



Brussels, 31 July 2020

Ms Sophie Wilmès
Prime Minister
16, Rue de la Loi
1000 Brussels
BELGIUM

*CC : Mr François Bellot, Ministre de la Mobilité, chargé de skeyes et de la Société nationale des chemins de fer belges
Ms Maggie De Block, Ministre des Affaires sociales et de la Santé publique, et de l'Asile et la Migration
Mr Pieter De Crem, Ministre de la Sécurité et de l'Intérieur, chargé du Commerce extérieur
Ms Ursula von der Leyen, President, European Commission
Ms Adina Vălean, Commissioner, Transport
Ms Ylva Johansson, Commissioner, Home Affairs
Ms Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner, Health and Food Safety*

Dear Prime Minister,

As the trade associations representing Europe's airports and airlines, we are writing to express our deepest concerns over the re-introduction of travel restrictions within parts of the area comprising the EU/Schengen and the UK.

While EU & Schengen States have generally followed the common approach proposed by the European Commission last June to lift internal border controls and related travel restrictions that were imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the latest developments have motivated a number of States to re-instate travel restrictions vis-à-vis selected countries.

While the States concerned have justified these new restrictions by the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the countries they are targeting, we note that such actions are not consistent with the advice and recommendations of the ECDC and WHO.

.../...

In its latest Risk Assessment specifically addressing “*The resurgence of reported cases of COVID-19 in the EU/EEA, the UK and EU candidate and potential candidate countries*”¹, the ECDC expressly states that it does not consider travel restrictions within and to the Schengen as an efficient way to reduce transmissions since community transmission is already taking place in the EU/EEA.

The ECDC also considers that in this phase of the epidemic, imported cases are likely to represent a negligible minority of the cases reported in EU/EEA countries and the UK.

Furthermore, we note that these restrictions are different in scope and content. They also have been established based on different criteria. This is hampering consumer confidence over air travel - a clear objective recognised and set by EU Transport Ministers as per their conclusions of 24 July 2020.

Coming at the height of the peak Summer season for tourism and travel industries, these restrictions are slowing down the recovery in air traffic and the restoration of air connectivity. They are badly hurting the European economy – and threatening livelihoods.

On the basis of the above, the European aviation sector is hereby urging EU/Schengen States and the UK to reconsider restrictions to travel that have been imposed between them – especially quarantines. Given the above-mentioned advice given by the ECDC, we fail to see any valid science-based and proportionate justification for such restrictions from a health policy perspective.

In addition, renewed efforts must therefore be urgently put into:

1. Coordinating effectively and aligning responses to the evolving epidemiological situation at EU level and in close cooperation with the UK.

This issue must be addressed urgently and jointly by home affairs, transport and health ministers and the European Commission. Every single day counts – this cannot wait the end of Summer breaks.

2. Re-enforcing the principle of risk-based and proportional measures (i.e. localising restrictions – not blanket country bans, quarantine as a very last resort) following ECDC guidance.
3. Managing impacts on travel within the area comprising the EU/Schengen and the UK.
4. Harmonising implementation of EASA/ECDC Aviation Health Safety Protocol.
5. Renewing effort and priority to be given to ensure the interoperability of contact tracing apps developed by States.

.../...

¹ ECDC Risk Assessment, 2 July 2020 : <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/rapid-risk-assessment-resurgence-reported-cases-covid-19>

This is a fundamental element in the strategy to fight the pandemic and limit the risk and scope of further outbreaks. Yet, none of the existing contact tracing apps are interoperable – and it is difficult to understand why no tangible progress has been made.

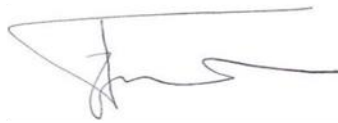
6. Informing the public accordingly and in close cooperation with the travel and tourism industries.

We remain at your disposal.

Yours sincerely,



Olivier Jankovec
Director General
ACI EUROPE



Thomas Reynaert
Managing Director
A4E



Rafael Schwartzman
Regional Vice-President
IATA Europe

About ACI EUROPE (Airports Council International)

ACI EUROPE is 'the Voice of Europe's airports', representing more than 500 airports in 46 countries. ACI EUROPE's members account for over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming 2.4 billion passengers and handling 21.2 million tons of freight. ACI EUROPE's member airports committed in 2019 to achieve Net Zero CO2 emissions for operations under their control by 2050.

About A4E (Airlines for Europe)

Launched in 2016, Airlines for Europe (A4E) is Europe's largest airline association, based in Brussels. The organisation advocates on behalf of its members to help shape EU aviation policy to the benefit of consumers, ensuring a continued safe and competitive air transport market. With more than 720 million passengers carried each year, A4E members account for more than 70 per cent of the continent's journeys, operating more than 3,000 aircraft and generating more than EUR 130 billion in annual turnover. Members with air cargo and mail activities transport more than 5 million tons of goods each year to more than 360 destinations either by freighters or passenger aircraft. Current members include Aegean, airBaltic, Air France-KLM Group, Cargolux, easyJet, Finnair, Icelandair, International Airlines Group (IAG), Jet2.com, Lufthansa Group, Norwegian, Ryanair Holdings, Smartwings, TAP Air Portugal, TUI and Volotea. In 2019, A4E was named "Airline & Aviation Business Development Organisation of the Year" by International Transport News. Follow us on Twitter @A4Europe.

About IATA (International Air Transport Association)

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world's airlines, representing some 290 airlines or 82% of total air traffic. We support many areas of aviation activity and help formulate industry policy on critical aviation issues.