

## THE EPOCH TIMES



A man and a woman walk on Trocadero Plaza as a French national flag flies on the Eiffel Tower in background in Paris on May 11, 2020. (Philippe Lopez/AFP via Getty Images)

---

PREMIUM **WORLD**

# More European Countries Roll Back COVID-19 Restrictions

By [Jack Phillips](#) | February 9, 2022 Updated: February 10, 2022

**A** **A** Print

---

France, Greece, and Portugal have become the latest European countries to relax their [COVID-19](#)-related regulations, with the three nations easing travel restrictions.

Vaccinated tourists won't have to provide a negative COVID-19 test to enter the countries, although unvaccinated people will still have to do so. Greece also dropped pre-departure testing requirements.

French officials announced this week that the country would drop the requirement of a negative COVID-19 test for vaccinated people entering the country from outside the EU.

“We again required tests in December over the Omicron variant. In the coming days, we will announce that tests are no longer needed for vaccinated people,” Clément Beaune, with the Ministry of [Europe](#) and Foreign Affairs, told France 2 TV on Feb. 8.

The relaxation of COVID-19 rules comes as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the UK, Ireland, and the Czech Republic have dropped their own domestic COVID-19 restrictions, including vaccine passports in some cases.

Earlier this month, Finnish Prime Minister [Sanna Marin announced](#) that Finland will be lifting all COVID-19 restrictions by mid-February.

Marin said the lifting of restrictions should be done in a gradual manner, arguing that the COVID-19 pandemic is still placing a “relatively high burden” on hospital resources.

“That’s why I want that we give them up as soon as possible,” she said during an event with reporters, the Helsinki Times reported.

Denmark Health Minister Magnus Heunicke said in late January that the country would only keep COVID-19 restrictions in place if they were “truly necessary.”

“No one can know what will happen next December. But we promised the citizens of Denmark that we will only have restrictions if they are truly necessary, and we’ll lift them as soon as we can,” Heunicke [told CNN](#). “That’s what’s happening right now.”

COVID-19 vaccine passports for restaurants, bars, and other venues, as well as indoor mask mandates, are ending across the Nordic country, he said. Denmark was the first EU nation to [lift all restrictions](#) on Sept. 10, 2021.

Earlier in January, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the end of some COVID-19-related restrictions in England, such as passports, mask mandates, and work restrictions. The governments in Scotland and Wales also announced at the time the removal of certain Omicron coronavirus variant curbs, although mandatory indoor mask-wearing and COVID-19 passes will remain in place.

Days later, the Republic of Ireland's leadership announced the end of COVID-19 certificates, social distancing, capacity limits, and curfews.

"Humans are social beings and we Irish are more social than most. As we look forward to this spring, we need to see each other again," Taoiseach Micheál Martin said. "We need to see each other smile. We need to sing again."

On Jan. 20, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez told reporters that the EU should approach COVID-19 in the same manner that it approaches influenza, as frequent studies and data have shown the Omicron variant is far less virulent than previous variants.

"What we are saying is that in the next few months and years, we are going to have to think, without hesitancy and according to what science tells us, how to manage the pandemic with different parameters," he said on Jan. 17, according to The Associated Press.

But in Austria, President Alexander Van der Bellen [signed](#) a controversial law last week introducing a national COVID-19 vaccine mandate for adults that includes fines. Those without proof of vaccination or exemption face an initial fine of 600 euros (\$680) and additional fines of up to 3,600 euros (\$4,100). Individuals can be fined up to four times per year, and the law will last until January 2024.