



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 06.01.2021
C(2021) 64 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond {COM(2020)550 final}.

The Communication, together with the accompanying three guidelines and a recommendation, aimed at helping EU countries gradually lift travel restrictions, at allowing tourism businesses to reopen and at ensuring that people in Europe could benefit from tourism activities after months of confinement while respecting necessary health precautions.

The Commission is pleased that the Camera Deputaților shares its views and supports the objectives and coordinated approach to tourism and transport in particular to support the sustainability of the EU's valuable tourism ecosystem.

The Commission has taken due note of the views expressed by the Camera Deputaților. The views will contribute to the work on a sustainable, innovative and resilient European tourism ecosystem in the context of a European agenda for tourism 2050, announced in the Communication.

The European tourism sector is facing enormous investment challenges in terms of its sustainable recovery and the green and digital transition, which is a precondition for its long-term competitiveness and maintaining Europe as world number one destination for visitors. Ideas for advancing with this dual transition were at the centre of the European Tourism Convention held by the Commission on 12 October 2020. On this occasion, the Commission reiterated the ambition for effective investments and reforms relating to the tourism ecosystem under the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the national plans the Member States are currently preparing. On 17 September 2020, the Commission issued

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strategic guidance for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility in the framework of its 2021 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy. In the seven flagship projects that the Commission encourages Member States to consider in their national recovery plans, they may indeed steer investments and reforms to build resilience and spur the green and digital transformation of the tourism ecosystem.

In response to the more technical comments in the Opinion, the Commission would like to refer to the attached annex.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Thierry Breton
Member of the Commission*

Annex

The Commission has carefully considered the points raised by the Camera Deputaţilor in its Opinion and would like to offer the following observations grouped by topics.

Points 1 and 2 – Coordinated and integrated approach to tourism and transport

The sector's digital and green transition and resilience remain at the core of the Commission's policy and actions on EU tourism and recovery efforts. This includes, among others, increasing the innovation and digitalisation capacity of tourism small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), improving digital skills, supporting public-private partnerships in data management as part of smart specialisation in industrial modernisation, fostering and promoting smart tourism at destination level and supporting intelligence about the evolution of new business models of the platform economy in tourism. These priorities are reflected in the EU programmes for the Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (COSME), the 2020 Work Programme, the Commission's proposal for the reinforced Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and the Recovery Instrument. They were also in the focus of discussions at the recent European Tourism Convention to which the Romanian government kindly provided its written statement¹.

The transition towards green, more responsible and sustainable forms of travel and tourism contributes to the objectives of the European Green Deal and should guide the recovery and the long-term agenda for tourism businesses and destinations. EU programmes and funds under the EU budget 2021-2027 will support this transition. Commitment is necessary at all levels, and the Commission will work together with Member States with concrete actions towards the transition and sustainable growth of European tourism.

Points 3 and 4 – Restrictions on free movement

Restoring the Single Market and ensuring its full functioning and the freedom of movement of people and goods has been at the core of the Commission's efforts in the wake of this crisis. The Commission continues to work closely with Member States in face of the remaining restrictions on free movement within the EU. Regular exchanges with the relevant Member States authorities and Commission services are taking place to ensure coordination. In this context, the Commission repeatedly emphasises the importance of ensuring non-discrimination both among Member States as well as among citizens. In particular, there should be no discrimination based on nationality.

As mentioned in [the Communication on short-term EU health preparedness for COVID-19 outbreaks](#)², targeted and localised non-medical countermeasures, informed by research and evidence, are preferable to blanked restrictions to and from entire Member States. Local or regional restrictions inside the territories of a Member State, including restrictions on travel to and from these areas or regions imposed by the health

¹ https://tourism-convention.eu/media/lixjnjl/rom_ministerial-written-statement_ro.pdf

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication_-_short-term_eu_health_preparedness.pdf

authorities, need not necessarily result in restrictions on travel to and from other parts of that Member State.

On 11 June, the Commission adopted a Communication in which it strongly encouraged Member States to finalise the process of lifting the internal border controls within the EU by 15 June 2020. Most Member States have since then done so. However, at the same time restrictions to free movement have persisted and, in some Member States, have even been reinforced. This is why the Council adopted on 13 October 2020, on a proposal by the Commission, a Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This Recommendation builds on two very important principles of free movement and of EU law: the principles of proportionality and non-discrimination. These principles guide any measures adopted by Member States. The Recommendation sets out a coordinated approach on four points:

- 1) the introduction of common criteria for Member States when deciding whether to introduce restrictions to free movement. The common criteria take into account: the number of new cases of infections with the virus; the percentage of positive tests, compared to the total of tests carried out in a Member State; the number of tests carried out.
- 2) a common colour code should be used across the Union to provide clarity for citizens and businesses;
- 3) the common approach should be established when dealing with travellers coming from areas deemed to be at higher risk;
- 4) the need to be provide a clear, comprehensive and timely information to the public. Member States should also inform each other and the Commission of any upcoming restriction, on a weekly basis. This information should also be regularly provided to the Commission for publication on the 'Re-open EU' web platform, which already contains valuable information.

The Recommendation does not propose any new restrictions or encourage Member States to adopt measures that so far have refrained from imposing restrictions to free movement. However, the decision to introduce restrictions to free movement remains the responsibility of Member States, which have to comply with EU law.

Point 5 - Safe travel

To ensure travel and tourism function safely especially for cross border services, the Commission issued as part of the tourism and transport package on 13 May 2020 [Guidelines on the progressive restoration of transport services and connectivity](#), setting out general principles for the safe and gradual restoration of passenger transport by air, rail, road and waterways. Furthermore, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Air Safety Agency (EASA), the European Railways Agency (ERA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) have issued guidance on the health-safe operations, based on solid scientific evidence. Since the reopening of

EU internal borders, the Commission has been publishing the list of measures in place on the Reopen-EU website.

For aviation, the updated version of the [EASA-ECDC Aviation Health Safety Protocol](#) provides operational guidelines for the management of air passengers and aviation personnel in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, including health screening measures, hygiene measures and the management of passengers and aviation personnel.

In addition, the Commission, together with EASA, is following closely the implementation of these guidelines amongst Member States via a survey. EASA also issued a charter where actors are engaged to apply EASA-ECDC guidelines, to be signed by airlines and airport operators and, soon, by competent authorities of Member States.

EASA has also issued a new Safety Information Bulletin EASA [SIB 2020-02R5](#) recommending the implementation of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) CART report (also known as the [CART Take Off guidelines](#)) as a minimum. Most of the recommendations issued by ICAO are laid down in the EASA-ECDC Aviation Health Safety Protocol with more details. Finally, the SIB is highlighting the importance of harmonisation to support safe travelling and the traffic growth.

Moreover, two Safety Directives, [2020-03](#) and [2020-04](#), issued on June 25, 2020 mandate all operators flying from or to the EU, to fully clean and disinfect aircraft at least once every 24 hours, or more frequently if deemed necessary, on the basis of the operator's risk assessment. Aircraft used for long haul flights need to be disinfected before each flight operation. The Safety Directives apply to both European and non-European carriers.

Regarding the railways, following EASA's example ERA and ECDC have agreed on a [Rail protocol](#) containing recommendations to the rail sector for proper reaction to the Covid-19 crisis. The protocol advises, in particular, rail service operators and station managers on how to train staff, inform passengers and otherwise ensure safe and healthy rail journeys during the pandemic. Specific attention is paid to distancing and protection, hygiene measures and passenger tracking and tracing.

For cruise tourism, EMSA and ECDC have developed [guidance for the gradual resumption of cruise ship voyages](#) in the European Union in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance provides a holistic framework covering both the ship and the port angle while promoting close cooperation between the parties to ensure that the safety of crew, passengers and the communities visited is not impaired.

Point 6 – information systems and databases

Information and communication technologies have become of great importance for many human activities: one of these is represented by tourism, involving millions of people moving around the world every day. The European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) and in the near future the satellite navigation system GALILEO represent enabling technologies for the implementation of innovative services and applications related to the concept of 'personal info-mobility', where information and

data regarding the territory and its resources can be efficiently provided on demand to the tourists, taking into account their current position on the ground and their needs. The project TWIST, as an example, intends to facilitate the visit of tourists by providing information on both cultural assets and logistic issues, thus facilitating the user in the deployment of a complete visit to a city, a museum or an archaeological area.

The Reopen-EU website, which the Commission put in place following the 13 May Communication to allow safe trip planning, provides European citizens with information on geographically specific possible travel restrictions and public health measures introduced across Europe.

Point 10, 11 and 14 – Financial resources, regional vulnerability

The EU reacted swiftly to provide a lifeline to the economy and the tourism industry by mobilising all available tools to, among others, prevent the disintegration of the tourism ecosystem and its individual companies:

- Injection of liquidity to stabilise companies – €8bn capital for SMEs through the European Investment Fund was made available rapidly and allocated immediately after;*
- Temporary framework for state aid so that Member States could support their businesses. There are now more than 220 State aid measures available to the tourism system across the EU;*
- Temporary unemployment system to allow people to keep their jobs. EU has created a new instrument, €100bn SURE, which supports national temporary unemployment systems;*
- Opened up the possibility for Member States to use the remaining funds from the structural funds to help businesses, among others, under the Coronavirus Response Instrument Initiative (CRII) of ca €37bn.*

To mitigate the impacts of the current crisis, an ambitious recovery instrument and EU budget was proposed by the Commission for 2021-2027, to address the need for the relaunch of European economy, with tourism being one of the most affected areas. The Commission agrees that for the longer-term future of EU tourism ecosystem, it is a key to ensure the right support for the green and digital transformation of the tourism industry and SMEs, for boosting innovation along the tourism value chain and for equipping the workforce with the skills for the future.

In the Commission's proposals for the EU spending programmes for 2021-2027, several of the proposed programmes foresee support for tourism namely: the structural funds under the cohesion policy (e.g. European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) European Social Fund (ESF), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)), InvestEU, the Single Market Programme, Creative Europe, and Horizon Europe. This reflects an integrated approach mainstreaming tourism-related investments across diverse EU financing programmes, which takes into account the interdependencies of tourism with other

sectors of the economy and ensures support for tourism through a wide variety of policy objectives (e.g. sustainable infrastructure, research, innovation, competitiveness of SMEs, regional development, culture and creative industries, etc.).

Point 12 – Consultation mechanism

Regarding coordination between the Commission and Member States and as a follow-up to the [tourism and transport package of 13 May](#), Member States meet on weekly basis under the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) mechanism, where preparedness is discussed and coordinated also on aspects affecting tourism and travel (epidemiological situation, travel restrictions, transport and tourism services). Moreover, the Commission facilitates the exchange of information and good practices through existing structures and new structures established with the participation of Member States, such as the Tourism Advisory Committee, the Health Security Committee, as well as in the areas of transport and borders. As follow-up to the guidance issued on the implementation of [green lanes](#) to ensure the availability of goods and essential services, the Commission created an operational network of national contact points to avoid congestion and delays at borders.

Points 13 – Skills

The green and digital transitions and demographic trends are transforming the way we live, work and interact. We want to ensure people have the skills they need to thrive. The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated these transitions and brought new career challenges for many people in Europe. With the new [European skills agenda](#) the Commission is placing skills at the heart of the EU policy, steering investment in people and their skills for a sustainable recovery after the coronavirus pandemic. The Skills Agenda aims to improve the relevance of skills in the EU to strengthen sustainable competitiveness, ensure social fairness and build our resilience. Since massive investment in skills is needed, in addition to resources from enterprise and governments, the EU is prioritising investing in people and their competences (including under the Recovery Plan).

Points 7 and 15 – Promotion of niche tourism and cultural tourism

The Commission has been supporting the diversification of tourism offers in the past in order to address carrying capacity, seasonality challenges and the boosting of competitiveness of tourism SMEs, by encouraging new forms of sustainable tourism, including in the areas of cultural tourism.

The Commission is supporting the promotion campaign ‘We are Europe’, set up on Euronews in partnership with the European Travel Commission with the aim to promote intra-EU traveling. It is also running online promotion campaigns of cultural tourism offer (Europeana, Cultural gems app). As part of Europeana, the Commission launched on 15 June ‘Discovering Europe’, an online collection of art works and photographs of cities and landscapes, historic places and hidden gems across Europe, as well the #Discovering Europe online campaign. Furthermore, a dedicated tourism hub on

Europeana Pro has been set up to help cultural heritage professionals discover initiatives supporting tourism throughout the EU.

The Commission is also implementing the European Capital of Smart Tourism initiative promoting smart and innovative tourism development by European cities and showcasing outstanding practices of tourism destinations, which are sustainable, accessible, digital and capitalising on cultural heritage and creativity.