



Airlines and airports call on EU/EEA and UK governments to immediately abolish passenger quarantines as EASA/ECDC Guidelines confirm their ineffectiveness

- EASA/ECDC *Guidelines for COVID-19 testing and quarantine of air travellers*¹ unequivocally reject quarantines in current epidemiological situation, where transmission of the virus is already widespread.
- Guidelines confirm air travellers account for less than one per cent of all detected COVID-19 cases and do not increase the rate of COVID-19 transmission.
- Aviation associations urge governments to consider rapid testing technologies and success of travel corridors to help restore passenger confidence and support early detection of asymptomatic cases.

Brussels and Geneva, 2 December 2020 – European and international aviation associations are urging European governments to immediately abolish quarantine measures and other travel restrictions following new [recommendations](#) published by the European Union Aviation Safety Association (EASA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention & Control (ECDC), which **unequivocally reject their use in the current situation – where transmission of the virus is already widespread.**

The EASA/ECDC *Guidelines for COVID-19 testing and quarantine of air travellers: Addendum to the Aviation Health Safety Protocol* also confirm that air travellers account for less than one percent of all detected COVID-19 cases and do not increase the rate of virus transmission.

“These Guidelines unequivocally show quarantines to be essentially politically-driven, non-risk-based measures which bear no relation to what is actually needed to safeguard public health. As such, quarantines fail the test of proportionality, a key principle of EU law – particularly since there are no equivalent measures at land borders. This has resulted in unprecedented limitations to the freedom of movement and the freedom to provide services. We call on national governments to immediately abolish their quarantine restrictions and restore freedom of movement for European citizens”, said Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE.

A more harmonised, co-ordinated approach among EU/EEA and UK states is essential to increase clarity and predictability for citizens and businesses following the latest recommendation² of the EU Council. This is essential for the recovery of the sector.

¹ EASA/ECDC [Guidelines for COVID-19 testing and quarantine of air travellers: Addendum to the Aviation Health Safety Protocol](#) 30 November 2020.

² EU Council Recommendation 2020/1475 of 13 October 2020 on a co-ordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The EASA/ECDC Guidelines consider 14-day quarantines to be effective only in the ‘exceptional situation’ where a country has achieved full control over the virus and reduced transmission levels to close to zero, and only then for travellers entering from countries where the virus keeps circulating.

Apart from the data presented by the Guidelines, several other analyses confirm the absence of a correlation between passenger traffic and prevalence rates at national level:

- ACI EUROPE’s analysis of airport passenger data in the third quarter of 2020 unequivocally rejects any relationship between air travel and increasing COVID-19 transmission rates. The brief increase in air passenger traffic during this period was proven to have no statistically significant relationship with the COVID-19 test positivity rate, based on aviation, public health and community mobility data. ACI EUROPE’s paper can be found [here](#).
- Similarly, [Oxera’s study](#)³ confirmed that the risk of introducing infections from international travel should be assessed relative to domestic infection levels. It projected that among weekly incoming passenger volumes of 409,800 from the EU to the UK, only 0.01 per cent of air travellers were expected to be infectious travellers being released into the UK population. This is the equivalent of one infectious person per 10,000 travellers.
- McMaster HealthLabs in Canada has also published its [interim report](#) on their COVID-19 study of arriving international passengers, which again backs up the figure of 99 per cent of passengers testing negative. This, says the labs, is a powerful tool to make ‘science-based policy decisions’ and reject quarantines as a relevant approach to containment. Airlines and airports continue to believe that rapid testing of passengers travelling between high and low-risk areas can contribute to and support the early detection of cases amongst asymptomatic travellers.

European air passenger traffic has been among the most heavily impacted of any region, and recently [plunged to -89 per cent at EU/EEA/Swiss and UK airports](#). To date, 102 airports across Europe accounting for 47 per cent of passenger traffic on the continent have deployed testing facilities under the supervision of their competent health and aviation authorities. These testing facilities have allowed a number of airlines and airports to propose ‘COVID-19-free flights’ and quarantine-free travel corridors on certain air routes, including most recently [between Italy and the United States](#), based on a testing protocol for air travellers. This proves the all-important role that testing can play in re-establishing connectivity.

“Rapid testing which utilises the latest technologies available and meets the high sensitivity and sensibility criteria established by ECDC can help restore predictability, reignite passenger confidence and thus re-establish flight connectivity for European passengers”, said Thomas Reynaert, Managing Director, Airlines for Europe (A4E).

Europe’s aviation associations urge European states to work together bilaterally to replicate such initiatives and develop more quarantine free travel corridors.

“Testing technologies are evolving quickly, and we stand ready to work with EASA, the ECDC and national governments to implement the most efficient and effective methods to get Europe moving again”, said Montserrat Barriga, Director General, European Regions Airline Association (ERA).

“Rapid testing of passengers for COVID-19 opens the door to restarting air travel by eliminating quarantine. And the public agrees: some 65 per cent of travellers surveyed suggest quarantine

³ Review of case studies of effectiveness of testing schemes, Oxera, November 2020:
<https://www.oxera.com/publications/review-of-case-studies-of-effectiveness-of-testing-schemes>

should not apply to passengers who have tested negative. The EASA/ECDC protocol makes it clear that quarantine is not an effective measure in the present circumstances. And it is important that the protocol should also be applied to remove the temporary travel restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU from third countries”, said Rafael Schwartzman, IATA’s Regional Vice President for Europe.

Ends

Note to editors:

- **Airlines for Europe (A4E)** is Europe's largest airline association, based in Brussels. The organisation advocates on behalf of its 16 airline group members to help shape EU aviation policy to the benefit of consumers, ensuring a continued safe and competitive air transport market. Follow us on Twitter @A4Europe.
- **ACI EUROPE (Airports Council International)** 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 per cent 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.
- 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.
- **IATA (International Air Transport Association)** represents some 290 airlines comprising 82 per cent of global air traffic. You can follow IATA at <https://twitter.com/iata> for announcements, policy positions, and other useful industry information.

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