



## **Council's failure to harmonise cross-border travel restrictions puts millions of travel and tourism jobs at risk**

**Brussels and Geneva, 13 October 2020:** Following the adoption today by European Affairs Ministers of a Council Recommendation on travel restrictions, the aviation sector has branded it a failure and issued a stark warning of the potential consequences.

The *Council recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic*, formally [approved this morning](#), sets out some guidance to Member States. Yet, it falls far short of what it was supposed to deliver: encouraging a restart of travel through effective coordination and proportionate, predictable and non-discriminatory measures.

Aviation bodies ACI EUROPE, Airlines for Europe (A4E) and IATA have strongly [pushed for a common pre-departure COVID-19 testing framework](#) to replace quarantines for passengers travelling from high risk areas, in order to re-establish freedom of movement in Europe. The current lack of coordination between Member States has killed the nascent recovery of travel and tourism, thus jeopardising millions of jobs associated with the sector.

Specifically, the Recommendation:

- Does not propose to replace quarantines by testing, effectively meaning borders remain closed.
- Leaves the door open for Member States to refuse entry to citizens travelling from other Member States and also fails to harmonise the rules applicable for cross-border and domestic travel.
- Conflicts with the principle of the EC Communication of 13 May that travel restrictions should be lifted between areas that have equivalent (“sufficiently similar”) epidemiological situations.
- Ignores the ECDC opinion that travel restrictions - and in particular quarantines - are of “questionable effectiveness” when community transmission is on-going - which is currently the case across most of Europe.
- Does not create a sufficient window of certainty for travellers, as Member States have only committed to publishing information on new measures 24 hours prior to their entry into force, as opposed to the five days the Commission had proposed.

These shortcomings are a political failure. The inability of the Council to go beyond shallow coordination and establish a truly harmonised and workable framework is now beyond any doubt.

Expectations for an effective solution now rest with the European Commission, which has charged EASA (European Union Aviation Safety Agency) and ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control) with the development of an EU Testing Protocol for Travel.

ACI EUROPE, IATA and A4E support the Testing Protocol initiative, which presents an opportunity to address the risk of importation of cases from high-risk areas to low-risk areas far more effectively than quarantine, and end the disastrous patchwork of responses between individual Member States.

Under the mandate given to them by the European Commission, EASA and the ECDC can now move forward with the framework needed to reverse the continued economic blows suffered by Europe as a result of a continued lack of a coordinated response and leadership from the European Council.

Millions of workers in the transport and tourism sectors need the European Union to take the lead in not only supporting its economic recovery from COVID-19 - but also to defend the right to freedom of movement of EU citizens, a core European principle.

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**Note to editors:**

- **ACI EUROPE (Airports Council International)** is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 500 airports in 46 European countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe: 2.5 billion passengers, 20.7 million tonnes of freight and 25.7 million aircraft movements in 2019. In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.
- **Airlines for Europe (A4E)** is Europe's largest airline association, based in Brussels. The organisation advocates on behalf of its 16 airline group members to help shape EU aviation policy to the benefit of consumers, ensuring a continued safe and competitive air transport market. Follow us on Twitter @A4Europe.
- **IATA (International Air Transport Association)** represents some 290 airlines comprising 82% of global air traffic. You can follow IATA at <https://twitter.com/iata> for announcements, policy positions, and other useful industry information.

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