Good stories on consular support for EU citizens stranded abroad

High Representative/Vice President Josep Borrell, supported by the EEAS, the Commission and EU Delegations around the world, is leading the work to strengthen coordination among Member States to help EU citizens who are currently stranded outside the EU.

To find out more on the Coronavirus response, visit the constantly updated page of the European Commission here.
The **EEAS** is supporting Member States with their consular assistance to EU citizens through its network of local consular correspondents in the 142 EU Delegations. The EU “consular toolkit” involves practical information to EU citizens in third countries on their options. This includes EU collaboration on repatriating EU citizens and advice on how to handle travel restrictions around the world.

"Repatriation efforts are aimed at EU travellers who have been stranded abroad. We are not talking about permanent residents (...) Our priority is to bring these people home", said High Representative Josep Borrell in a video conference after the last Foreign Affairs Council. On Friday 27 March, the Commission proposed to make some extra €45 million available from the EU budget to help Member States repatriate EU nationals.

The priority is to repatriate EU citizens via commercial flights. However, when this option is no longer possible, the European Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) of DG ECHO, together with EEAS and EU Member States, steps in to assess difficult situations worldwide demanding special assets (flights, ships). EU Member States can then activate the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), which coordinates and co-finances up to 75% of the special transport assets mobilised for repatriation. Since the beginning of the outbreak, around 250,000 people have been flown back to Europe thanks to flights organised by the Member States. In addition, the UCPM has so far facilitated the repatriation of more 10,600 EU citizens to Europe from China, Japan, the US, Morocco, Tunisia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Egypt, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Honduras, Mexico, Cabo Verde, Georgia, Gambia, Senegal, Haiti, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India, Canada, Peru, Thailand, Nepal, Guatemala, Ghana, Jordan, Algeria, Peru and Seychelles.

Download the factsheet on [consular support](#)

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**Where else has the EU provided support so far?**

**Middle East and North Africa**

**Algeria**

A repatriation flight organised by the Polish Embassy left on 27 March for Warsaw, with a stopover in Dresden, with European nationals from various countries.

**Iran**

When most airlines had stopped their services, the coordination at both capital and local level resulted in the safe return of about 630 EU citizens. Thanks to the coordinated local efforts, sufficient
capacities could be organised at commercial airlines, so it was not necessary to activate the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. DG ECHO monitored the situation closely.

**Kuwait**

After close coordination by the EU Delegation together with EU Member States, Kuwait is ready to provide transport to certain European destinations for EU nationals who may wish to return to Europe [on the special outbound chartered flights that will soon be flying to various European cities in order to pick up Kuwaiti citizens for repatriation]. Kuwait will also start bringing back its citizens from several EU countries.

**Morocco**

Close to 30,000 EU tourists stranded in Morocco have already returned to their countries. Over 600 EU citizens were brought back in two Austrian flights under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. HR/VP Borrell spoke to Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita on Sunday 15 March to address the situation of European citizens still remaining in the country and trying to return to Europe. As a result, Morocco authorities granted an extension to return flights until 22 March.

The EU Delegation has persuaded the Moroccan authorities to authorise departures via the port of Tanger and made logistic arrangements with a ferry company covering the route Tanger-Sète. A first ship transporting 326 EU tourists and 160 camping cars sailed on 29 March. A second departure is expected on 2 April. The EU Delegation and EU Member States have also shown solidarity as regards citizens from the UK and partner countries (Norway, Switzerland) by supporting the repatriation of an additional 10,000 of their citizens.

**The occupied Palestinian territory**

The EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM Rafah) donated a mobile clinic as screening station for arriving travellers into the West Bank.

**Saudi Arabia**

EU Delegation and a Member State embassy coordinated a repatriation flight on 27 March to carry 250 nationals from 8 EU Member States, while liaising with local authorities.

**Europe**

**Albania**

The Albanian government also supported in the repatriation of more than 70 EU Member States citizens still stranded in Albania since the outbreak in the country of the Coronavirus. Another tangible example of the concrete solidarity that Albania is providing in time of need.

**Asia and Pacific**

**Australia**

Coordinating closely with EU Member States, the EU Delegation managed to secure seats on flights to Europe. Delegation vehicles picked up stranded European citizens unable to reach the gathering points. The EU Delegation also liaised with the Australian government to facilitate returns of their citizens from Europe.
Bali-Singapore

With the support of the EU delegation in Singapore, a flight bound to Amsterdam left Bali on the 25th of March with 288 passengers onboard. The plane transited via Singapore where 71 more passengers were boarded to safely reach Europe.

Cambodia

The EU Delegation is working to provide information to Member State about flights operating and cancellations, transit restrictions and closures, in communication with the other Delegations in the region. The Delegation has taken the coordination of the requests of EU citizens that could benefit of some seats made available by France for a flight to Paris.

China

Joint EU and Member States efforts over several days brought back thousands of EU citizens from the Wuhan province, including with several flights co-funded by the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

India

The EU delegation is liaising with the Indian authorities and is actively supporting and coordinating the member states in the organization of repatriation flights for the several thousands of European tourists.

The EU delegation has been asked to coordinate with EU Member states and facilitate in preparing the list of EU non German passengers on two flights from Delhi organized by the German government, planned for the 25th and 26th of March, on top of assisting the registration process on the day of departure. The Delegation is also in charge of coordinating the loading of EU citizens for other German flights from other destinations in India, as Mumbai, Goa, Chennai and Bangalore.

The delegation is also in contact with the WHO and has identified two doctors to provide medical advice to the Europeans.

Japan and the US

A number of cruise ships with many EU citizens on board have been denied permission to call at several ports in different regions of the world.

- EEAS services assisted EU Member States actively in coordinating the local handling regarding return flights and assistance of citizens in quarantine or undergoing health checks.
- The situation of the Diamond Princess in Yokohama and the Grand Princess in Oakland (California), required the repatriation of EU citizens under the activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.
- Especially in the case of the Grand Princess, the active 24/7 engagement of EEAS HQ and the EU delegation in Washington have proven decisive for the successful repatriation of citizens.

Maldives and Sri Lanka

After the confirmation of the first Coronavirus cases in different resort islands, the Maldives government put several measures in place: health checks, temporary lockdown of resorts, isolation/treatment where necessary.

Since there is no diplomatic representation by any EU Member State in the capital, Malé, nor an EU
Delegation, the German Embassy in Colombo employed its consular team to assess situation and to assist tour operators responsible for organising commercial return flights.

The EU Delegation in Colombo travelled to the Maldives, held talks with relevant authorities and organised local coordination meetings with EU Honorary Consuls and German diplomats, associating also British diplomats.

In Sri Lanka, from 15 March, an entry ban for citizens from a number of EU countries is in place. Travellers from these countries still arriving may either return with the next available flight or undergo a 14-day quarantine. The EU Delegation and EU Member States’ embassies cooperate closely with local authorities and airlines to facilitate the timely return of affected EU citizens via commercial means.

Nepal

Almost 600 people have been brought back to Europe from Nepal, thanks to two German repatriation flights, including 409 Germans and 184 citizens from other Member States. The selection of passengers was made through use of the database of the EU delegation on citizens stranded in Nepal and wishing to repatriate. The majority of the European citizens selected for the flights were among the most and next vulnerable: elderly, disabled, families.

New Zealand

The first repatriation flight left Wellington on Saturday morning with citizens of 20 EU countries wishing to go back to Europe. The EU delegation coordinated the flight gathering all the requests, contacting the Member States for offering the available seats and compiling the final list of passengers.

Vietnam

On 18 March, the HR/VP had a call with the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs. Following this call, the local EU Delegation, together with different Member States consulates, organised a flight for EU citizens stranded in Vietnam.

Thanks to a flight set up under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, close to 300 European Union citizens manage on the 25th of March to fly from Hanoi to Prague. The EU delegation in Hanoi helped the authorities of the Czech Republic in coordinating the humanitarian charter flight that allowed the repatriation of around 200 Czech citizens and 80 citizens of other member states.

On 31st March 2020, another flight left Ho Chi Minh City for Kaunas via Bangkok. The flight was co-sponsored by the European Union and Lithuania, under the Union Civilian Protection Mechanism (UCPM). Nearly 300 Lithuanians and other EU Member States citizens are now on their way home.

Africa

Cabo Verde

Nearly a million EU tourists annually visit the small islands of Cabo Verde. Many still came in March, and got "stranded". Only 4 EU Member States have embassies in Cabo Verde. The EU Delegation was contacted by hundreds of EU citizens needing help, and coordinated actions and info sharing with EU Member States' embassies also in Dakar and Lisbon. Luxembourg and Germany organised flights supported by the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. France, Portugal and Spain also mobilised flights. The EU Delegation received many grateful emails from returned citizens including British. A big
thanks also to TUI who managed to operate most of their return flights in difficult circumstances.

The Gambia

Lead by the EU delegation in Banjul, an intensive European consular cooperation has taken place in Gambia to help repatriate EU citizens back home. As a result of this cooperation, more than 700 stranded EU nationals - mainly Germans - returned safely home since the weekend of 21 March. Another flight was organized from Banjul to Amsterdam on 30 March, bringing safely home 112 citizens from different countries.

In Gambia and Kenya, additional flights took off out with multiple nationalities thanks to good local coordination under the EU Delegation.

In Uganda and Rwanda, EU Delegations organised an emergency flights going through Rwanda and Uganda to take EU citizens and others back home. The EU Delegation undertook actions to facilitate the landing of these flights.

Seychelles

In Seychelles, with the support of EU Civil Protection Mechanism, two flights were organised to Germany on 26 and 28 March and one flight to France on 31 March. As the flight on 31 March operated by the European Union and the French Government was the last one, the French Embassy and UK High Commission in Seychelles coordinated closely and organized the logistical aspect of the repatriation, while keeping European citizens informed on the situation through the European delegation network. At 20h50 local time, a charter plane left from Mahé to Paris with 156 tourists from 10 different countries (France, Germany, UK, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland). The plane safely landed in Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport in the morning on 1 April. The EU Delegation based in Mauritius participated actively in this consular coordination.

Mauritius

Successful joint effort allowed bringing down the number of EU tourists in need of repatriation from more than 15.000 ten days ago to less than 400. The EU Delegation was closely involved in coordination, liaising with non-resident Member States, informing about commercial and charter flights (including one UCPM-funded), as well as about a special flight after the closure of the airport. The EU Delegation also supported logistically the repatriation by a private flight to Spain.

Latin America & the Caribbean

Bolivia

Thanks to EU led constructive cooperation with Member States and local authorities and despite difficulties such as total lockdown and only five resident EU Member States embassies accredited, 2 flights took off under the UCPM repatriating citizens with more than 20 nationalities. More UCPM flights are planned to repatriate the currently estimated remaining 500 EU stranded travellers.

In Jamaica, thanks to a very good cooperation between the EU Delegation, the EU Member States’ embassies and the local authorities, travel restrictions have been reduced. It allowed the repatriation on 28-29 March of most of the thousands EU travellers stranded in the country.

Nicaragua

The repatriation operation of the European citizens from Nicaragua is being led by Germany under
the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism and with the EU’s financial support. Last Saturday a special chartered Condor plane left Managua for Frankfurt with over 220 EU, UK, Swiss and Norwegian citizens on board. The repatriation was coordinated through consular coordination mechanism facilitated by the EU Delegation. The EU Delegation had been in touch with all the Member States, also those 23 EU countries that do not have their diplomatic missions in Managua. During the first coordination meeting the decision was taken to give priority for non-represented citizens (60), while other countries accepted a quota proposed by EU Delegation. A dozen of UK citizens could be added at the last minute after a request by the UK embassy. A second flight for 253 passengers is foreseen for 2 April. Many last minute changes of passengers made coordination labour intensive but prioritisation and constant communication and clear coordination proved to be recipe for success. The Nicaraguan press has described this recent coordinated operation as “organisation without precedence by Germany with the support of the EU”. The Delegation has also received a citizen’s feedback who arrived safely at home stating, “in this world, hopefully, there are benevolent people. What a beautiful life’s gift. We will never forget what you have done”.

**El Salvador**

In **El Salvador** a flight with 180 stranded EU citizens left last week. Very good joint effort by Germany, of the EU Delegation and of the three EU Member States Embassies present in the country. There were many obstacles to overcome: the closure of the airport, the prohibition for anyone to move around the country, the strict lockdown measures. But negotiation with the President and Foreign Affairs made it possible. The EU Civil Protection Mechanism was activated by Germany and gathered nationals from 16 different EU countries, UK and Israel. Another flight was arriving from Spain to Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras carrying 475 passengers mostly from Spain but also other EU nationals.

**Peru**

Concerted intervention through a letter by the President of the European Council and a call by the HR/VP to the Foreign Minister and intense local coordination of more than 30 countries concerned has paved the way for an “orderly” repatriation schedule: 24 repatriation flights from Lima (half of which UCPM-funded) are planned for some 8,700 tourists left. 7 have departed reducing the number of stranded tourists by 2,000.

**See also**

Commission website on consular protection for EU citizens abroad  
Council’s website on consular protection  
EEAS Crisis management and Response  
www.eeas.europa.eu  
**Source URL:**  