

FAQs re: COVID-19 – Election Observation Roster

Re: Nomination/participation in Election Observation Missions (EOMs) organised by the EU and OSCE

Response to questions from members of the Election Observation Roster

1. Do I need to be vaccinated in order to be considered as an STO or LTO on an EOM?

In general, vaccination and other COVID-19 related requirements are in accordance with national public health requirements and travel advice in Ireland and in the host country, alongside conditions set out by the EU or OSCE. The EU and OSCE include information on COVID-19 in their calls for nomination of STOs and LTOs in relation to specific EOMs. Travel advice is also available on the Department's website - [Travel Advice - Department of Foreign Affairs \(dfa.ie\)](https://www.dfa.ie/travel-advice).

It is important to note that participation in election observation missions poses particular COVID-19 risks due to transit through international airport hubs, extensive in-country travel and interactions with observers from a significant number of other countries. This potentially exposes to Covid-19 not only election monitors, but also those with whom they interact with in the host country and when they return home.

It should also be noted that some host countries may require full vaccination of individuals prior to entering their country and that entry requirements for host countries may differ on a case-by-case basis.

The EU strongly encourages those with pre-existing/chronic illnesses who are at risk of developing serious health complications if exposed to COVID-19 to consider the risks before putting themselves forward for nomination to participate in an EOM.

2. Are all COVID-19 vaccinations valid?

Information on COVID-19 vaccines is available at the following link: [Safe COVID-19 vaccines for Europeans | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/europeans/safe-covid-19-vaccines)

3. What COVID-19 protections are in place during an EOM?

Both the OSCE and EU have implemented extra safety procedures with regard to COVID-19 such as social distancing, wearing of face masks and the use of PPE equipment if required. The EU and OSCE provide further information when issuing a call for observers and in pre-departure briefings.

4. Will the roster be extended due to the absence of mission opportunities during lockdown?

Changes to the lifetime of the roster have not been considered to date.

5. What EOMs are expected for the remainder of 2021?

On resuming nomination of volunteer election observers in October 2021, the Department circulated a call from the OSCE for STOs for the parliamentary elections in Kyrgyz Republic scheduled for 28 November 2021. Nine members of the Roster participated as short term observers (STOs).

The Department will consider any further EU and OSCE calls for LTOs and STOs on a case-by-case basis, on adjudication of duty of care concerns related to COVID-19. This will take into account the evolving nature of the public health pandemic.

6. What cover is provided in relation to COVID-19 under the travel insurance policy?

COVID-19 is treated as any other illness under the travel insurance policy.

7. Do I need to provide medical evidence that I am fit to travel and participate as an observer on an EOM?

As per previous requirements pre-pandemic, the OSCE and the EU may require a medical certificate in order to be considered for deployment on an EOM.

8. Do I need to arrange my own health insurance, covering COVID-19, to go on an EOM?

The Department does not provide health insurance for election observers. The travel insurance policy provides cover for those who become ill while travelling. Once you return home you are subject to public health care or, if applicable, care provided under your own private health insurance policy.

9. What happens if I display symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 on my return home from an EOM?

If you display symptoms or test positive you must adhere to government guidance in your country of residence, whether that be Ireland or elsewhere. Once you return home you are subject to public health care or, if applicable, care provided under your own private health insurance policy.

10. Will there be an additional allowance for COVID-19 testing or other costs incurred relating to COVID-19, or will this be taken from the standard €600 flat fee already in place for inoculations etc.?

Required COVID tests will be, in the first instance, covered under the €600 flat rate already in place for inoculations. Any excess amounts incurred for COVID testing will be allowable as an expense.

11. If I have COVID-19 symptoms or am a close contact of somebody who is infected with COVID-19 before I am due to depart for an EOM, what do I need to do?

You must adhere to the public health guidelines relating to COVID-19 in the country in which you reside. This may mean that you cannot participate in the EOM.

12. If I have COVID-19 symptoms or am a close contact of somebody who is infected with COVID-19 while on an EOM what do I need to do?

You must adhere to the public health guidelines relating to COVID-19 in the host country. This may require relevant tests and a period of quarantine in a location

determined by local authorities. As a result you may be required to delay your departure date. Accommodation or day-to-day expenses not covered by the OSCE or the EU can be submitted to the Department for consideration. As for any other unplanned eventuality, cover provided under the travel insurance policy will be applied.

13.What happens if I test positive for COVID-19 while on an EOM?

If you test positive for Covid-19 while deployed or are a close contact of an individual with COVID-19, you must adhere to the host country's public health guidelines relating to COVID-19.

As for any other illness, cover provided under the travel insurance policy will be applied. The EU and OSCE will make every effort to provide advice and assistance where possible. In addition, the Department may be able to offer consular assistance for Irish citizens. However, where Ireland does not maintain a resident diplomatic mission or embassy it may be more challenging to provide consular assistance. It is important to note that many health systems around the world are under pressure due to COVID-19.

14.Will there be a reserve list for EOMs in the event that selected roster members are unable to participate due to Covid-19?

This is a matter for the EU or OSCE organising the EOM.