COVID-19 RELATED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS
A GLOBAL REVIEW FOR TOURISM

FIRST REPORT AS OF 16 APRIL 2020
COVID - 19
RELATED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS
A GLOBAL REVIEW FOR TOURISM

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Prepared by
UNWTO
Sustainable Development of Tourism Department
Acknowledgments

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Key Facts

- As of 6 April 2020, 96% of all world destinations have travel restrictions.

- This means that 209 DESTINATIONS WORLDWIDE ADOPTED COVID-19 RELATED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS.

  Percentage of all destinations per region:
  - 100% OF AFRICA
  - 100% OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
  - 100% OF MIDDLE EAST
  - 93% OF EUROPE
  - 92% OF AMERICAS

- About 90 destinations have completely or partially closed their borders for tourists, while another 44 destinations are implementing the closing of borders in a more differentiated manner by identifying specific countries of origin.

- 4 DOMINATING CATEGORIES OF TRAVEL RESTRICTIVE MEASURES are currently applied:
  1. Complete or partial closure of border - “Passengers are not allowed to enter”.
  2. Destination-specific travel restriction - “Passengers who have transited or been in x are not allowed to enter”.
  3. Suspension of flights, all or partially - “all flights are suspended”.
  4. Different measures: Quarantine or self-isolation, Visa measures, Travel bans to passengers coming from certain regions within a destination, or passengers with specific nationalities, Medical certificate requested upon arrival.

- NO DESTINATION HAS LIFTED a TRAVEL RESTRICTION as of 6 April 2020.
Summary of Findings

1) **Volume and severity of travel restrictions under COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented**

The current COVID-19 crisis has impacted on travel like no other event in history before. Almost all destinations in the world have imposed travel restrictions since January 2020, including very severe measures such as the banning of all travel in some destinations.

UNWTO has been monitoring travel restrictions and facilitation measures for several years. UNWTO’s regularly published Visa Openness reports\(^1\) have shown a continuously growing trend for more than a decade, on the number of destinations facilitating visa policies for temporary visitors (tourists). When reporting last in 2018, the world openness reached its highest level ever, with an openness of 37 index points.\(^2\)

2) **Currently 96% of all world destinations have travel restrictions**

Within less than 10 weeks, between the end of January 2020 and 6 April 2020, 209 destinations have implemented measures, restricting travel in reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak. This amounts to 96% of all destinations worldwide.

As of 6 April 2020, 90 destinations have completely or partially closed their borders for tourists, while another 44 destinations are implementing the closing of borders in a more differentiated manner by referring to countries of origin, such as China, Republic of Korea, Iran, Italy or European Union or others, from where travellers are not allowed to enter the destination.

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\(^{1}\) World Tourism Organization, Travel Facilitation reports are available online at: [www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/travel-facilitation](http://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/travel-facilitation).

\(^{2}\) The Openness Index ranges from 0 – 100 and is calculated by summing the percentage of the world population affected by no visa weighted by 1, visa on arrival weighted by 0.7, eVisa by 0.5 and traditional visa weighted by 0.

\(^{3}\) The maps elaborated by UNWTO are for reference only and do not imply any judgement on the legal status of any territory, or any endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.
Looking at regional trends in the five UNWTO regions, all the destinations (100%) in the regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, as well as the Middle East have implemented travel restrictions, while in the European region 93% and in the Americas 92% of destinations have implemented travel restrictions.

Figure B - Travel restrictions have expanded geographically as the number of confirmed cases grows

By mid-February 2020, only two weeks after COVID-19 was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), a total of 62 destinations had implemented travel restrictions. Out of those destinations, more than half were from Asia and the Pacific region.

In the following weeks and with the spread of COVID-19 to additional countries, gradually destinations in other regions joined in restricting the entry of tourists.

A significant increase was observed between 9 and 24 March 2020, when the number of destinations imposing travel restrictions more than doubled, from 81 to 181, following the declaration of COVID-19 as a Pandemic by WHO on 11 March 2020.

Source: Data compiled by UNWTO as of 6 April 2020.

Figure C - Number of confirmed cases and destinations with COVID-19-related travel restrictions

Source: UNWTO SDT, based on desk research from IATA Travel Centre, WHO Extranet and International SOS.
4) **Travel restrictions affecting tourists can be grouped in four broad categories**

As of 6 April 2020, there are four broad categories of travel restrictions under implementation in 209 destinations as shown in the figures below.

**Figure D - Category of travel restriction by destination with COVID-19 travel restrictions**

1. About 43% (90 destinations) have completely or partially closed their borders.
2. About 21% (44 destinations) have introduced travel bans to passengers coming from certain destinations that have been affected by COVID-19.
3. About 27% (56 destinations) have suspended all or partially international flights into the destination.
4. The remaining 9% of destinations with travel restrictions are implementing different measures such as: i) requesting immediate self-isolation or quarantine for usually 14 days after entering a destination; ii) invalidation of visa or no more issuance of visa upon arrival; iii) travel bans to passengers coming from certain regions; iv) requesting medical certificates from the passengers arriving at the border with the negative results of COVID-19.

Source: Data compiled by UNWTO as of 6 April 2020.
Figure E - Changes in type of travel restriction over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Overall or partial closing of borders</th>
<th>Destination wide travel restriction</th>
<th>Suspension of flights - all or partial</th>
<th>Different measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 March</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 March</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 April</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Different measures include:

- Visa: includes the invalidation of visa, destinations are no longer visa exempt or visa cannot be obtained upon arrival any longer.
- Regional: travel restriction directed at a region (sub-national) within a country, and not the whole country as such.
- Nationality: directed at a nationality.
- Quarantine: quarantine or self-isolation requirement.

Due to roundings, aggregates do not necessarily add to 100.

Source: Data compiled by UNWTO.

Figure F - Type of travel restriction by destination with COVID-19 travel restrictions

Source: Data compiled by UNWTO as of 6 April 2020.
5) Declaration of COVID-19 as a Pandemic led to a significant increase in number and scope of travel restrictions

After COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020, the majority of new destinations introducing travel restrictions have used the same categories as other destinations before them, in particular the complete or partial closure of borders and suspension of flights. These two categories had not been in use before the declaration of the pandemic.

6) Destinations are applying more differentiated measures

Since the end of January 2020 to 6 April 2020, about 40 destinations have adjusted their travel restrictions. These adjustments have been observed more frequently since the week of 24 March 2020. Authorities started as from then to become stricter in their approaches, limiting travel and the closing of borders even further.

7) Lifting of travel restrictions have not taken place so far

As of 6 April 2020, no destination has lifted a travel restriction introduced in the context of COVID-19.
1. Introduction

The overall purpose of this interim report is to provide information on the implementation of travel restrictions by governments as one of the means to address the global health crisis of COVID-19. It shall help to better understand the overall process, from the issuing of travel restrictions and their evolution over time to their date of lifting, including references to the different categories of applied restrictions among other details.

This interim report will be updated on a regular basis to support mitigation and recovery efforts of the tourism sector as well as to identify critical issues and best practices for the future. The report intends to assist governments in their preparation for the recovery of the tourism sector as well as to enhance consistency in their measures and related communications. At the same time, the report aims to enhance the understanding of the international community of the importance of travel facilitation and the concept of seamless travel.

This report is based on desk research carried out from end of January 2020 until 6 April 2020 and is based on the results of monitoring all travel restrictions that have been implemented during this period through the review of official websites that provide information on travel restrictions, in particular the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Travel Centre⁴ and the World Health Organization (WHO) Extranet, as well as the International SOS travel restrictions data contributing to the online platform of the World Food Programme on global travel restrictions⁵.

The research includes the analysis of different categories of travel restrictions, as well as their respective evolution into more differentiated and elaborated measures, and the timing of their implementation and/or lifting. The monitoring of travel restrictions is carried out from the standpoint of travel facilitation for tourism purposes (i.e. focusing on temporary visitors/tourists) and does not take into account measures that are directed to residents, diplomats and other categories of travellers. In addition, this report does neither take into account travel advisories issued by governments for their respective citizens.

This work is carried out by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Sustainable Development of Tourism Department (SDT) that, inter alia, monitors visa policies around the world since 2008 and produces the Visa Openness Reports, which focus on entry requirements for tourism purposes.⁶

In general, visa policies are among the most important governmental formalities influencing international tourism with the aim to i) ensure security, ii) control immigration and limit the entry, iii) generate revenue and apply measures of reciprocity, and iv) ensure a destinations’ carrying capacity and control tourism demand.⁷

At present, the implementation of travel restrictions within the framework of the COVID-19 crisis, based on serious health considerations as highlighted by WHO, is going beyond visa policies, as it includes in many cases the unprecedented complete closure of borders. As such, drawing lessons from the past have become challenging and the subsequent socio-economic impacts of these measures are still to be seen.

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⁴ IATA Travel Centre, available online at: www.iatatravelcentre.com.
⁵ International SOS is a medical and travel security services company, for more info on Travel restrictions, flight operations and screening see: https://pandemic.internationalsos.com/2019-ncov/ncov-travel-restrictions-flight-operations-and-screening.
2. **Background on COVID-19 and pandemic measures**

On 31 December 2019 a pneumonia of unknown cause was detected first in Wuhan, China and reported to the local WHO office. Four weeks later, on 30 January 2020 the WHO declared the outbreak of this virus, initially named 2019-nCoV, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). At that stage WHO referred to 83 cases in 18 countries and did not recommend any travel or trade restriction. In a joint statement by UNWTO and WHO released on 26 February 2020, it was indicated that “Tourism’s response needs to be measured and consistent, proportionate to the public health threat and based on local risk assessment, involving every part of the tourism value chain.”

While from end of December 2019 until end of February 2020 China reported the largest amount of COVID-19 cases, by February 2020 the virus had already spread almost all over the globe. When WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020, 114 countries had reported 118,000 cases with Europe becoming the worst-affected region. As of 6 April 2020, there are worldwide reported 1,210,956 COVID-19 cases with 67,594 deaths.

Based on the WHO Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response guidance document for governments, a variety of measures have been implemented worldwide in order to reduce the spread of the virus. These include individual measures, such as the promotion of hand and respiratory hygiene, as well as societal level measures, such as protocols related to social distancing which include the suspension of school classes, adjusting work patterns, the reduction of unnecessary travel and overcrowding of mass transport systems as well as the development of frameworks for cancellation/restriction of mass gatherings. Moreover, with regards to international travel, measures to “develop capacities for emergency public health actions at designated points of entry in accordance with International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) Annex 1 B.2.” which include relevant control mechanisms for arriving and departing travellers, have been implemented.

Furthermore, additional provisions of the IHR have guided the introduction of measures. For instance, under Chapter III on special provisions for travellers, the treatment of suspected travellers when entering a destination is outlined, ranging from medical examination to providing the person with food and water. Also under IHR Article 43, it is stated that additional health measures shall be based on scientific principles, available scientific evidence and available specific guidance of WHO. In this context, the implementation of additional health measures that significantly interfere with international traffic, shall be reported to WHO within 48 hours, including the public health rationale and relevant scientific information. Significant interference means “refusal of entry or departure of international travellers, baggage, cargo, containers, conveyances, good, and the like, or their delay, for more than 24 hours.” The IHR stipulates that WHO shall share this information with other governments and request that the measure is reviewed within three months. Furthermore, WHO may request a government that implemented such measure to reconsider its application.

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12 International Health Regulations (2005).

13 International Health Regulations (2005).


15 International Health Regulations (2005), pp. 29.
3. Implementation of travel restrictions during COVID-19 outbreak until 6 April 2020

When WHO declared on 30 January 2020 COVID-19 a PHEIC, 11 destinations had already implemented travel restrictions directed at travellers coming from China and prohibiting their entry into the destination. Six days later, on 5 February 2020, this number had grown four times and reached 40 destinations. Within another 5 days, on 10 February 2020, the number of destinations with travel restrictions had grown to 56. By then, 24 destinations worldwide had reported confirmed cases of COVID-19.

With the spread of COVID-19 cases to an increasing number of countries, the number of travel restrictions had also grown. On 11 March 2020, when WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, a total of 85 destinations had already implemented travel restrictions. The declaration of the pandemic triggered a new wave of governmental measures and within two weeks the number of destinations with restrictions more than doubled, from 85 to 181 destinations, by 24 March 2020, an increase of 112%. From 24 March to 6 April another 28 destinations followed and amount now to a total of 209 destinations.

Figure 1 - Number of confirmed cases and destinations with COVID-19 related travel restrictions

Source: UNWTO, based on desk research from IATA Travel Centre, WHO Extranet and International SOS.
4. Evolution of travel restrictions by region

During the first weeks of the global health crisis, mostly destinations of Asia and the Pacific region\textsuperscript{16} started implementing travel restrictions. On 7 February 2020, 60\% of the 52 destinations having implemented restrictions were from this region, followed by the Americas (17\%), Europe (13\%), Middle East (6\%) and Africa (4\%).

Four weeks later, by 9 March 2020 (Figure 2), out of the 81 destinations worldwide with travel restrictions, 36 destinations (44\%) were from the Asia and the Pacific region. In the Americas, 15 destinations had introduced travel restrictions (19\%) and in Europe 12 destinations (15\%), followed by Africa and the Middle East with each amounting to 9 destinations with travel restrictions (both combined making 11\% of the overall number of destinations with restrictions).

\textbf{Figure 2 - Destinations with travel restrictions as of 9 March 2020}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2}
\caption{Destinations with travel restrictions as of 9 March 2020}
\end{figure}

Between 9 and 16 March 2020, an additional 38 destinations, the majority of those (20) from the Europe implemented travel restrictions, bringing the total to 119 destinations.

During this period travel measures of closing borders were implemented for the first time. As of 16 March, out of 119 destinations, 22 destinations (19\%) were using the closing of borders for the first time, while still 72 destinations (61\%) were using the Destination-specific travel restrictions travel restrictions, followed by other categories of measures.

\textsuperscript{16} Regions in this report follow UNWTO's geographical distribution of Member States.
As of 24 March 2020 (Figure 4), a total of 181 destinations worldwide had implemented travel restrictions. Out of this total, 48 destinations were from Europe (27%), followed by Asia and the Pacific and Africa, each with 42 destinations (23%), the Americas with 37 destinations (20%) and the Middle East with 12 destinations (7%).
As of 6 April 2020 (Figure 5), an additional 28 destinations introduced travel restrictions, bringing the world total to 209: Africa increasing by 11 destinations (amounting to 53 destinations, 25%), the Americas increasing by 10 (amounting to 47 destinations, 22%), Asia and the Pacific increasing by 4 (amounting to 46 destinations, 22%), Europe increasing by 2 (amounting to 50, 24%) and the Middle East increasing by 1 (amounting to 13, 6%).

Figure 5 - Destinations with travel restrictions as of 6 April 2020

Source: Data compiled by UNWTO.
At this stage, in three of the five UNWTO regions, all destinations (100%) have implemented travel restrictions (Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East), in Europe 93% and in the Americas 92%.

**Figure 6 - Global and regional breakdown of destinations with travel restrictions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data compiled by UNWTO.
6. Categories of travel restrictions

At the beginning of the crisis two main categories of travel restrictions were applied, one directed at passengers coming from a country that had confirmed cases and the other one being the invalidation or suspension of visa issuances.

Over time additional measures were observed, such as the request for medical certificates upon arrival at a destination or the request for self-isolation or quarantine.

Once WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, two new, more extreme categories of travel restrictions started to be applied, namely the complete and partial closure of borders and suspension of flights by governments.

The last two categories introduced are, at the current date, the more commonly implemented by destinations and both increased in use in the last 30 days.

a) Destination-specific travel restriction travel restrictions aimed at passengers from specific countries - “Passengers who have transited or been in x are not allowed to enter x”

Between mid of January and end of February 2020 the most common category of travel restriction was “Passengers, who have transited or been in China or another country with confirmed cases in the last 14 days will not be allowed to transit or enter destination x”.

Figure 7 - Changes in type of travel restriction over time

Note: Different measures include:
- Visa: includes the invalidation of visa, destinations are no longer visa exempt, or visa cannot be obtained upon arrival any longer.
- Regional: regional (sub-national) specific travel restriction within a country.
- Nationality: nationality directed.
- Quarantine: quarantine or self-isolation requirement.

Note: Due to roundings, aggregates do not necessarily add to 100. Source: Data compiled by UNWTO.
Over time, this category of travel restrictions was used by a growing number of destinations. As countries with reported cases of COVID-19 increased, not only passengers who transited or travelled to China were restricted, but also those who transited or travelled to the Republic of Korea, Iran, Italy, Japan, Singapore and Thailand and later on to Europe and sometimes Schengen area.

After 16 March 2020, the number of destinations implementing this type of restriction ceased to increase as new categories of measures emerged, namely the complete closure of borders, as well as the suspension of flights.

Between 24 March and 6 April, the number of destinations applying this category decreased further from 56 (31%) on 24 March to 44 (21%) destinations as of 6 April.

b) Overall or partial closing of borders - “Passengers are not allowed to enter”

This category was observed for the first time mid-March 2020, with 22 destinations applying these restrictions by 16 March. By 24 March, the number of destinations increased to 69 and by 6 April further to 90 destinations, making it the currently most often applied category of measures (43% of all destinations worldwide).

c) Suspension of Flights - partially or totally - “All flights are suspended”

The suspension of flights was also observed for the first time as of mid-March. By 24 March, already 32 destinations suspended all flights, by 6 April 56 destinations (27% of all destinations worldwide).

Figure 8 - Type of travel restriction by destination as of 6 of April

Source: Data compiled by UNWTO as of 6 April 2020.
d) Regional (sub-national) specific travel restriction within a country - “Passengers who reside or visitors who have been in region x of a destination x in the past 14 days are not allowed to enter destination x”

Only a small number of destinations made specific reference to regions within affected countries for which they applied travel restrictions rather than addressing an entire country (e.g. Hubei province, Cheongdo County and Daegu City, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy or Veneto). With the development of the pandemic, this measure has lost importance and by 6 April, only to 2 destinations are making still use of this measure (1% of all destinations worldwide).

e) Visa measures - “Visa is invalidated” or “no longer visa exempt” or “visa cannot be obtained any longer upon arrival”

Introduced at a later stage, only 6 destinations are applying currently this measure as of 6 April (3% of all destinations worldwide).

f) Quarantine-related and medical certificate related travel restrictions - Passengers who have been in destination x are subject to quarantine for 14 days or Passengers who have been in destinations x in the past 14 days must bring a medical certificate

Observed since the beginning, this category of travel restrictions is applied by 10 destinations as of 6 April (5% of all destinations worldwide).
Overview on the different categories and applying destinations as of 6 April 2020

**Overall or partial closing of borders - “Passengers are not allowed to enter x”**

Applied by 90 destinations (43% of all destinations worldwide).

Algeria, Argentina, Aruba, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Canada, Cayman Islands, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Taiwan Province of China, Colombia, Congo (DR), Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Cote D’Ivoire, Cuba, Curaçao, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Fiji, French Guinea, French Polynesia, Georgia, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Honduras, Indonesia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Korea DPR, Latvia, Lesotho, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Federated States of Micronesia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Montserrat, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Niger, North Macedonia, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Reunion, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, Spain, St. Maarten, Suriname, Switzerland, Togo, Tuvalu, Ukraine, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.

**Destination-specific travel restrictions travel restrictions aimed at passengers from specific countries - “Passengers who have transited or been in x are not allowed to enter x”**

Applied by 44 destinations (21% of all destinations worldwide).

Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Belize, Bonaire, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Croatia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Haiti, Hong Kong SAR, Iceland, Japan, Maldives, Nauru, Netherlands, Niue, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Romania, Saba, Samoa, Somalia, St. Eustatius, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, United States of America.

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17 Some destinations apply more than one measure, in this case the measure affecting tourists most is taken into account.
Suspension of Flights - partially or totally - “All flights are suspended”

Applied by 56 destinations (27% of all destinations worldwide).

Afghanistan, Albania, Anguilla, Bermuda, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Comoros Islands, Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea (Rep.), Guyana, Hungary, India, Iraq, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Nepal, New Caledonia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Portugal, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Sudan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkmenistan, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Virgin Islands British, Yemen.

Visa measures - Visa are invalidated or no longer visa exempt or visa cannot be obtained any longer upon arrival

Applied by 6 destinations (3% of all destinations worldwide).

Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Laos, Malawi, Myanmar.

Regional (sub-national) specific travel restriction within a country - “Passengers who reside or visitors who have been in region x of a destination x in the past 14 days are not allowed to enter destination x”

Applied by 2 destinations (1% of all destinations worldwide).

Republic of Korea, Macao SAR.

Quarantine or self-isolation related measures

Applied by 10 destinations (5% of all destinations worldwide).

Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Ethiopia, Ireland, Italy, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Zambia.

Medical certificate before arrival

Applied by 1 destination (1% of all destinations worldwide).

Slovenia.