

Open letter
to
Ms. Ursula von der Leyen,
President,
European Commission

Signed by



eu travel tech



Brussels, 17 September 2020

Dear President von der Leyen,

The undersigned associations, representing the travel and tourism sectors and their workers, are fully supportive of the Commission's proposed EU coordination framework for travel restrictions.

This framework is a much-needed step in the right direction, providing common criteria for fully aligned risk assessments and the related mapping of EU/EEA countries and the UK.

We urgently need this framework to be endorsed and fully implemented by all European States.

However, it appears that many Member States have reservations and may be reluctant to undertake effective coordination. This is raising alarm across our sectors, as failure to fully implement the Commission's proposal would kill any chances of a potential recovery. This directly threatens the livelihoods of more than 27 million Europeans¹ who rely on the jobs created by airlines, airports, railways, ground handlers, caterers, travel retailers, air navigation service providers, tour operators, hotels, restaurants, cafes, travel agents, road transport operators and logistics services, camp sites, holiday parks, taxi operators, tourism boards and authorities and all their associated supply chains. The travel and tourism sector accounts for more than 10%² of European GDP and has a strong multiplier effect. What is actually at stake is the recovery of Europe and European economies.

This chaotic situation requires your immediate personal involvement, as President of the European Commission. We are thus urging you **make this issue a top priority and calling on you to address this issue directly with the Heads of State and Government**.

Beyond the huge economic and human costs involved, the freedom of movement of people and the principle of non-discrimination – the core pillars and essential purpose ("raison d'être") of the European project – are at risk.

While some national lockdowns and travel restrictions remain lifted within national borders, cross-border travel within the EU/Schengen area continues to be treated differently and without adequate justification. Extreme travel restrictions – in particular quarantines – are anything but risk-based. They are not an effective way to fight the epidemic, and the ECDC formally advises States **against** such restrictions. Along with active calls to avoid travelling abroad within Europe, this means that Governments have demonised our industries and what is an integral part of the European way of life. This needs to stop.

We are therefore also urging you **to ensure that the Commission takes the lead in the development of an EU Testing Protocol for travel** and its implementation to avoid quarantines and re-open borders.

The Commission must urgently bring together States, industry and medical expertise to develop such a Protocol. This is the only way to move towards a proper risk-based approach. This would bring the travel and tourism sectors in line with what is being done for all other sectors in terms of risk management, for which States are not following a zero-risk strategy.
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¹ 2018 UNWTO figure

² Ibid

An EU Testing Protocol would allow the removal of (or at least considerably reduce) quarantines for travellers coming from red/grey areas as per the proposed Commission common criteria and mapping. It is thus instrumental in re-establishing the free movement of people, ending current discriminations and restoring the essential functionality of the Single Market.

We stand ready to immediately assist and work with the Commission and Member States on this and would like to discuss the way forward with you at your earliest convenience.

The travel and tourism sector is by far the most heavily impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. The current situation amounts to an existential threat for many of our companies and our employees, who for years have contributed to making the ideals and objectives of a united Europe a reality. We desperately need to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

We hope the EU will not let us down.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Roland Maurhofer
Chairman
Airline Catering Association
(ACA)



Mr Jost Lammers
President
Airports Council International
(ACI EUROPE)



Mr Rafal Milczarski
President
Airlines International
Representation in Europe
(AIRE)



Dr. Erich Forster
President
Alliance of Rail New Entrants
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pp **Mr Steven Allen**
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Mr Andrew Kelly
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Mr Luís Araújo
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Mr Frank Moreels
President
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Mr Mario Bodini
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Mr Nigel Keal
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