

Statement to the Council by the Social Partners in the Civil Aviation Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on the response to COVID-19

The European social partners in Civil Aviation expresses deep concern over the current patchwork of closed or open borders within the Union, resulting from widely different policies in Member States as to how to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Current Member State policies are creating significant confusion among the travelling public, making it impossible to plan ahead, both for service providers like airlines as well as for their customers and suppliers. Borders are opened and closed with short notice, based on non-coordinated criteria as to what is considered high, medium or low spread of infections, and sometimes even based on the nationality of the traveller as described in the recent European Commission proposal¹. Quarantine for air travellers is used in several states, again without any coordination, effectively destroying future and planned demand for air travel.

Internationally, 80 percent of countries worldwide restrict entry on grounds of health protection in the context of the pandemic or prohibit flights entirely. This is making international aviation almost impossible, endangering the existence of large parts of the aviation value chain worldwide and heavily impeding trade relations.

This is an untenable situation, harming the travel industry, harming employment in aviation and beyond, but also harming the larger economy.

To allow for a faster and sustained recovery, these practices must be harmonised in order to give both passengers and the industry to plan with confidence.

Only governments working together, and not in isolation, will enable economic and social life to resume, while controlling the spread of the virus.

The global aviation industry has taken a number of mitigating measures to make sure the air journey itself is safe and secure from a health perspective, through effective coordination within ICAO and IATA and with the support of WHO, and at European level with EASA, the EU Commission and the support of the ECDC.

The use of reliable testing technology can now provide an important contribution in order to increase safety on board and on the ground even further, regain the trust of the travelling public and should be integrated in the revisions of the ICAO CART and EASA/ECDC guidelines, and be promoted by EU Member States.

The European social partners in Civil Aviation strongly welcome the initiative taken by the Commission for a proposal for a Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restrictions of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic published on September 4th.

Whilst not taking a position on the detailed and technical measures of the proposal, the social partners firmly believe this approach is the right way forward. We now urge Member States

¹ European Commission Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. 20200256 (NLE) 4th September 2020

to swiftly adopt the proposal and to cooperate along those lines to make sure borders are re-opened in a harmonised and coordinated manner to facilitate and contribute to the economic recovery of the Union and sustain employment.

As a second step, we also suggest that the Commission and Member States define criteria for a risk-based consideration of third countries and the lifting of associated entry bans.

The Council of the EU already adopted a recommendation on June 30, 2020, *on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restrictions*. The Council agreed that, as from 1 July, member states should start lifting the travel restrictions at the external borders for residents of 15 third countries.

Many member states are not applying this recommendation generating confusion and discrimination and undermining the credibility and the image of the European Union. The uncoordinated travel restrictions towards third countries and the confusion about which rules apply in Europe has caused a considerable negative impact on aviation. The social partners call upon member states to follow to the maximum extent possible the recommendations it adopts.

Brussels, September 21st , 2020

Members of the Civil Aviation Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee

This statement is being issued jointly by the following associations of employers and their professional staff associations:

European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF)
European Cockpit Association (ECA)
Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination (ATCEUC)
Airlines for Dialogue (A4D)
Airline Coordination Platform (ACP)
European Regions Airline Association (ERAA)
Airlines International Representation in Europe (AIRE)
Airports Council International – Europe (ACI)
Civil Air Navigation Services Organization (CANSO)
Airline Services Association (ASA)