Belgium

Source: European Union/Re-open EU
10.08.2020

Travelling to and from EU countries is, in general, allowed. Travelling to and from Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as the United Kingdom, is in general allowed.

Travellers to or from Belgium should check the latest information on travel advice available at diplomatie.belgium.be (updated daily at 16h).

Travel to and from “third countries” remains prohibited with few exceptions. Essential travel to and from Belgium is allowed, while respecting restrictions (see question on quarantine).

Rules and Exceptions

Before entering or leaving Belgium, please check the latest information on travel advice (with particular reference to “red zones” and “orange zones”) at diplomatie.belgium.be.

A mandatory PCR test and quarantine of 14 days are required upon arrival or return from “red zones” (while they are recommended for “orange zones”). For “red zones”, travel may not be possible or not authorised.

Mandatory Travel Documentation

From 1/8/20, all persons returning to Belgium and all persons travelling through Belgium and who are staying at least 48 hours must fill out a Passenger Locator Form.

Specific measures for Belgian residents exiting or returning to Belgium

Check the travel advice by country

Check the latest information on travel advice (with particular reference to “red zones” and “orange zones”) at diplomatie.belgium.be.

Links to national sources

diplomatie.belgium.be

www.info-coronavirus.be

Documents you need to travel in Europe

Source: https://reopen.europa.eu/en/map/BEL

Remarks from the International Road Transport Union
28.08.2020

Belgium is regularly updating its travel advice list. On 26 August 2020, countries were added to the red list, including Romania. Countries and areas on the red list are subject to a formal travel ban and persons returning to Belgium from these countries must undergo mandatory testing and quarantine.

However, essential movements, including the transport of goods, are exempt from quarantine. See below information for truck drivers coming from red zones.

1) If a driver comes to Belgium as part of a professional journey (transporting goods):

a. If he/she stays in Belgium for less than 48 hours, the Passenger Locator Form does not need to be completed.

b. If he/she stays in Belgium for more than 48 hours, the Passenger Locator Form must be completed.

In both cases, drivers are exempted from compulsory quarantine and testing, even if they come from a red zone. The text messages they receive on arrival to Belgium after filling in the Passenger Locator Form may be ignored.

Therefore, if a driver transits through Belgium (which will almost always be less than 48 hours), he/she can pass freely, regardless of where he/she is coming from.

2) If a driver comes to Belgium after spending his/her free time abroad (e.g. a driver goes to Romania for a week to visit his/her family and comes back to work in Belgium), then the quarantine measures apply.

a. Coming from a red zone, it is mandatory to spend two weeks in quarantine and to test for COVID-19. The test is free of charge.

b. Coming from an orange zone, it is strongly recommended to go into quarantine and get tested. You will be charged for the test.

More information can be found here.

Source: FEBETRA

SOURCE: WCO/General Administration of Customs and Excise
17.04.2020

Protective equipment

Export

Despite the fact that procurement has increased and additional production has been encouraged, the current level of Union production and existing stocks of protective equipment will not be sufficient to meet the demand within the Union. Therefore, the EU has issued Regulation 2020/402 of 14 March to control the export of protective equipment.

For the Belgian Customs Administration, that means:

SOURCE: Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
26.06.2020

On 13 July, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs updated its travel advice list and included Sweden in the red list.

Countries and areas included in the red list are subject to a formal travel ban and mandatory test and quarantine upon return in Belgium.

Full details can be read here.

Source: Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sustaining Supply Chain Continuity

Measures aiming at Supporting the Economy and economic sector.

1. There is a single point of contact to report possible bottlenecks on logistics. There are weekly high level calls with representatives of the Belgian authorities. The hotline can be reached 24/7.

2. Belgian Customs maintains presence and service at all points of entry. For hospitals, Belgian Customs has a procedure to rapidly identify the goods upon arrival and confirm whether they are allowed on the EU territory. The minister of Internal Affairs and Safety has listed the measures for customs officers

- Selection system does not release the items of the annex of the regulation for export. Goods can only be cleared for export after verifying officers confirm that the shipment does not contain protective equipment
- The necessary capacity is provided for the control of the measures
- There is ongoing concertation with major Belgian industrial stakeholders on the operational side of the regulation
- The competent authority provides certification for traders that are not targeted by the regulation (e.g. protective gear for automotive industry that has no medical use).

Import

The Belgian Customs Administration issued temporary measures to allow relief of VAT and Customs duties for donations of equipment for the protection of personnel. The relief is based on articles 57 – 58 of regulation 1186/2009.

Disinfectants, sanitizers, etc.

Pharmacists shall be allowed, as an exception and for a limited time, to store and use ethanol. We do require the beneficiaries of the exceptional rules to hold a register.

As a second measure, to increase the production of base substances for disinfectant sprays and liquids, the Belgian Customs Administration temporarily broadens the products that can be used for denaturation for this purpose. This enables pharmacists and hospitals to use alcohols to produce disinfectants based on stocks of available alcohols that would otherwise receive another destination (industrial use, destruction, etc.).

Measures for customs officers

The minister of Internal Affairs and Safety has listed the Customs Administration as an essential service for the vital functions of the Kingdom of Belgium. This means the Customs Administration will continue its core function of protecting the interests of the Union and facilitate trade.

1. Measures aiming to Facilitate the Cross-border Movement of Relief and Essential Supplies

1.1. Belgian Customs maintains presence and service at all points of entry
1.2. For hospitals, Belgian Customs has a procedure to rapidly identify the goods upon arrival and confirm whether they are allowed on the EU market by the competent authorities. The hotline can be reached 24/7.
1.3. There is a single point of contact to report possible bottlenecks on logistics. There are weekly high level calls with representatives of the Belgian economic sector.

2. Measures aiming at Supporting the Economy and Sustaining Supply Chain Continuity

The EU Member States and associated Schengen countries still temporarily ban all non-essential travel to and from so-called “third countries” in the EU+ area until 30 June 2020. These measures may be extended.

The temporary travel restrictions do not apply to persons doing essential work or for compelling reasons, such as:

- Health professionals, health researchers and professionals providing care for the elderly.
- Frontier workers.
- Seasonal agricultural workers.
- Transport staff responsible for the transport of goods and other transport personnel, as necessary.
- Diplomats, staff of international organisations, military personnel and humanitarian workers in the performance of their duties.
- Passengers in transit.
- Passengers travelling for compelling family reasons.
- Persons in need of international protection or for other humanitarian reasons; travel in accordance with the principle of ‘non-refoulement’.

Phase 4 of the lockdown easing plan will start on 1 July, with no impact on transport operations.

Source: Belgian Federal Government

15.04.2020

On 13 April, relaxations on driving and rest time rules in Belgium have been slightly adapted and limited. For drivers transporting essential goods (food supplies, medicines, medical equipment, fuel), the following applies:

- Increase of the maximum weekly driving limit from 56 hours to 60 hours.
- Increase of the maximum fortnightly driving limit from 90 hours to 96 hours.
- Possibility to postpone a weekly rest period beyond seven-24 hour periods (instead of six).
- Possibility to take 2 consecutive reduced weekly rest periods, provided that:
  a) the driver takes at least 4 weekly rests in 4 consecutive weeks, of which 2 are regular weekly rests; and
  b) compensation for a reduced weekly rest shall be taken before the end of the fourth week.

For all other drivers, there is the possibility to take the regular weekly rest in the vehicle, provided that it has suitable sleeping facilities and is maintained. Such exemptions apply to national and international goods transport.

Exemptions for both categories apply until 31 May.

Source: FEBETRA

09.04.2020

Belgium has agreed to a temporary and limited relaxation of the enforcement of driving and rest times for all drivers of vehicles active in the transport of goods. This relaxation is granted pursuant to Article 14(2) of the EU Regulation 561/2006. This temporary relaxation applies from 26/03/2020 and will run until 25/04/2020. It will apply to those drivers involved in the delivery of goods, both domestically and internationally. The following provisions will be temporarily relaxed as follows:

- Increase of the maximum weekly driving limit from 56 hours to 60 hours.
- Increase of the maximum fortnightly driving limit from 90 hours to 96 hours.
- Possibility to postpone a weekly rest period beyond seven-24 hour periods (instead of six).
- Possibility to take 2 consecutive reduced weekly rest periods, provided that:
  a) the driver takes at least 4 weekly rests in 4 consecutive weeks, of which 2 are regular weekly rests; and
  b) compensation for a reduced weekly rest shall be taken before the end of the fourth week.

For all other drivers, there is the possibility to take the regular weekly rest in the vehicle, provided that it has suitable sleeping facilities and is maintained. Such exemptions apply to national and international goods transport.

Exemptions for both categories apply until 31 May.
2.1. For the Customs Transit procedure, more flexibility has been allowed, respecting the constraints of the European Union Customs Code.

2.2. Supply chains are disrupted because of the lockdown measures in multiple countries. This leads to the build-up of stocks. Temporarily, holders of Customs authorizations (inward processing, bonded warehouse, etc.) can request an extension. The locations must be located in Belgium and can only be used for goods that have not received a final customs destination yet.

3. Measures aiming at Protecting Customs administrations’ Staff

3.1. The Administration took severe measures for protection, based on the social distancing principle. Field officers have reduced staff numbers to allow less interaction. Teams work in the same composition as much as possible

3.2. Legislation, central services, litigation and prosecution, and all other non-first line officers work from home.

3.3. As a general rule, every document or certificate can temporarily be scanned and delivered to customs. Digital autographs are also accepted. The only exception is documents that need a physical copy in third countries (e.g. proof of origin). See also point 3.1.

4. Measures aiming at Protecting Society

4.1. As a general rule, Belgian customs delivers every document, authorization or certificate digitally. The only exception is documents that need a physical copy in third countries (e.g. proof of origin). See also point 3.3.

4.2. Belgian customs, in cooperation with the Federal and local police, guard the national borders to prevent unnecessary travel, as is forbidden by national decree. The officers that enforce normally work on internal controls, so this task does not reduce the capacity of Belgian customs at the EU-borders (airports, ports)

4.3. Belgian customs has a stopping function for the controls on the quality of personal protective equipment. There is cooperation with the competent authorities.

SOURCE: FEBETRA

23.03.2020

Employers’ federations and trade unions in the Belgian road haulage sector and logistics service providers for third parties have made a joint call on all those involved to ensure, to the extent possible, the protection of all those in the haulage and logistics industry who are working during the COVID-19 pandemic. The call relates to stringently respecting all current measures in place regarding general hygiene, social distancing and the use of equipment at workplaces. The letter is available here.

Source: FEBETRA

20.03.2020

For passenger transport, the social distance measure of 1.5m must be respected for all types of collective transport of passengers still operational and allowed, including public bus transport.

In line with the advice regarding unnecessary journeys abroad, all coach services are in a lockdown phase. As schools have been closed, all related transport has been suspended, apart from schools requiring transport to respect their duty of day care for children from families working in key roles, such as health care workers.

The professional training for driving licences or continuous education, and even MOT control have been suspended and appropriate measures are taken to waive the potential validity violations.

Source: FBAA

19.03.2020

Restrictions

SOURCE: WCO/General Administration of Customs and Excise

20.03.2020

Belgian Customs Administration Corona Measures – best practices

Protective equipment
Export
Despite the fact that procurement has increased and additional production has been encouraged, the current level of Union production and existing stocks of protective equipment will not be sufficient to meet the demand within the Union. Therefore, the EU has issued Regulation 2020/402 of 14 March to control the export of protective equipment.
For the Belgian Customs Administration, that means:
o Selection system does not release the items of the annex of the regulation for export. Goods can only be cleared for export after verifying officers confirm that the shipment does not contain protective equipment OR if a licence is available.
o The necessary capacity is provided for the control of the measures.
o There is ongoing concertation with major Belgian industrial stakeholders on the operational side of the regulation.
o The competent authority provides certification for traders that are not targeted by the regulation (e.g. protective gear for automotive industry that has no medical use).

Import
The Belgian Customs Administration issued temporary measures to allow relief of VAT and Customs duties for donations of equipment for the protection of personnel. The relief is based on articles 57 – 58 of regulation 1186/2009.

Disinfectants, sanitizers, etc.
Pharmacists shall be allowed, as an exception and for a limited time, to store and use ethanol. We do require the beneficiaries of the exceptional rules to hold a register.
As a second measure, to increase the production of base substances for disinfectant sprays and liquids, the Belgian Customs Administration temporarily broadens the products that can be used for denaturation for this purpose. This enables pharmacists and hospitals to use alcohols to produce disinfectants based on stocks of available alcohols that would otherwise receive another destination (industrial use, destruction, etc.)

Measures for customs officers
The minister of Internal Affairs and Safety has listed the Customs Administration as an essential service for the vital functions of the Kingdom of Belgium.
This means the Customs Administration will continue its core function of protecting the interests of the Union and facilitate trade.
With this in mind, the Administration took severe measures for protection, based on the social distancing principle. Legislation, central services, litigation and prosecution, and all other non-first line officers work from home. Field officers have reduced staff numbers to allow less interaction.

Temporary and limited relaxation of the enforcement of driving and rest times for drivers
Belgium has notified a temporary and limited relaxation of the enforcement of driving and rest times for the drivers involved in the supply chain relating to essential goods and medicine. This relaxation is granted pursuant to Article 14(2) of Regulation (EC) No 561/2006.
Start date: 19.03.2020

The Belgian government took additional measures on 17 March 2020 introducing further measures to encourage teleworking and closing all non-essential stores (only pharmacies, food stores and newspaper stores remain open) to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Measures are valid until 5 April 2020. The objective is to limit public gathering. As far as public transport is concern, services function normally, but it is asked to limit journeys.
These measures have no consequences for international freight transport and drivers. However, a number of companies have been forced to close because they are unable to respect the social distancing rules or are short of material to continue the production process.

Relieves
Minister of transport announced a temporary and complete tolerance concerning the enforcement of driving and resting times for drivers involved in the transportation of food, medication and other life essential goods to shops and pharmacies. This measure has been taken on the basis of article 14.2 of the EU Regulation 561 2006 and applies from 14 03 2020 at 00:01 until 31 03 2020 at 23:59. More detailed information is available here.

Sources: FEBETRA and Official News Agencies
End date: 31.03.2020