

“It’s about saving both lives and livelihoods” says ACI EUROPE, as Rome Airport reveals robust results for COVID-19 tested flights

ACI EUROPE

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Brussels, 2 February 2021: At a webinar organised today by ACI EUROPE, Aeroporti di Roma¹ presented the impressive results of the COVID-19 tested flights pilot conducted at Rome-Fiumicino airport. The trials have been taking place since 8 December, in partnership with Alitalia and Delta Airlines and in close cooperation with and the support of the Italian and US authorities.

The webinar took place as the EU is further tightening travel restrictions in response to the new COVID-19 variants and significant delays in the rollout of vaccination across the bloc. This results in a blanket ban on non-essential travel both within most of the EU and externally, with testing in combination with quarantines – and applied without harmonisation – essentially becoming the baseline for essential international travel.

Setting the scene for the event, Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE warned that the acute shortage of vaccination doses in the EU and the resulting delays in mass vaccination programmes across EU States will have dire consequences for airports, airlines and tourism:

“Airports have essentially written off the coming months, but they desperately need to see a recovery in passenger traffic by the Summer. With the vaccination drive across the EU in disarray, this is now being questioned. We risk seeing tight restrictions and bans on travel remaining in place beyond the Summer – including for intra-European travel.”

Jankovec was quick to highlight 2 consequences:

- The urgent need for more financial support to allow airports to weather the coming months².
- The need for the EU to work with the aviation and tourism sectors to chart the way out of travel bans and other tight restrictions towards equally effective but less damaging travel conditions.

Jankovec said *“Moving from the current travel bans and other harsh restrictions to an evolving regime of travel conditions, which allow the gradual restoration of the free movement of people, is about saving both lives and livelihoods. This obviously requires more visibility on the extent to which the new COVID-19 variants are present in Europe and the extent to which they may already be driving community transmission. That, along with more predictability and visibility over the rollout of vaccination should allow us to look at how we can move ahead based on proper risk assessments and data driven approaches.”*

¹ Aeroporti di Roma operates both Rome-Fiumicino and Roma-Ciampino airports. In 2020, these airports welcomed 11 million passengers, down from 49 million in 2019.

² “Airports & tourism organisations urge revision of ‘wholly inadequate’ state aid rules, as new forecast shows industries in systemic collapse” - [link](#)

Testing air travellers is bound to be an important part of that equation. The testing pilots conducted by Aeroporti di Roma on the Rome-Fiumicino-New York-JFK and Rome-Fiumicino-Atlanta routes have delivered both reassuring and encouraging results. They confirm previous assessments that the transmission and importation risks involved with air travel can be controlled and mitigated through testing.

The headline results show that during the trial phase, only **5 passengers out of 3,824** proved COVID-19 positive – an overall positivity rate of just **0.13%**. These figures therefore show that these COVID-19 tested flights had no impact on the prevalence of the virus in Italy, pointing to testing for air travel as an effective risk control measure without the need to resort to quarantines. The full results of the trial can be accessed [here](#).

Marco Troncone, CEO Aeroporti di Roma, said: "*The excellent results obtained so far from the **Covid-Tested flights** trial carried out by Aeroporti di Roma confirm the **health effectiveness** of the protocol: in fact, thanks to a pre-departure control on 100% of passengers, it allows a radical reduction in the risk of virus importation, in particular as an alternative to the measure of trust-based isolation.*

*"The protocol we are currently trialling, focussing on the creation of international 'clean corridors', is proving to be fully suitable to **support in maximum safety** the much awaited recovery of air traffic and the relaunch of international connectivity. This is why we are working to obtain an extension of the experimental phase beyond the deadline of February 15 and to get more airlines, airports and institutions involved to promote **effective, sustainable and homogeneous protocols across Europe**.*

"Aeroporti di Roma is also working to implement an effective digitalisation of processes. We're developing a Travel Health Portal and implementing health pass solutions that can help ensure a convenient and reliable handling of the certificates of negativity before departure, and allow for valid contact-tracing support."

ACI EUROPE recently released its position and key requirements for effective health certification for air travel purposes. The paper can be found [here](#).

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*ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over **500 airports** in 45 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.*