

Global Immigration: Weekly round-up of COVID-19 updates

8 March 2021

In brief

Below is a round-up of the most significant global updates on COVID-19 travel restrictions, travel corridors and quarantine measures as at 8 March 2021.

In detail

Global – Vaccination and Health Passport update

There have been numerous global updates on vaccination rollout plans, including **Dubai** which expanded its COVID-19 vaccine eligibility criteria to include foreign national residents of Dubai, over the age of 40 years old. In addition, Dubai Health Authority (DHA) also confirmed that foreign national residents of any emirate within the UAE, over the age of 60 years old, were also eligible to register for the vaccine, provided they reside in Dubai and should book via the DHA app.

Singapore also announced a new digital health app in collaboration with authorised clinics, which captures an individual's COVID-19 test results (and eventually vaccination records). Authorised clinics will be able to issue digital pre-departure COVID-19 test results via the portal, which will be recognised at airports and help facilitate cross-border travel. This 'tamper-proof' initiative follows – and seeks to address – recent reports of falsified negative COVID-19 test results within the region.

Israel announced that vaccinated Israeli citizens will be able to bypass self-quarantine, provided they test negative for COVID-19 on arrival. Israel is one of the latest countries to announce more lenient quarantine rules for vaccinated citizens. It follows Qatar's announcement last week.

Across **Europe**, with vaccination rollout in full swing, there is increasing commentary around ‘vaccination passports’ being recognised for use across the bloc, with the aim of easing travel and quarantine measures across the Schengen area. There is a growing list of EU member states backing the initiative of regionally recognised vaccination certificates, including **Ireland**. Interestingly, Ireland’s MEP also called for the **UK** to be included in any EU-wide vaccination travel passport initiative, given Ireland’s shared common borders with the UK and the fact Ireland is not part of the Schengen area. Notably, **France, Germany and Romania** have not yet supported an EU-wide vaccination passport. Further details on the approach the EU will take with regards to vaccination and free movement and easing of quarantine measures are likely to be announced over the coming weeks.

PwC continues to monitor the updates around vaccination and health passports – and the impact on international travel, closely and updates are being recorded on the [PwC COVID-19 dashboard](#).

Africa

South Africa – Easing of national lockdown restrictions to Level 1

On 1 March 2021, South Africa eased its lockdown alert to level 1, resulting in the easing (but not removal) of several national COVID-19 related restrictions. Full details on what Level 1 means can be found via the [Government of South Africa website](#).

South Africa’s borders have been partially re-opened, with international travel restricted to the following airports: O.R. Tambo International Airport, King Shaka International Airport, Cape Town International Airport, Lanseria International Airport and Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport.

All international arrivals are required to provide a negative COVID-19 test result, obtained no more than 72 hours before the date of travel. On arrival, travellers will be subject to further antigen testing (at the traveller’s cost) followed by a ten-day quarantine period.

In addition, following the easing of national restrictions to Level 1, South Africa’s Department of Home Affairs has announced that it will resume a number of e-services from 8 March 2021, including but not limited to re-issuance of Smart ID cards and I.D documents, registration of marriage certificates, late registration of birth certificates and applications for and collection of passports. However, citizenship services remain temporarily unavailable.

PwC Observation – *The cautious easing of South Africa’s national lockdown restrictions to Level 1 is welcome. Individuals should still ensure that they follow all ongoing COVID-19 related restrictions. Further, there are still several countries that have flight suspensions and restrictions on travel from South Africa. As such, travellers should be sure to check the end-to-end route to confirm feasibility of any up-coming travel in/out of South Africa.*

Americas

Peru – Extension of restrictions

The Peruvian government has extended the entry restrictions for all non-resident foreign nationals, who in the 14 days prior to intended entry to Peru, have been in Europe, South Africa or Brazil. The restriction is set to be in place until 14 March 2021 (subject to further extension).

In addition, the commercial flight suspension on all flights to a destination more than eight hours away has been extended until 14 March (subject to extension).

PwC Observation – *As with several countries in South America currently, Peru continues to review and extend travel restrictions in attempts to contain new variants of COVID-19. Travellers who are still eligible to enter the country must ensure they meet all pre-departure and on arrival COVID-19 testing requirements and be prepared to quarantine for 14 days.*

Europe

United Kingdom – Purpose of travel to be confirmed for outbound travel from 8 March 2021

The Department of Transport announced on 5 March 2021, that all travellers from 8 March 2021 will be required to confirm their purpose of travel, and why it is considered permissible during the UK national lockdown. The announcement comes over a month after the Home Secretary announced that additional checks would be made on outbound travel.

Travellers can access the form via the [UK government website](#).

The form should be downloaded, signed before travel and presented at the UK port for inspection before boarding, at check in and potentially by the enhanced police presence at UK airports. Those who are found to be attempting to travel without a valid reason will be fined up to £6,400.

Currently, [permissible travel during the UK national lockdown](#) includes reasons for work, study, medical or compassionate ground and attending weddings and funerals. Those travelling for essential work purposes (which fall within the exemption, per link above) should ensure that they have an employer support letter, together with employer contact details, in case the carrier/police wish to verify travel.

PwC Observation – *Whilst the implementation of this restriction comes over a month after the announcement, it highlights the ongoing focus the UK authorities have on travel during the national lockdown. Anyone travelling out of the UK should ensure that their purpose of travel meets a listed exemption. Where travel is for work purposes, an employer support letter should be provided.*

The Netherlands – Extension of ban on flights from the UK, South Africa and countries in Central and South America

The Dutch authorities have confirmed that, as a result of the ongoing evidence of new variants of COVID-19, they will be extending the flight ban with the UK, South Africa and countries within Central and South America until 1 April 2021.

There are limited exemptions which include:

- Certain healthcare workers;
- Staff travelling to and from drilling platforms in Dutch or UK territory; and
- Dutch nationals and residents.

The full list of countries subject to the ban and further information on exemptions from the flight ban can be found via the [Dutch government website](#).

In addition to the above, the Netherlands continues to implement a travel ban on non-essential travel to the Netherlands from outside the EU. There are limited exemptions for travellers, which are under regular review and can be accessed via the [Dutch government website](#).

All those that are eligible to enter the country must ensure that they meet all pre-departure [COVID-19 testing](#) requirements and [self-quarantine](#) on arrival.

PwC Observation – *The Netherlands continues to review the global epidemiological situation and update restrictions accordingly. Travellers are reminded that they should ensure to check whether they fall within an exemption ahead of travel. Where they do, they should ensure that they have met all pre-departure COVID-19 testing requirements and be aware of the strict quarantine requirements currently in place.*

Middle East

Israel – Flight suspension to be lifted and Work Permit Unit resumes services

The Israeli government has confirmed that the flight suspension currently in place on all international commercial flights to/from Ben Gurion airport will be lifted on 7 March 2021.

It is understood that there will be a phased resumption of flights, with daily limits on the number of passengers permitted entry. Flights from Germany, the US, France and the Ukraine are being reported as the first round of approved flights from 7 March 2021.

However, despite the lifting of the flight suspension, Israel still has an entry ban in place and any upcoming travellers should ensure that they meet an exemption before attempting entry. Business Travellers remain subject to the entry ban, unless they have specific pre-approval by the Ministry of Interior.

Work Permit services are also expected to resume the issuance of work permits. Foreign nationals, once they have received their work permit, will still be required to obtain pre-approval from the Ministry of Interior for entry.

If eligible to enter, travellers should also ensure that they have met all pre-departure COVID-19 test requirements and are aware of quarantine measures on arrival.

PwC Observation – *In conjunction with its vaccination rollout plan, Israel is now cautiously starting to ease restrictions on entry. However, whilst the flight ban has been lifted, it is important to note that pre-approval is still a required step for foreign nationals, even those with issued work permits, in order to enter the country whilst the COVID-19 entry bans remain in place.*

Bahrain – Digital COVID-19 'vaccine passport'

Bahrain is one of the first countries to launch a digital 'vaccine passport' via its existing BeAware app which, during the pandemic, was the country's contact tracking app. BeAware has been developed to manage digital vaccine bookings, confirm an individual's immunity through a "COVID-19 vaccinated" shield, including an official certificate containing personal information on the individual as well as the type of vaccine used.

Bahrain's BeAware app uses a QR code that links to the country's vaccination register, in order to provide confirmation of an individual's vaccination status within the country.

It remains unclear whether Bahrain's vaccination passport will be recognised as sufficient proof of immunity by other countries. Further updates from Bahrain and within the region are expected over the coming weeks.

The takeaway

We continue to see more and more 'health/vaccine passport' initiatives being announced by countries and airline groups.

At this time there is still a level of uncertainty around how individual initiatives will be used and/or recognised by other countries and airlines. We expect more details to be announced in the coming weeks.

Let's talk

For a deeper discussion of how this impacts your business, please contact your Global Mobility Services engagement team or one of the following professionals:

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Meet the [Global Mobility Services global leadership team](#)

Access the [PwC COVID-19 Mobility dashboard](#) for a global round-up of all currently announced travel restrictions and quarantine measures