

EU urges members to prolong entry ban until May 15

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The European Commission urged EU member states Wednesday to maintain a ban on non-essential travel into the bloc's passport-free zone until at least May 15 to slow the coronavirus epidemic.

"All member states have successfully implemented social distancing measures to limit [social interaction](#) and slow down the spread of the virus," said Margaritis Schinas, commissioner for promoting the European way of life.

"The restriction on non-essential [travel](#) from third countries to the EU complements these measures at the EU's external borders."

The ban on entry to the so-called EU+ area—which also includes non-members Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland—is one of the bloc's most drastic measures against the epidemic.

Responsibility for visa and migration rules lies with the member state governments, but Brussels is trying to coordinate the response to slow infections while avoiding unnecessary economic harm.

Some EU members are beginning to chafe at lockdown restrictions, while others are tightening them, hoping to cut off the spread of a disease that has killed more than 80,000 people.

"While we can see encouraging first results, prolonging the travel restriction is necessary to continue reducing the risks of the disease spreading further," Schinas said in a statement.

"We should not yet let the door open whilst we are securing our house."

Since the implementation of the travel restriction by all EU member states except Ireland in the second half of March, air passenger traffic has dropped to almost zero, the commission said.

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