

Brussels, 10 March 2022

Mr Vassilis Kikilias
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity
Aristotelous 17-19
10187 Athens
GREECE

*CC: Mr Kostas A. Karamanlis, Minister of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks, Greece
Mr Makis Vodiris, Minister of the Interior of the Hellenic Republic, Greece*

RE: Removal of Health-Related Travel Restrictions

Dear Minister,

The International Air Transport Association and ACI EUROPE (Airports Council International) are writing to you to urge Greece to follow other European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) Member States including Iceland, Ireland, Norway Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland in taking further steps to urgently restore the fundamental principle of free movement for citizens across the continent.

11th March marks two years since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the WHO. The virus has impacted many aspects of daily life for European citizens, not least restrictions on free movement. The rapid development and distribution of highly-effective vaccines and treatments have given society the tools to live with COVID-19. 82% of the adult European population has been vaccinated, over 62% have received a booster and more than 20% have recovered from the virus. As a result, the impact of COVID-19 in terms of severe outcomes and health system pressure is now much lower and similar to seasonal disease outbreaks such as influenza.

Given this improving context across the EU and the EEA/CH, an increasing number of countries have now removed domestic COVID-19 restrictions and have lifted all travel-related health measures for intra-EEA/CH flights. This includes the need for testing, the need to hold proof of vaccination/testing/recovery as well as the requirement to complete a passenger locator form.

With that in mind we urge Greece to now:

- remove all health-related travel restrictions ahead of the summer season, and as a minimum on intra EEA/CH flights;
- align the health restrictions applicable in your country to those applied to aviation (e.g. if the requirement to use face masks is removed within the country, it should be also removed in aviation in that country);
- allow those vaccinated with a WHO-approved vaccine to travel into your country with no additional restrictions as is the case for those passengers vaccinated with an EMA-approved vaccine.

.../...

Governments that have already lifted all travel related measures for intra-EEA/CH flights understood that travel restrictions have little to no long-term impact on the spread of a virus and that the economic and social hardship caused for very limited benefit is simply no longer justifiable. This is aligned to the conclusions of the attached study on the effectiveness of travel restrictions in the EEA/CH that we are pleased to share with you.

The modeling set out in the study confirms that imposing travel restrictions following the detection of a new variant does not affect the size of the peak of an outbreak but might only delay the timing of the peak by a few days, but only if they are introduced pre-emptively or on the day that the variant is first imported. In addition, the effectiveness of travel restrictions is further reduced when a variant is more infectious than the variants that were previously in circulation.

Lastly, we would like to use this opportunity to congratulate the European Commission and EU Member States for the development and implementation of the EU DCC. ACI EUROPE and IATA recognise the value of the EU DCC which will remain important for European citizens travelling to third countries and for third country nationals who wish to travel to Europe. The DCC may also be useful in response to future variants of concern or health emergencies. We therefore encourage further work at international level to promote greater consistency and mutual recognition of digital health credentials to support the resilience of international travel in the future.

A similar letter has been sent to your counterparts in the other Member States referred to above. We remain at your disposal to answer any queries you may have on the above.

IATA and ACI EUROPE stand ready to work with you and support you to help rebuild European connectivity and give back to citizens of the EU and EEA/CH the fundamental right to free movement across the continent.

Please accept, Minister, the assurance of our highest consideration,



Olivier Jankovec
Director General
Airports Council International
(ACI EUROPE)



Rafael Schwartzman
Regional VP Europe
International Air Transport Association
(IATA)

Annex.

About Airports Council International (ACI) EUROPE

ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 500 airports in 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe. In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.

About International Air Transport Association (IATA)

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world's airlines, representing some 290 airlines or 82% of total air traffic. We support many areas of aviation activity and help formulate industry policy on critical aviation issues.