

Resolution on the Schengen system and measures taken during the COVID-19 crisis

2020/2801(RSP) - 24/11/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 619 votes to 45, with 28 abstentions, a resolution on the Schengen system and measures taken during the COVID-19 crisis.

As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the Member States have reintroduced internal border controls or closed borders. Temporary restrictions on travel from third countries, but also from EU Member States in the Schengen area, have been introduced and continue to apply.

Parliament regretted that these measures have not been coordinated between the Member States or with the EU institutions. It stressed that a swift return to a fully functional Schengen area is of utmost importance and depends on both the political will of the Member States and their commitment to coordinating measures under the Schengen acquis.

Recalling that a strategy on the future of Schengen is one of the key initiatives of the Commission for 2021, Parliament reiterated its call on the Commission and the Member States to prepare, as quickly as possible, contingency plans in the event of further peaks in the spread of COVID-19, in order to prevent temporary border controls from becoming semi-permanent in the medium term.

Parliament recalled the importance of restoring a fully functioning Schengen area without internal border controls.

In this regard, the Commission was called on to:

- continue its efforts to improve and support EU-wide cooperation and coordination among and with Member States during the pandemic;
- update the 'Re-open EU' website accordingly to create a true one-stop shop which facilitates free movement during the pandemic and significantly helps residents to resume their usual way of life.

The Commission, the Council and the Member States were called on to:

- further enhance and fully implement the measures for overall coordination based on the best available science, notably regarding quarantine regulations, cross-border contact tracing, testing strategies, the joint assessment of testing methods, the mutual recognition of tests, and temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU.

Cross-borders obstacles

Parliament expressed concerns at the numerous obstacles encountered by many cross-border workers, students and binational couples in stable relationships due to the closing of borders or travel restrictions. In this regard, it suggested that people living in border regions and cross-border workers should be exempted from pandemic-related measures and restrictions, while being required to respect the advice and measures taken by the health authorities of the relevant Member States in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

The resolution also stressed that EU residents should have easy access to reliable, comprehensive and real-time information about travel restrictions and health and safety measures related to the pandemic throughout the EU.

According to Parliament, tools such as COVID-19 tracing apps should be compatible across borders to ensure they are effective and to make it possible to trace infections during travel.