The Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, presents its compliments to diplomatic missions, consular posts as well as to international organizations established in Belgium and has the honour to draw their attention to the following details about travel from, to and inside the Belgian territory.

In order to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus, the Belgian authorities confirmed on 23.03.2020 by Ministerial Decree the prohibition of all non-essential travel.

A number of provisions implementing this basic principle have been clarified and applied on the national territory since 29.03.2020. The new practical arrangements have been published by the Federal Crisis Centre (in French, Dutch and German) and are available on the website of the Protocol Directorate. This page is updated as often as possible: it is strongly advised to visit it regularly.

1. Leaving the Belgian territory

Flexibility is introduced for the staff of diplomatic missions or consular posts and the civil servants of international organizations who are allowed to leave the country if travel abroad is essential in the exercise of their duties.

For the time being, it is also considered to be an essential reason, and therefore permitted, to pick up persons abroad who have to return to the Belgian territory. It is important that the person leaving the territory:

- is a long-term resident who holds a legal residence permit or has the Belgian nationality. The return is subject to conditions, see point 2;
- has to be always in possession of his identity document (residence permit, identity card, passport). The special residence permits issued by the Protocol Directorate are accepted;
- is in possession of an acceptable proof that travelling is essential: for example, a sufficiently detailed march order, a certificate or verbal note from the employer, a copy of the plane ticket...

Military staff who are members of an international organization and do not have a Belgian residence permit nor an identity card must be in possession of a clearly recognizable identification card or badge as well as an acceptable proof such as a march order.
Note: National regulations and applicable additional measures must be observed in the country of destination.

2. Return to the Belgian territory

Principle: return to Belgium of the staff members of the diplomatic missions or consular posts and of the officials of international organizations as well as long-term residents or persons with the Belgian nationality are regulated as follows:

- When travelling was essential, the above mentioned categories will not need to be in quarantine.
- In the case that travelling did not meet these criteria, return is subject to the compliance with 2 conditions:
  A) the returning person as well as the person or driver who picked him/her up must be isolated in their home for 14 days;
  B) these persons are not entitled to go to work during 14 days (only telework or conference calls are allowed).
- Public transportations remain accessible. If the transfer to the place of residence is made in any other way, the “social distancing” rules, i.e. 1.5m, are applicable. In a car, no more than 2 persons can be seated, including the driver.

3. Travelling on the national territory

Reminder: travelling within Belgium is strictly limited and must comply with the provisions of the verbal note P0.0/PRO.31.43/1 of 18.03.2020. Teleworking remains the rule and video or teleconferences should be encouraged. Travel in the exercise of the function or going to one’s workplace is only allowed if the physical presence of the person is essential, if teleworking or teleconferencing are not feasible.

In order to facilitate checks, persons are encouraged to provide, in addition to their identity documents, an acceptable proof that travelling is essential: for example a sufficiently detailed marching order or a certificate of the employer.

The measures taken by the Protocol Directorate in its verbal note P0.0/PRO.3143 of 24.03.2020 regarding the special residence permits and the new functions remain relevant and applicable.

The Protocol Directorate thanks the Heads of missions and staff members for their cooperation in implementing these measures imposed in the general interest.

The Federal Public Service for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation seizes this opportunity to renew to diplomatic missions, to consular posts and to international organizations established in Belgium the assurances of its highest consideration.

Done in Brussels on 30/03/2020.

To the diplomatic and consular missions and to international organizations in Brussels