iceland and Icelandic regulations. Subject to continuous monitoring, the experience of this expansion will remain under review by all relevant authorities, especially with regard to any possible risk that they may pose to public health and security of Iceland and the Schengen area as a whole.



Aslaug Arna Sigurbjörnsdóttir Minister of Justice