

Mr Sebastian Kurz
Federal Chancellor of Austria
Ballhausplatz, 2
1010 Vienna
AUSTRIA

CC: Ms Leonore Gewessler, Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology
Mr Wolfgang Mückstein, Federal Minister, Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection

Brussels, 21 April 2021

Dear Chancellor,

Re: Digital Green Certificate Preparedness and air travel resumption

As the trade associations representing Europe's airlines and airports, we are writing to you following the European Commission's 17 March adoption of a proposal for an *EU Regulation on a framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of interoperable certificates on vaccination, testing and recovery to facilitate free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic (Digital Green Certificate)*.

We are of course fully supportive of this proposal, as we consider common, interoperable, secure and GDPR-compliant health certificates to be an essential tool to facilitate the free movement of European citizens within the EU/EEA and Switzerland through the easing and ultimately lifting of current travel restrictions. This would in turn contribute to the recovery of the travel and tourism sector.

European aviation remains one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. Passenger traffic across the EU/EEA/Swiss airport network was down by 89% in March 2021 compared to March 2019¹, with initial data for April standing at 87%². Similarly, air connectivity keeps declining, with Europe having lost over 8,500 air routes this month, further down from 6,663 air routes lost last January.

As the majority of our members are now facing acute business continuity issues, it is crucial that air traffic is restarted in time for the peak summer months – along with the reopening of the travel and tourism sectors. This would also allow Europeans to travel abroad for their holidays, and finally reconnect with their family, their culture and friends across our continent.

The expected acceleration of the rollout of the vaccines across the EU/EEA and Switzerland by June should allow travel restrictions to be eased significantly. In this regard, the example of how vaccination has facilitated a decisive improvement in the epidemiological situation in other countries such as the UK and Israel is indeed very encouraging.

On this basis, we are both relieved and encouraged by the fact that the legislative process for the proposed EU Regulation is being fast tracked in the European Parliament and in the Council allowing for a final adoption in June.

However, while getting the EU Regulation approved and entering into force is an essential prerequisite, it will not – per se – ensure that Digital Green Certificates are implemented or become operational.

Significant preparatory work needs to be done at national level by all concerned States, including Austria, so that these Digital Green Certificates can effectively be issued and accepted in accordance with the EU Regulation and its implementing acts defining their technical specifications by the end of June.

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¹ Source: ACI EUROPE

² Source: ACI EUROPE

We currently have no visibility on this work, including the planning involved and related actions. Yet, it is essential for our sector that we are able to establish as early as possible the state of readiness of each EU/EEA country and Switzerland.

We would therefore be grateful if you could ensure that Austria:

- Actively participates in the technical discussions pertaining to the Digital Green Certificate, via the eHealth Network and its subgroups;
- Takes all necessary steps for an effective and timely planning and execution of all actions needed from the technical, administrative and legal point of view to be able to effectively start issuing Digital Green Certificates by the end of the legislative procedure in June at the latest.
- Could inform us of the date by which you plan to start issuing Digital Green Certificates.

In addition to the above, we would also like to point to the need to ensure an effective and early planning and coordination between all EU/EEA States and Switzerland over the conditions and criteria for the easing of travel restrictions both within the EU/EEA/Switzerland and externally. In this regard, please find attached our joint position: *"Preparing for Summer 2021 – an EU Roadmap to Restore Air Travel"*, which we hope will be useful.

We remain at your disposal for any further information and look forward to your feedback.

Yours sincerely,



Thomas Reynaert
Managing Director
Airlines for Europe
(A4E)



Olivier Jankovec
Director General
Airports Council International
(ACI EUROPE)



Montserrat Barriga
Director General
European Regions Airline
Association (ERA)

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.

About ACI EUROPE (Airports Council International)

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 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe. In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.

About European Regions Airline (ERA)

Founded in 1980, European Regions Airline Association (ERA) is a non-profit trade association representing over 60 airlines and around 150 companies involved in European air transport and is the only association representing the entire spectrum of companies involved in European aviation. The association promotes the interests of European airlines by lobbying European regulatory bodies on policy matters, promoting the social and economic importance of air transport and its environmental commitments.