



Airline Coordination Platform



Joint Action Plan by the European Social partners in Civil Aviation on safely resuming travel during COVID-19

European aviation is a major contributor to the European economy, notably in its regions, and the restart of aviation will re-establish connectivity throughout Europe and revitalise the European economy. Additionally, the restart of European aviation will help to secure jobs in the transport, tourism and services sectors (IATA estimates that between 6-7 million jobs supported by aviation are at risk because of the pandemic). In order to facilitate the smooth resumption of air travel in Europe, the Social partners propose the following four stage action plan.

- 1. Facilitate free movement through a Digital Green Certificate**
- 2. Prioritise air crew in the vaccination roll-out**
- 3. Implement a coordinated European approach for aviation personnel**
- 4. Extend payroll support programmes**

1. Facilitate free movement through a Digital Green Certificate

The European Social Partners in Civil Aviation welcome the recent proposal from the European Commission to create a Digital Green Certificate to facilitate free movement in the EU during the Covid-19 pandemic. Having an interoperable system in place (also beyond the EU), which can ensure that travel reopens safely for all travellers within as well as to and from the EU will be beneficial for the European economy, connectivity and secure employment in the transport and tourism sectors. To achieve these aims this Certificate should not be a pre-condition to exercise free-movement within the EU or beyond. We call on the European co-legislators to adopt this Regulation swiftly, and on Member States to ensure it is operational before the Summer season starts. In the meantime, Member States should ensure that tests, vaccines and certificates that confirm travellers have recovered from Covid-19, are mutually recognised and that vaccinations, tests, and certificates are provided free of charge to passengers, in line with the recommendation of the European Parliament.¹

Additionally, consideration should be given to allow the use of approved rapid Antigen tests as an alternative to PCR tests when attaining the Digital Green Certificate. Such tests, which are both

¹ [https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2021/0068\(COD\)&l=en](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2021/0068(COD)&l=en)

cheaper and faster, have been given approval by the Health Security Committee², but remain not widely used.

This goes hand in hand with a coordinated European approach regarding travel restrictions which will be required in order to encourage consumer demand and end the current complexity surrounding air travel. We applauded the EU Traffic Light System which was a good step in this direction. The Traffic Light System should guarantee that the same travel restrictions are in place for regions with the same colour. For instance, persons arriving from Green list locations should be able to enter the State without the requirement to restrict movement or undergo testing for Covid-19.

In this context, we also welcome the recent statement of Commission President von der Leyen on the possibilities for vaccinated US citizens to be able to visit Europe during the forthcoming summer. It is our expectations that such provisions must also provide for full reciprocity from the side of the United States.

Common travel restrictions should be defined for each category and in general, testing and quarantine requirements should be proportionate and not go beyond what is necessary. Having due regard to the relevance of proof of vaccination, existing testing requirements and EU rules on free movement of persons, any requirement for quarantine should be proportionate and based on transparent and objective criteria while ensuring freedom of movement remains for EU citizens. Quarantines are disproportionate measures and should be avoided at all times. Measures of this nature go far beyond what is necessary and are disproportionate.

As the vaccine rollout gathers pace across the EU with reduced rates of hospitalisations and mortality, the EU Traffic Light System should evolve so that it takes account of vaccination rates across EU Member States. Crucially, vaccinated travellers and those with proof of recovery must be exempt from testing and quarantine requirements.

The Regulation should also contain an exemption for transport workers. As it now stands, transport workers are only exempted from certain requirements - such as testing or travel bans - under EU soft law, mainly communications and recommendations³. It is of utmost importance that aviation personnel are not required to obtain a Digital Green Certificate, and that this exemption is included in the Regulation. This would guarantee that essential transport workers are free to undertake their tasks without unnecessary administrative burdens.

2. Call to prioritise aviation personnel in the vaccination roll-out

The European Social Partners strongly support and encourage the Covid-19 vaccine development. The availability of essential transport workers will allow European aviation to increase capacity, restore consumer confidence, and re-establish critical air transport connectivity throughout Europe, both for business and leisure travel. Vaccinating aviation personnel should therefore be prioritised as part of broader government schemes, once the most vulnerable in society have been vaccinated. This is especially urgent as the Digital Green Certificate materialises.

² https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/preparedness_response/docs/covid-19_rat_common-list_en.pdf
https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/preparedness_response/docs/covid-19_rat_common-list_en.pdf

³ E.g. *Council Recommendation amending Council Recommendation (EU) 2020/912 on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council Covid-19: Temporary Restriction on Non-Essential Travel to the EU.*

Accordingly, we call on Member States to prioritise the inoculation of essential aviation workers in their Covid-19 vaccination rollout plans, as some Member States have already done. Clear coordination and engagement between Member States and the undersigned Social Partners will also assist in ensuring an efficient inoculation programme, and we stand ready to assist as required.

3. Call for a coordinated European approach for aviation personnel which takes into account their specific situation

Transport workers may face difficulties while exercising their essential work due to a patchwork of requirements in relation to testing, quarantines, red zones and other travel restrictions. Member States should coordinate in this regard and ensure that requirements across the EU are aligned. Requirements and restrictions which are in force for the general population should be tailored for essential transport workers, particularly those who are considered ‘highly mobile’, and should take into account the specific circumstances in which these workers undertake this essential work. By way of example, we call on the EU and on Member States to ensure that cabin crew and pilots who remain airside in the course of their work, are exempt from requirements both to quarantine and / or undergo testing on return to the Member State in which they are based.

4. Extend payroll support programmes

Aviation workers are highly skilled professionals and must be regularly trained / assessed to ensure they remain current. Having aviation in a turnkey state to transport a Covid-19 vaccine and to support the larger EU-wide economic recovery, requires trained workers with valid licences when demand returns for air travel. In this regard, an extension of payroll supports by Member States will help secure thousands of jobs which will allow aviation stakeholders to scale up to support Europe’s economic recovery as travel restarts. Conversely, any removal or restriction of payroll supports by Member States will threaten jobs and employment. The European Social Partners in Civil Aviation therefore urge Member States to continue their payroll support schemes for all aviation workers (both airline personnel and also people working on the ground, such as at airports or groundhandlers), including through industry specific arrangements where appropriate, to support the aviation sector and its employees until at least 2024, or such a time that a sustainable level of air traffic returns to European skies.

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This statement is issued jointly by Members of the European Civil Aviation Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee:

Airlines for Dialogue (A4D)
Airline Coordination Platform (ACP)
Airport Council International – Europe (ACI Europe)
Airlines International Representation in Europe (AIRE)
Airline Catering Association (ACA)
Airport Services Association (ASA)
European Regions Airline Association (ERA)
European Cockpit Association (ECA)
European Transport Workers’ Federation (ETF)