

March 2020

State of epidemic threat in Poland – restrictions introduced

On 13 March 2020, the Minister of Health announced a state of epidemic threat in Poland.

A state of epidemic threat is a legal situation announced within a given area with respect to a threat of an epidemic outbreak, in order to introduce suitable countermeasures. The state of epidemic threat has been declared in accordance with article 46 of the act on countering and combating infections and infectious diseases in people.

Four categories of restrictions have been introduced.

Reinstating border controls

Starting from Sunday, 15 March 2020, a 10-day period of prohibition on entering the territory of Poland for foreigners has been introduced.

Not all foreigners will be covered by the restriction. Some may still enter Poland – these include:

- spouses of Polish citizens;
- children of Polish citizens;
- individuals in possession of 'Karta Polaka';
- diplomats;
- foreigners driving a vehicle intended for transporting goods;
- individuals having the right to stay in Poland on a permanent or temporary basis (having been issued relevant permits) or having a valid work permit to perform work in Poland.

Citizens of Poland will be able to return to Poland by means of road vehicles (including cars and buses). Returning charter flights with Polish citizens will also be allowed back into the country.

Those on board will be subjected to a 14-day home quarantine.

Several exceptions to this rule will be applied:

- individuals in border areas, who reside in Poland, but perform work in the neighbouring country;
- road transport drivers (e.g. bus drivers).

These individuals will not be subject to the aforementioned quarantine period.

Starting 15 March, all international flight and railway connections are suspended. Borders will remain open for exchange of goods, however domestic flights and railway routes remain open.

Restrictions in operation of shopping centres/malls

All shops located in shopping centres (malls) shall remain closed with the exception of grocery shops, pharmacies and selected service points (e.g. laundries). These restrictions do not apply to shops located outside of shopping centres (malls).

Closure of restaurants, bars and pubs

Restaurants, cafes, bars and pubs may still sell food, but consumption on site is prohibited – as such ordering for home delivery will be possible.

Prohibition of public gatherings exceeding 50 individuals

This restriction applies universally to all locations wherein people may gather. The restriction thus applies to any public events, festivities, demonstrations, marches and religious events.

In addition, three decrees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration and the Council of Ministers (government) have been announced on the reinstatement of border controls and individuals crossing the borders of Poland being internal borders of the Schengen area, and the temporary suspension or restriction of cross-border movement through certain border-crossing points of Poland, as well as on restrictions in aviation travel. The decrees include, among others, a list of border-crossing points facilitating entry into Poland.

Detailed information may be found under www.gov.pl/web/coronavirus as well as in the relevant decrees.

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