Switzerland COVID-19

Update 20th August 2020

Average daily cases is just over 200, which is a 43% increase on the previous weeks numbers. Basel City have now introduced the wearing of masks as mandatory for shopping becoming the first German speaking Canton to do so.

Real estate

Operating close to normal, with some viewings being offered virtually, or with limited parties in the building at any given time. Federal guidelines being followed on the use of face masks when social distancing is not possible.

Entrance and exit inspections are taking place as normal.

Transportation and shops

Train/buses

These are running on a normal timetable. The advice is to travel during off-peak if possible and try and keep a distance between each other. Wearing of face masks is mandatory at all times on all public transport (trains, buses, trams, cable cars etc.)

Taxis

Taxi continue to run normally (regulated per law) although special measures for disinfection have been introduced.

Cars

Fuel stations and garages are open.

Shopping

All shops are now open and operating again, however limited numbers are being allowed in at any given time. The floors are marked for social distancing and in hairdressers’ masks are always required. Face mask wearing has also become mandatory in some Cantons (for all shops), so our advice is to always have one available.

Online shopping for groceries is also available with Coop and Migros offering platforms mainly in English for home delivery.

Education

Local schools are now open in some Cantons and others opening soon (in accordance with normal practice). International schools still have a few more weeks off, but we expect them to open on time.

Administration offices for international schools will most likely now be back and operating as the first day of term draws closer.
Events

All public and private events can take place for up to 1,000 people (assuming rules are followed, and contact tracing is in place). Gatherings of more than 1,000 are banned until the end of October and only then with a special license.

International travel

Entering by car or air from Schengen/EFTA and UK is now possible as of the 15th of June. From the 6th July third country national workers (non-EU/EFTA) have been able to enter with the appropriate documentation for assignments (but not those attending short term training, non-essential business meetings or for holidays).

Travelers arriving from certain countries will face quarantine periods. The list has been published but is subject to change by the FOPD (Federal Office of Public Health), the link can be found below. Those entering will be advised at either the point of entry or whilst in transit.


Airports are open but many flights have been cancelled. Intercontinental travel is not always available on a daily basis.

Work and permits

Offices are generally open, and the government recommendation for employees to work from home has been lifted leaving it to the employers to set the rules and necessary levels of protection required. Employees in the high-risk category (people with serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and lung disease, or aged over 60) must be allowed to work from home.

Administration offices in Switzerland for permits are open (sometimes with limited opening hours). Registration is possible, however for those subject to quarantine rules this can be done remotely or following a different process. Best to check with the local townhall once you/they have arrived in country for clarification. In some Cantons the physical issuing of permits is taking longer than normal, but this is becoming less the case.

For 3rd country nationals (non-EU/EFTA), visas/permits will be issued again and entry to the country permitted from the 6th of July under the quota systems as was in place prior to the COVID lockdown. This lifting relates to workers, so those coming on holiday, short-term training, non-essential business meetings are still blocked.

Deregistration during the lockdown has been possible remotely, but now with offices open often an in-person notification is required (as was the case prior to situation).

Timetable for lifting restrictions

Masks should be worn when social distancing is not possible, and always on public transport.

Contact tracing app is now available called SwissCovid

6th July 3rd country nationals (non-EU/EFTA) can enter for work purposes with the required documentation (assignments). Short-term training, non-essential business meetings and holidays are still not permitted.
Federal announcements are no longer scheduled but will take place on an “as needed basis”.

3rd of August, from this date, lifelong partners and those who can prove they are in a long-term relationship with a Swiss resident may enter the country. Proof will be required, so this needs to be checked prior to departure.

Helpline number

0041 58 463 0000 (for residents)
0041 58 464 4499 (for travelers)
Germany COVID-19

Update 20th August 2020

Real estate

As of 17 June, the federal government of Germany and the federal states have agreed upon allowing the federal states to adjust and lift individual restrictions, while the general hygiene, distancing, and contact restrictions remain in place. In addition, Germany has introduced a Corona Warning App as of 15 June. Usage is not mandatory, but strongly recommended.

Citizens are asked to keep the number of people with whom they have contact to a minimum and to keep the number of people they have contact with as constant as possible. Closer and longer contacts should be kept to a minimum. Where possible, meetings should preferably be held outdoors.

During the summer holiday period, special attention will be directed to identify local hotspots and quarantine measures for people returning from identified risk areas.

Home finding viewings are possible. Housing prices remain solid.

Public authorities are open for in-person services, albeit on an appointment only basis. Distancing and hygiene measures are in place.

Transportation and shops

Train/buses

Public transportation is available and running on regular schedules. All states will require wearing a mask when using public transport, some will require wearing a mask in stations.

Taxis

Taxi continue to run normal (regulated per law) although special measures for disinfection are introduced.

Cars

Fuel stations, as well as repair shops are open.

Shopping

All shops are allowed to be open. Hygiene and distancing regulations are required, and all states are requiring wearing a mask for shopping to date. Restaurants are allowed to be open observing the hygiene and distancing measurements. Bars are still closed in most German states.

As of 1st July, the VAT has been lowered from 19% to 16% (from 7% to 5% for selected goods) to strengthen the economy. This measure will effective until the end of the year.

Education

All children are to be accepted to nurseries and kindergartens, hygiene rules apply. Schools (nursery/primary/secondary) have started to resume operation minding the distancing and hygiene measures. Individual regulations vary from state to state.
Events

Large public events with a limited possibility for contact tracing remain forbidden until 31st October. Museums, theaters, etc. are starting operations again and depending on the respective restrictions of the individual states.

International travel

Travel within Germany is possible, distancing measures remain in place. Restrictions may be imposed to travelers from areas with an increased number of infections, also within Germany. A negative SARS-Cov-2 test result will be required if travelling from an identified risk area.

As of 15 June, all boarders will be open for travel within the EU/Schengen/GB. Inbound travelers will not face Quarantine measures, unless they are entering from a country deemed to be high risk due to the number of Covid-19 infections.

As of 8 August, all German travelers returning from countries deemed risk countries have to undergo a mandatory Covid-19 test upon arrival and undergo quarantine unless tested negative. Travelers returning from non-risk countries are recommended to undergo a test, both test scenarios will be free of charge to the traveler. A negative test may shortcut the quarantine requirement for risk areas. While test facilities are installed at all major airports, the requirement to test travelers is applicable for train, car, and ship arrivals as well.

As of 2 July, citizens from selected third countries can enter Germany without restrictions, while entries from most countries are still restricted to “important reasons”. Germany initially allowed for unrestricted entries from the following countries: Australia, Georgia, Canada, Montenegro, New Zealand, Thailand, Tunisia and Uruguay. For three further states (China, Japan and South Korea), the entry restrictions will be lifted on condition that these states in turn expand the entry possibilities for German citizens. None withstanding, all travelers entering the country from countries identified as “infection risk areas” per regular assessment, are required to undergo a quarantine period after arrival. The list will be published and updated under:

https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Risikogebiete_neu.html

(English version available)

Passengers entering the country via plane or ship are obliged to disclose their identity, itinerary and contact details for risk assessment reasons.

Flight schedules have been reduced significantly but are picking up again.

Work

No federal regulation is in place for prohibiting employees to go to work. However, hygiene regulations should be observed in companies - with protective measures for employees and visitors. Companies are advised to allow for home office solutions where possible.

Timetable for lifting restrictions

This is provisional and subject to the trend of reduced infections continuing.

The federal government has imposed general guidelines for easing the restrictions as of 6th May, including safety measures, in case infections start to increase. If more than 50 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants occur within seven days in an administrative district or an independent city, immediate regional restrictions must be imposed.
The German states will govern individually how many people will be allowed to be meeting again, as well as other measures. We will monitor the situation and will be able to advise individually, depending on the respective situation and request.

Large public events remain forbidden until 31st October.

**Helpline number**

+49(0)30 346465100  Mo – Thu 8:00am - 6:00pm, Fr 8:00am - 12:00pm
Belgium COVID-19

Update 20th August 2020

Antwerp has seen a spike in numbers and has applied stricter measures than other parts of the country, including a curfew on establishments which now need to be closed by 11pm. Elsewhere each person can meet up to 5 other people at any given time, but they must be the same 5 people and part of your “inner circle”.

Real estate

While the National Security Council approved to proceed with phase 4 of the phasing-out plan on 1 July, the rising numbers of infections recently has led to impose renewed restrictions, especially for the area of Antwerp. As of 1 September new measures with slightly reduced restrictions are introduced for the duration of one month, utilizing a color code system for identifying risk areas. The main aim is to ensure regular schooling. People are still allowed to meet with only up to 5 others regularly throughout Belgium. In Antwerp, restrictions for leaving the home at night apply.

Wearing a mask is now required in public transport as well as in public spaces.

Real Estate agencies are open again.

Town halls typically offer email applications and may deliver certain documents by email.

Transportation and shops

Train/buses

Public transportation is running on regular schedule, but passengers need to respect the social distancing rules. People are being asked to only take public transport if necessary. As of 4th May, wearing a mask is required in public transport.

Taxis

Taxis continue to service customers, provided that a minimum distance of 1.5 m is maintained between passengers. The number of people that can be transported therefore varies according to the type of vehicle. People living under the same roof may share a taxi. In this case the rule of minimum distance is not applicable.

Cars

Fuel stations are open. Car/glass/tire repairs can be done in garages.

Shopping

All shops are open. Due to the renewed restrictions, shopping can be conducted only alone and shall be finalized within 30 mins. As of 24 August, shopping will be allowed in pairs without a time limit. “Night shops” are required to close by 10pm. Discotheques or night clubs are not yet allowed to reopen. Facemasks are mandatory at all times.
Education

Nurseries, Nursery schools, as well as primary and secondary schools are open. Under the “Code Yellow” scheme, regular school schedules will apply. If an area is identified as “Corde Orange”, limitations will be introduced.

Events

For regular events held in permanent infrastructures such as theatres, cinemas, stands and congress halls that are organized, protocols will be developed with the competent ministers and GEES experts.

Events are subject to a renewed capacity limit: 100 people indoors; 200 people outdoors. When people take part in cultural and leisure activities, wearing a mask is recommended at all times.

As of 1 September, 400 people will be able to attend events outdoors, 200 indoors.

International travel

Travel inside of Belgium is unrestricted, however, it is advised by authorities to avoid unnecessary travels to the area of Antwerp currently due to the recent infection numbers.

As of 15 June, Belgium has opened its borders for travel to and from the European Union, including the United Kingdom and the four other Schengen countries (Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway), as well as selected non-EU countries.

As of 1 August, all persons entering Belgium after a stay abroad of more than 48 hours have to fill in the Passenger Locato Form, allowing for the traveler to be traced.

Travel to areas declared as “Red zones” is not possible unless deemed necessary, including all countries outside the EU and Schengen. There are also “Orange Zones” where it is recommended you don’t travel to. All information on these zones can be found on the website of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs.

As of 2 July, The EU has issued a recommendation to allow for citizens from selected third countries to enter the EU again. Initially, this applies to the following countries: Algeria, Australia, Canada, Georgia, Japan, Montenegro, Morocco, New Zealand, Rwanda, Serbia, South Korea, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay, China (subject to confirmation of reciprocity). In addition, entry will be possible for travelers from third countries if there is an "important reason for travel". Travelers entering the country from Non-EU/ non-Schengen countries deemed "risk areas" are required to undergo a quarantine period after arrival. These countries will be re-evaluated for risk assessment regularly.

Currently, a mandatory quarantine (*) and test will be required on return from:

All countries outside the EU and Schengen, Bulgaria (selected areas), Malta, Romania (selected areas), Spain (selected areas), UK (Leicester)

Work

Working from home is now strongly recommended for all employees for whom it is possible, it is mandatory in Antwerp (provided possible). When working from home is not possible, companies must guarantee social distancing.
Timetable for lifting restrictions

This is provisional and subject to the trend of reduced infections continuing.

New measures with slightly reduced restrictions will introduced as of 1 September, which will be provisional for one month. The general aim is to ensure regular school activities. Shopping in pairs will be allowed as of 24 August.

Cinemas and Theme Parks are allowed to reopen, an audience is allowed. A maximum of 100 people indoors is allowed, seating only. This capacity limit will be increased in August to 200 people indoors, provided the health situation allows for it.

Helpline number

0032 0800 14 689 weekdays 8am – 8pm /weekends 10am – 8pm

About us

Packimpex with the support of all employees will be offering a flexible working solution. We will ensure we constantly have the staffing required to deliver the authorized services to your employees.

Please contact us if you have any specific concerns with regards to the current situation, our services or our ability to work with you and your colleagues in the weeks and months ahead.