

BRUSSELS DECIDES TO EXTEND EXTERNAL BORDER CLOSURE UNTIL MAY 15



Last week, the European Commission proposed extending the external border closure of the EU at least until May 15, covering European countries in the Schengen Area in an agreement to try to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The measure would prolong the temporary suspension to enter the EU agreed by the member states on March 17, which restricted entries to “strictly necessary” travels for one month.

Since these restrictions were announced, air travel to the EU has been reduced “to practically zero” and there are hardly any flights for transport of goods and to repatriate Europeans stranded in other countries due to lockdown measures in place.

The assessment of the epidemiological situation carried out by the European Commission shows a continuous increase in a number of cases and deaths from COVID-19 in the European Union; therefore, the virus continues to spread.

That is why the current cabinet government considers it necessary to extend the restrictions on movements from countries outside the EU and to extend the border closure. “We should not yet let the door open whilst we are securing our house,” said in a statement Margaritis Schinas, Vice President of the European Commission responsible for Migration.

“While coordinated action is key at the external borders, we also need to work together at the internal borders to make sure our internal market continues to function properly, and those vital products such as food and medicines reach their destination without delay,” added Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs.

Border management is an exclusive matter of the member states, so the closure of the common external border depends on the coordination of national decisions agreed upon by the governments involved.

While the EU countries and their partners in the Schengen Area agreed to the closure of external borders, the same coordinated measures have not been applied within the common space.

13 EU countries, and two partner countries in the Schengen Area, also keep their internal borders closed, despite the fact that Brussels did not support this measure to deal with the pandemic.

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