

# Expansion of National Interest Exception Travel Students, Business Travelers, Investors, and Academics

## Eligible Travelers

As of March 2, 2021, Washington announced that certain travelers from Schengen area countries could resume traveling to the United States if, as determined by a Consular Officer, they qualify as a National Interest Exception (NIE) to Presidential Proclamation 10143 that suspended routine travel from the Schengen Area to the United States. The following travelers may apply to be considered for the NIE:

- Vital support of critical infrastructure sectors as defined by the Department of Homeland Security or critical infrastructure linked supply chain. The DHS-defined critical infrastructure sectors are:
  - chemical
  - commercial facilities
  - communications
  - critical manufacturing
  - dams
  - defense industrial base
  - emergency services
  - energy
  - financial services
  - food and agriculture
  - government facilities
  - healthcare and public health
  - information technology
  - nuclear reactors
  - transportation
  - water/wastewater systems

For more information on the DHS critical infrastructure sectors, please see <https://www.cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-sectors>.

**Attention:** Senior executives and managers traveling to observe operations, hold regular meetings with U.S. clients, and/or for routine operational travel will no longer be considered eligible for a National Interest Exception.

- **Students:** All students, and their dependents, traveling to the United States to:
  - o Pursue a full course of study per INA 101(a)(15)(F);
  - o Pursue a full course of study per INA 101(a)(15)(M); or
  - o Participate in an exchange program as a bona fide student.
- **Academics:** All exchange visitors and their dependents traveling to the United States under INA 101(a)(15)(J) in the following categories:
  - o Professors

- o Research Scholars
- o Short Term Scholars
- o Specialists

Note, certain other travelers may be eligible for a national interest exception for the following scenarios:

- Urgent Medical: Lifesaving medical treatment for the principal applicant and accompanying close family members.
- Public Health: Travel as a public health or healthcare professional or researcher to alleviate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, or to continue ongoing research in an area with substantial public health benefit.
- Humanitarian: Travel to the United States to provide care for a U.S. citizen, legal permanent resident, or other nonimmigrant-in-lawful-status close family member, to include alleviating the burden of care from a medical or other institution.
- Medical escorts, legal guardians, or other escorts required by an airline or legally required by a foreign medical or law enforcement entity.
- Information media representatives and journalists traveling on I visas.
- Derivative spouses and minor children in visa categories carrying eligibility for derivative status and whose principal applicant is currently in the United States or possessing a valid national interest exception.
- Athletes and their supporting staff should contact Customs and Border Protection (CBP) regarding their eligibility for a National Interest Exception.

While the Embassy and Consulates aim to process National Interest Exceptions (NIE) requests as soon as practicable, there is likely to be increased wait times due to substantial backlogs. Please allow up to **60 business days** to review your documents and qualifications. **The Embassy and Consulates cannot accept NIE requests for individuals who are currently physically present in the United States.** If you are currently in the United States and seek to depart and re-enter the United States at a later date, you should carefully consider your travel plans, understanding that there is no guarantee that you will be given a NIE to re-enter the United States within your expected travel dates.

### **Travelers with Valid Visas**

Travelers that already have valid visas are required to verify that they qualify for a National Interest Exception (NIE) before they are permitted to travel to the United States. **To do so, travelers must send the following documentation and information to the Embassy or Consulate where your visa was issued. Do NOT email multiple addresses or you will not receive a response. As noted above, the Embassy and Consulates cannot accept NIE requests for individuals who are currently physically present in the United States.**

**NOTE:** F and M visa holders with a valid I-20 do not need to be re-approved for each entry to the United States.

- Visa Issued in Milan: [usvisamilan@state.gov](mailto:usvisamilan@state.gov)
- Visa Issued in Rome: [RomeVisa@state.gov](mailto:RomeVisa@state.gov)
- Visa Issued in Florence: [VisaFlorence@state.gov](mailto:VisaFlorence@state.gov)
- Visa Issued in Naples: [NIVNaples@state.gov](mailto:NIVNaples@state.gov)

### **Please attach the following documentation**

- Photo/scan of your passport biographic page;

- Photo/scan of your valid U.S. visa;
- DS-2019 (for J visa holders); and
- If applicable, additional supporting documentation in English, such as a letter outlining your qualifications and travel purpose.

**Please include the following information**

- Name as it appears on passport:
- Current location (city, state/region, country):
- Date exited the United States:
- Reason exited the United States:
- Date of proposed re-entry to the United States:
- Reason for re-entry to the United States:
- Critical infrastructure Field per Department of Homeland Security(<https://www.cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-sectors>):
- Phone number of the traveler:
- Email of the traveler:

While the Embassy and Consulates aim to process NIE requests as soon as practicable, there is likely to be increased wait times due to substantial backlogs. Please allow up to **60 business days** to review your documents and qualifications. You will be notified by e-mail if you meet the NIE requirements. Print out that e-mail as confirmation of your excepted status.

**Travelers with ESTA**

Information about the status of ESTA registrations is provided through the [official ESTA website](#). **If your ESTA was cancelled but you fall in to one of the excepted travel statuses (see above for categories), you are required to verify that you qualify for a National Interest Exception (NIE) by emailing the Embassy or Consulate of your region of residence before traveling to the United States. Do NOT email multiple addresses or you will not receive a response. NOTE:** Tourism travel to the United States continues to be suspended.

- U.S. Consulate General Milan: [usvisamilan@state.gov](mailto:usvisamilan@state.gov) (regions of Friuli, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Trentino Alto Adige, Valle d'Aosta, and Veneto)
- U.S. Embassy Rome: [RomeVisa@state.gov](mailto:RomeVisa@state.gov) (regions of Abruzzo, Lazio, Sardegna, Umbria, Marche)
- U.S. Consulate General Florence: [VisaFlorence@state.gov](mailto:VisaFlorence@state.gov) (regions of Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, San Marino)
- U.S. Consulate General Naples: [NIVNaples@state.gov](mailto:NIVNaples@state.gov) (regions of Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, Sicily, Molise)

**Please attach the following documentation**

- Photo/scan of your passport biographic page;
- Photo/scan of your valid ESTA authorization; and
- Additional supporting documentation in English, such as a letter outlining your qualifications and travel purpose.

**Please include the following information**

- Name as it appears on passport:
- Current location (city, state/region, country):
- Date of proposed entry to the United States:

- Reason for entry to the United States:
- Critical infrastructure Field per Department of Homeland Security(<https://www.cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-sectors>):
- Phone number of the traveler:
- Email of the traveler:

While the Embassy and Consulates aim to process NIE requests as soon as practicable, there is likely to be increased wait times due to substantial backlogs. Please allow up to **60 business days** to review your documents and qualifications. You will be notified by e-mail if you meet the NIE requirements. Print out that e-mail as confirmation of your excepted status.

### **Travelers without a Visa**

Travelers that do not yet have their required visas and that they fall in to one of the excepted travel statuses (see above for categories) should apply for their visas as normal. Please visit <https://ais.usvisa-info.com/> or [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) to begin your application process. **NOTE:** Tourism travel to the United States continues to be suspended.

If you have an urgent need to travel, including after-sales, commissioning, and installation specialists and technicians, you may request an expedited appointment online at <https://ais.usvisa-info.com/>. In your request, please explain in detail your qualifications for a NIE and be prepared to provide supporting documentation via email, if requested by the Embassy or Consulate.

### **Limitations of NIE Travel**

Although travelers approved for a national interest exception for **economic and investor** related travel will be issued full validity visas, the exception is valid only for 30 days from the date of approval and is valid for a single entry to the United States. An individual who departs the United States and wishes to return must be re-assessed for a national interest exception.

**F and M visa holders with a valid I-20 do not need to be re-approved for each entry to the United States.** F and J travelers are reminded that they must still meet all Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) requirements.

*All individuals are reminded that their admission remains subject to a determination by Customs and Border Protection officers at ports of entry and that they may be subject to a 14-day quarantine upon arrival.*