



Press Release

17 March 2021

Europe's aviation sector welcomes Digital Green Certificate proposal whilst urging wider restart plan

Europe's aviation sector welcomed today's [proposal](#) by the European Commission for a Digital Green Certificate system. This proposal requires EU States to issue common, interoperable and mutually-recognised certificates for COVID-19 vaccination, testing and recovery status that will facilitate free movement during the COVID pandemic and support the restart of travel.

Industry associations Airlines for Europe (A4E), ACI EUROPE (Airports Council International), ASD (Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe), CANSO, European Regions Airline Association (ERA), and International Air Transport Association (IATA) view these certificates as a key tool to facilitate a safe and efficient resumption of travel and tourism in Europe. They call on the EU Council and the European Parliament to urgently approve the Commission proposal, and for all EU States to immediately begin preparations for their implementation.

Recent polling¹ showed that 54 per cent of Europeans aim to take a trip before the end of July 2021, revealing the strong pent-up demand for mobility. Among this group, 41 per cent wish to travel to another European country, underlining the benefit of a common EU framework. 89 per cent of people agree that governments need to standardise testing and vaccine certificates.²

The associations are therefore urging EU governments to ensure the certificates are operational in time for the peak summer travel months – with vaccination certificates, in particular, enabling the elimination of all restrictions to travel whilst recognising that vaccination should not be mandatory in order to travel.

But even if the COVID-19 situation permits the restart of travel, the industry warned that a more detailed plan is needed to energise economic recovery and restore freedom of movement as soon as governments are able to re-open their borders.

With utmost urgency, work on an EU roadmap setting out the conditions, criteria and possible timing for the easing and lifting of travel restrictions must begin. This should also include a simple, harmonised implementation of testing policies.

¹ Source: [ETC, Monitoring Sentiment for Domestic and Intra-European Travel – Wave 5, February 2021 in Germany, UK, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland and Austria](#)

² Source: IATA/Rockland Dutton research based on 4,700 interviews February 2021

In stark contrast to the restart roadmap set out by the UK, EU work has yet to be initiated on this – leaving hundreds of thousands of travel and tourism businesses and their employees across Europe in the dark as to their prospects for a restart and related planning. It is also preventing Europeans from planning longed-for family reunions, business trips or holidays,³ which will be crucial in helping to restore Europe’s economies.

Reiterating their [call for an EU Task Force for the Restoration of the Free Movement of People](#), the associations urged the European Institutions to immediately begin work on this roadmap, which should follow a risk-based and data-driven approach, taking into account:

- the acceleration of the vaccine roll-out across the EU over the coming months;
- an ambitious and coordinated testing strategy;
- the evolution of the epidemiological situation;
- existing statistical modelling on the very limited impact of travel on COVID-19 incidence rates; and
- the results of COVID-19 tested flight pilots.⁴

The latest data released by ACI EUROPE shows the striking milestone of over 7,500 lost air routes across Europe’s transport network has just been passed. Air passenger traffic remains in the doldrums as a direct consequence of the current restrictions. The situation is particularly acute in the EU/EEA/Switzerland and the UK, with a -89.3 per cent decrease in passenger volumes in February compared with the previous year. This contrasts with the rest of the wider European market (including Russia and Turkey) who are reporting only a 56 per cent decrease.

A planning roadmap is essential because a restart of air travel is complex. The industry is operating at massively reduced capacity, with hundreds of thousands of employees laid off or on salary support. A successful restart will include bringing aircraft and terminals back into service, and marketing and ticketed services brought back online.

Bearing in mind these facts, say the associations, the need for urgent coordinated and forward-looking planning at EU level is self-evident. The ICAO Council’s⁵ recent approval of requirements for globally accepted COVID-19 test certificates, including the technology framework for secure digital versions and the future incorporation of vaccination certificates now provides a global framework for further action.

The leaders of the associations said: “We welcome the European Commission’s adoption of the proposal for a Digital Green Certificate. The EC has our full support, and we call on the European Parliament and Council to work on its swift adoption via an emergency procedure. We need a clear path out of this crippling situation, and appeal once again to the EU Member States to implement common solutions and plan ahead in a fully co-ordinated and aligned way. We repeat: a safe restart of air travel is possible, and we can save both lives and livelihoods – but we need the EU to lead from the front. States must now do their part by acting in a co-ordinated manner, to avert yet another patchwork solution of fragmented agreements borne out of frustration and necessity.”

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³ IATA/Rockland Dutton survey shows 68 per cent feel quality of life has suffered with travel restrictions and nearly 40 per cent reported mental stress.

⁴ Pilot tests between Rome-Fiumicino and New York/Atlanta conducted by Aeroporti di Roma, Alitalia and Delta Airlines under the supervision of the Italian authorities confirm previous assessments that any transmission and importation risks associated with air travel can be controlled and mitigated through testing without quarantines. Results show that during the trial phase the positivity rate of air passengers stood at only 0.13%, resulting in no impact on the prevalence of the virus in Italy.

⁵ Source: <https://www.icao.int/covid/cart/Pages/default.aspx>



Press Release

Notes:

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 46 European countries. Our members facilitate over 90% 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.

ASD is the voice of European Aeronautics, Space, Defence and Security Industries, actively promoting and supporting the competitive development of the sector by advocating common positions towards European Institutions and International organisations. Follow us @ASDEurope.

The **Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO)** is the global voice of air traffic management worldwide. CANSO Members support almost 90 percent of world air traffic. Members share information and develop new policies, with the ultimate aim of improving air navigation services on the ground and in the air. CANSO represents its Members' views in major regulatory and industry forums, including at ICAO, where it has official Observer status. CANSO has an extensive network of Associate Members drawn from across the aviation industry. For more, visit canso.org.

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% 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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