

July, 2024

Dear Israeli ESRF users,

Below is a summary of the main points discussed in my meeting last month with Dr Joanne McCarthy, head of ESRF user office, and the two directors of research at the ESRF, Dr Gema Martinez Criado and Dr Michael Krisch:

1. The ESRF management is aware that the SAP Concur system for travel arrangements is problematic and unfriendly. They have received many complaints about it, not only from Israeli users. The users should contact the Travel Office (traveloff@esrf.fr) directly to discuss alternative solutions if the solutions proposed in the online booking tool cannot be used (e.g., arrival late in Geneva). The ESRF recommends that users contacts the Travel Office first to request a particular flight if it is known or to see what alternative flights can be offered. If the full cost is approved, the Travel Office can request the booking directly from the ESRF Travel Agency which avoids the user having to pay up-front for the flight. Otherwise the user will be asked to purchase the ticket and the ESRF will pay up to an amount according to the Travel Rules.
2. The users should specify all expected expenses in their travel request, including ground transport from Lyon/Geneva airports and the ESRF. Time will be saved if acceptable options have first been discussed with the Travel Office before adding them to the travel request.
3. Rental cars. The ESRF does not pay for rental cars according to the travel rules but in cases of no other way to reach the ESRF, the ESRF will pay for up to the equivalent of a public transport ticket or an “unauthorized private car” rate per reimbursed user who travels in the rental car. Again, please contact the Travel Office before submitting the travel request to discuss this and see if a special agreement can be made on a case-by-case basis.
4. Due to the tense situation in the middle east, in the case where a user is stranded at the ESRF due to the cancellation of the return flight that is a direct result of an escalation of the geopolitical situation in Israel (e.g., the airline pulls out of Israel), the ESRF has generously agreed to cover the costs of extra nights at the guesthouse and to cover the cost of a return flight with another available airline such as LY.
5. Given the limited and often disrupted travel options due to the current situation, the ESRF encourages a maximum remote use of the facility whenever this is possible. This would be mainly exploitable for MX experiments where remote access is well adapted and the number of travelling users could be limited to 1 or 2 (the ESRF has been made aware that some Israeli users are opposed to this request and make efforts to send the maximum allowed number of students to benefit from the educational opportunity). Again, special agreements may be reached on a case-by-case basis that may allow a higher level of financial support per user if fewer users are travelling.
6. Israeli users should inform beamline scientists as early as possible of unavailable dates and preferred dates for their experiments, considering the Jewish holidays. Whenever possible, the user should try to agree with the beamline managers on dates that are not near to Jewish holidays so that more travel options are available. The beamline managers will do their best to take this into account although it is not always possible due to other scheduling constraints

such as when certain setups are available and limitations of other users of that beamline.

The main message is that the ESRF has to respect its travel rules as for all users, but if the users contact the Travel Office, alternative solutions can be discussed and sometimes special agreements can be made on a case-by-case basis for a particular travel.

With best regards,

Yuval Golan, Chairperson

The Synchrotron Committee of the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities

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