



Transport and tourism associations reiterate their call for EU Member States to align their travel rules to avoid patchwork

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- *Passengers and business alike need a stable and coherent European framework to restart travelling and safely prepare for spring.*

In the last few weeks, Europe has seen a surge in COVID cases and the spread of the latest and highly-transmittable variant, Omicron. Whilst the European Commission announced in December 2021¹ that the EU Digital COVID Certificate (DCC) would be valid for nine months without a booster shot, several EU countries – including France, Italy, Denmark and Malta – decided to shorten the validity of vaccination passes for national use to seven or three months. A number of countries have also introduced additional testing requirements that apply to vaccinated/recovered EU travellers, going against the current Council Recommendations.²

Transport and tourism associations are very concerned at this emerging new patchwork of rules across Europe. The industry supports the European Commission according to which a harmonised validity period for the DCC “is a necessity for safe free movement and EU level co-ordination”. Although the Commission recommends EU Member States apply the same DCC validity period for intra-EU travel and national level, the emerging discrepancies are worrying. Equally, Member States should align with the Council Recommendations as they are agreed and updated from time to time, so that travel between Member States is possible under equal conditions across the EU at all times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the biggest global recession since the Second World War. Data³ shows EU economic underperformance from 2019–present relative to the United States and China, with forecasts confirming recovery is unlikely before 2023. Southern European countries have been particularly affected and without doubt, the travel and tourism sectors have been hit harder than others.

Although the pandemic has been raging for the last two years, several EU Member States continue to act unilaterally, adopting a different DCC validity period, as well as diverging rules regarding children and young adults below 18 years old. This will have a direct impact on families wanting to travel for the winter holidays and later on this spring.

This inconsistency in travel restrictions across the EU directly impinges on individual passengers and businesses to schedule future trips and holiday bookings. The transport and tourism industry still sees booking rates at least 30 per cent below 2021 levels.

Further to this, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control’s (ECDC) most recent guidance to reduce ongoing transmission has focussed on strengthening non-

pharmaceutical interventions; including avoiding large public or private gatherings, extended use of face masks, reduced contacts between groups of individuals in social or work settings, teleworking, and reduced inter-household mixing – it has not included travel restrictions. The World Health Organisation (WHO) also underlines the failure of travel restrictions to limit international spread of Omicron and points out the “ineffectiveness of such measures over time”.⁴

The emergence of non-co-ordinated travel restrictions across the EU jeopardises the DCC’s objective – to support safe and free movement across the EU. We urge governments to stop deviating from this consistent approach and ensure a clear and harmonised process at a European level.

The travel and tourism sectors have already suffered greatly at the hands of the pandemic, with economic consequences set to continue for years to come. Now more than ever, co-ordination between national governments to provide clear, safe and consistent rules is needed, to support traveller confidence, ‘save’ the summer season and ultimately ensure economic recovery.

###ENDS###

Notes to Editor:

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6837.

² Provision 17aa of Council Recommendation (EU) 2020/1475 on free movement.

³ European Economic Forecast. Autumn 2021 (11 November 2021).

⁴ [Statement on the tenth meeting of the International Health Regulations \(2005\) Emergency Committee regarding the coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) pandemic.](#)

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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 in 2019, A4E members account for more than 70 per cent of the continent’s journeys. Members with air cargo and mail activities transport more than 5 million tons of goods each year to more than 360 destinations.

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. Air transport supports 13.5 million jobs, generating €886 billion in European economic activity (4.4% of GDP). 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 Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)

CLIA is the world's largest cruise industry trade association and the leading authority of the global cruise community. On behalf of its members, affiliates and partners, the organization supports policies and practices that foster a secure, healthy, and sustainable cruise ship environment, promoting positive travel experiences for the more than 30 million passengers who have cruised annually. The CLIA community includes the world's most prestigious ocean, river, and specialty cruise lines; a highly trained and certified travel agent community; and a widespread network of stakeholders, including ports & destinations, ship development, suppliers, and business services. CLIA represents more than 90% of the world’s ocean-going cruise capacity, as well as nearly 60,000 travel agents and agencies from around the world. For more information on CLIA in

Europe, please visit <https://europe.cruising.org/>

ECTAA is the European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Association. It represents a sector of some 70,000 travel agents and tour operators in Europe, which provide consultancy and sell transport, accommodation, leisure and other tourism services as well as combined products to leisure and business customers. For more information, please consult www.ectaa.eu

Founded in 1980, **European Regions Airline Association (ERA)** is a non-profit trade association representing around 58 airlines and 136 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.**

ETOA is the trade association for better tourism in Europe. We work with policymakers to enable a fair and sustainable business environment, so that Europe remains competitive and appealing for visitors and residents. With over 1,200 members serving 63 origin markets, we are a powerful voice at local, national and European levels. Our members include tour and online operators, intermediaries and wholesalers, European tourist boards, hotels, attractions, technology companies and other tourism service providers ranging in size from global brands to local independent businesses. We are connected with over 30,000 industry professionals across our social media channels.

The **European Travel Retail Confederation (ETRC)** is an industry association for the duty free and travel retail industry in Europe, serving the industry and its members to help create the right environment to allow the industry to achieve its potential and protect it when challenges arise. ETRC is composed of national and regional affiliated trade associations representing over 200 European companies, Tax Free World Association (TFWA) representing 500 brand companies, and direct corporate membership from individual companies working in the duty free and travel retail trade across Europe and beyond. For more information about the organisation, please see our website – www.etr.org

eu travel tech represents the interests of travel technology companies. eu travel tech uses its position at the centre of the travel and tourism sector to promote a consumer-driven, innovative and competitive industry that is transparent and sustainable. Our membership* spans Global Distribution Systems (GDSs), Online Travel Agencies (OTA), Travel Management Companies in business travel (TMCs) and metasearch sites.

*Travel tech's members include Amadeus, Booking.com, eDreams ODIGEO, Expedia Group, Skyscanner and Travelport. Associate members include American Express GBT, etraveli Group, Trainline and Tripadvisor. Strategic Partners include CWT, Travelgenio and Travix.