【欧州】【Common】

Common - Tourism: The European Parliament's tourism task force calls for harmonisation of travel rules and the Council agrees on recommendations on the free movement of people in the on-going COVID-19 pandemic

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【概要：Summary】

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an unprecedented negative impact on the travel and tourism industry in the EU and worldwide. In the EU, the lockdown during the first wave of the pandemic even included a closure of the internal Schengen borders and travel restrictions in many Member States. This resulted in problems for the tourism industry. In the current phase of the pandemic with seriously increasing numbers of COVID19 cases, the borders remain open. However, unilateral decisions on quarantine rules and extended PCR testing obligations in some Member States or even regions have a detrimental impact on the movement of people. Therefore, the tourism sector has been calling for better coordination of measures between EU Member States and a harmonised European approach regarding travel restrictions. A common approach would help to rebuild confidence and give more planning security for travellers. However, this coordination has so far not taken place amongst the EU Member States. Therefore, the tourism industry and touristic organisations in the EU call on the EU institutions to introduce EU-wide harmonised and common rules on COVID-19 pandemic measures in order to support the tourism industry. At the same time, the European Parliament's Tourism Task Force of the TRAN Committee is considering the measures regarding the tourism sector's recovery process from the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the Council of the European Union has agreed on recommendations to coordinate measures affecting free movement of people amongst the EU Member States during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. However, although the Council recommendation could improve the transparency and predictability for citizens and businesses regarding the restrictions of free movement during the pandemic, these recommendations are not legally binding. Therefore, it is still in the discretion of the EU Member States in how far they will implement the recommendations and consequently, the rules on touristic travels within the EU will remain fragmented and unclear.

【記事：Article】

1. The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the EU's tourism sector

Due the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of international tourists fell by 98% in May 2020, compared to 2019, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)'s World Tourism Barometer.

In Europe, in 93% of European destinations, complete or partial closure of borders and suspension of flights lasted until May 2020. Thereafter, it was the European Commission's intention to re-establish the free movement of people within and between EU Member States across borders. The Commission presented guidelines for the safe and gradual restoration of passenger transportation and tourism within the EU on 13 May 2020.

The Commission proposed a phased and coordinated approach for restoring transport services while replacing blanket restrictions to free movement by more targeted measures, based on the advice of the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC). The Guidelines also address how to protect the health of workers and guests, testing capacity, contact tracing and coordination and communication mechanisms and to monitor the spread of the virus combined with contact tracing and isolation measures to slow down transmission and the further spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. On 30 June 2020, the European Council adopted a recommendation on the gradual lifting of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU to a group of 15 third countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, among others. Accordingly, in Europe, the summer vacation time started cautiously optimistic. Nevertheless, the European Travel Commission expected that in 2020, travels for vacation in Europe would be 54% lower in 2020 than in 2019. Also the number of flights is 50% below the 2019 figures and passenger numbers are currently forecast to fall by around 60% in 2020, compared to 2019. According to the European Tourism Manifesto alliance, the voice of the European travel and tourism sector, also hotel occupancy rates in Europe were 66.4% lower in July 2020, compared to the same month in 2019.

Furthermore, with the new rise of COVID-19 infections not only in Spain and France but in almost all EU Member States since August 2020, the tourism travels are approaching a new low. By the end of September 2020, with the exception of Italy and Greece, all other main travel destinations in southern Europe had again re-introduced restrictions as the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly entered the stage of a second wave.

Accordingly, besides the European Commission's guidelines, the EU Member States and associated countries in the EEA plus the United Kingdom have all issued their own individual countermeasures against the further SARS-CoV-2 spread. This leads to a patchwork of rules and countermeasures with very dynamic changes and updates according to the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the individual countries. The surge in the number of infections in almost all major touristic centres in Europe has led to a sudden end of the recovery signs of the tourism sector since August 2020.

2. Efforts to strengthen the tourism sector in the COVID-19 pandemic

2.1. The UNWTO's Tbilisi Declaration

On 15 - 17 September 2020, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)'s Members of the Executive Council of Ministers and representatives of national tourism administrations gathered on the occasion of the 112th Session of the Executive Council of the UNWTO in Tbilisi, Georgia. In the Tbilisi Declaration, the UNWTO Executive Council agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic crisis is an opportunity to rethink how tourism interacts with the societies, other economic sectors and natural and cultural resources and ecosystems. The aim is to measure and manage it better, ensure a fair distribution of its benefits and to advance the transition towards a carbon-neutral, more resilient and inclusive tourism economy. This requires ministerial and administrative coordination, involving all the public administrations concerned. All parties involved should be coordinated through the corresponding commissions, under the direct supervision of an official forming part of the governance structure of each government. This coordination system should

be extended to national organizations, as well as to other international organizations. International coordination and cooperation on travel procedures should be enhanced to promote non-discriminatory, safe and seamless travel, among others. A more resource-efficient and carbon-neutral tourism sector in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be achieved. Furthermore, effective reopening and recovery plans and policies should put people first, with partnerships and coordination allowing tourism to restart safely.

2.2.　The EU's tourism industry and ETC's joint call to restore travel in the EU

Considering the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry in the EU, on 18 September 2020, several EU Travel and Tourism Associations issued an open letter to the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, following further dramatic decreases in air passenger traffic. In an unprecedented move, the European Travel Commission (ETC) joined the tourism industry's appeal to the European Commission to end quarantines and to develop a common EU testing protocol. The ETC together with over 20 travel and tourism bodies as well as unions across Europe, including Airports Council International Europe (ACI EUROPE), Airlines International Representation in Europe (AIRE), the Alliance of Rail New Entrants (ALLRAIL), Airlines for Europe (A4E), European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations (ECTAA), European Regions Airline Association (ERA), European Travel Commission (ETC), among others joined this unprecedented call. They called on the European Commission for leadership to replace the national and individual quarantine restrictions with a common EU Testing Protocol for Travel in order to safe the European tourism sector. Since the European travel and tourism has already suffered severely from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the insufficiently coordinated border restrictions, declining traveller confidence and reduced consumer demand, the industry states that it simply cannot afford inconsistent and constantly changing national approaches and a patchwork of different regulations and rules in the 27 EU Member States for the upcoming autumn and winter seasons.

Accordingly, the associations urge the European Commission to lead the way to restore travel in the EU and to take the lead in the development of a EU Testing Protocol for travellers. The letter concludes by highlighting that the reduction and removal of quarantines is "instrumental in re-establishing the free movement of people, ending current discriminations and restoring the essential functionality of the Single Market".

2.3.　The European Tourism Manifesto alliance

On 8 September 2020, also the European Tourism Manifesto alliance, which gathers more than 60 European public and private organisations in the tourism sector and beyond, called on the EU Member States to urgently agree on harmonised travel restrictions and ensure their swift implementation in order to help the sector survive this unprecedented crisis. The European Tourism Manifesto alliance supported the German Presidency and of the European Commission's initiative to improve coordination on cross-border travel and restore the integrity of the Schengen area. The European Tourism Manifesto alliance also called on the national governments to urgently approve the European Commission's proposal and to establish common criteria and thresholds for determining epidemiological risks and the identification of risk areas. Furthermore, common measures should be implemented to put in place upon departure to and return from risk areas. These measures should be determined with sufficient detail and based on scientific evidence, as there is no reason to restrict travel to entire countries if only certain regions are affected. Blanket restrictions to free movement should be avoided and more targeted measures should be implemented which are limited in

geographical scope of travel restrictions on passengers. Agreeing on common rules for requesting pre-travel COVID-19 negative test results where needed and the interoperability of contact tracing apps in the EU should be enabled. Furthermore, Passenger Locator Forms should be harmonised, and all EU Member States should follow a common structured and transparent process to publish clear, comprehensive and timely information about any travel restrictions where these are needed.

3. EP's tourism task force's call for a COVID-19 crisis management mechanism

In the European Parliament, there are increasingly calls on the European Commission and on the European Council to put in place a coordinated EU tourism crisis management mechanism and a sector-specific recovery plan. On 23 June 2020, the European Parliament TRAN Committee's Tourism Task Force approved the Tourism Task Force (TTF) programme for the second half of 2020, including the topic of COIVD-19 pandemic crisis and its impact on the tourism sector in the EU. The Tourism Task Force coordinators also adopted a request for a Study on a roadmap for re-launching transport and tourism in the EU after the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 23 September 2020, the Tourism Task Force held an exchange of views meeting with key stakeholders. The aim was, firstly, to take stock of the situation in which the EU's tourism sector finds itself in the continuing COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Secondly, members would seek input towards drawing up the own-initiative report "Establishing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy" with Claudia Monteiro De Aguiar (EPP) serving as Rapporteur. During the European Parliament's Tourism Task Force meeting, the members criticised that EU bodies like the European Commission had done little to help the travel and tourism sector to survive in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, although tourism accounts for 4.3% to 25% of a EU Member State's GDP. The Task Force criticized that even six months into the COVID-19 pandemic, there are still no common criteria in the

EU on how to handle and live with this pandemic and still supporting tourism. There are no universal hygiene and health protocols, no common rules for testing or on how to assess the risks, and no support for the free movement principle. The Task Force also emphasized that the restrictions imposed by the Member States make it difficult to travel, and that travellers have no guarantees that their planned trips will go ahead.

Therefore, the Task Force members stated that they "…insist on urgent concrete action from the European Commission and the Member States. A well-defined crisis management mechanism is needed…" as the tourism sector is fighting to survive. The Task Force wants the EU to set a clear path towards a genuine EU policy on sustainable tourism, consistent and transparent criteria to assess the risks across the EU, as well as EU-level coordination of travel restrictions, hygiene and health protocols.

The Tourism Task Force called again on the European Commission to come forward with a strategy on sustainable tourism and a dedicated budget line in the next long-term EU budget. The MEPs stated that a request of a "€300 million budget line to implement a common vision for sustainable tourism over the next seven years is not too much to ask". They noted that it was essential to make sure that this tourism sector would have a chance to survive after it had suffered months of decreasing or stagnating travel volumes during the pandemic.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) also urged the EU Member States to act and to introduce systematic COVID-19 testing for travellers before departure, in order to re-establish travel and global air connectivity, among others.

4. Council approves Commission proposal on recommendations for harmonising rules on free movement of people

On 4 September 2020, the European Commission approved a proposal for a Council Recommendation on

a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement COM (2020) 499 final. Thereby, the Commission recommended a coordinated approach of the 27 EU Member States regarding the COVID-19 travel restrictions. It also proposed a set of parameters how to define the stages of restrictions. On 13 October 2020, the Council adopted a recommendation establishing common criteria and a common framework on travel measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The recommendation aims to help EU Member States to take decisions based on the epidemiological situation, region by region.

The EU Member States should take the following key criteria into account when considering to restricting free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, they should consider the "14-day cumulative COVID-19 case notification rate". This means the total number of newly notified COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the last 14 days at regional level. Secondly, they should consider the "test positivity rate", which is the percentage of positive tests among all tests for COVID-19 infections carried out during the last week. Finally, they should consider the "testing rate", which is the number of tests for COVID-19 infection per 100,000 population carried out during the last week.

If a region has less than 4% positive tests over the previous week and fewer than 25 cases in 100,000 people, no restrictions should be imposed when travelling from such a "green" region. If in a region, there are in a 14-day period 4% or more positive tests over the previous week but fewer than 50 cases in 100,000 people, or if there are less than 4% positive tests over the previous week but between 25 and 150 cases in 100,000 people, the region is indicated as "orange". If a region has in a 14-day period 4% or more positive tests in the previous week and 50 or more cases in 100,000 people, or more than 150 cases per 100,000 people, then the region is a "red" risk region. After the European Commission had approved this proposal for a Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the

restriction of free movement COM(2020) 499 final, the EU Member States' governments finally agreed on the common approach on 13 October 2020. The recommendation calls for clarity and a common approach in the application of restrictions in the EU Member States. A Member State intending to apply restrictions should inform the affected EU Member States first, as well as the other EU Member States and the Commission, prior of the entry into force of the new restrictions, if possible 48 hours in advance, but at least 24 hours before the measures come into effect, among others.

However, this Council agreement on the recommendation to provide more clarity and predictability on measures restricting the free movement of people due to the COVID-19 pandemic might not help the tourism industry at this point in time. This is because the Council recommendation is not a legally binding instrument and individual EU Member States can still decide what restrictive measures they will apply, such as quarantine. The Member States' authorities remain the responsible decision makers for implementing the content of the recommendation. Therefore, the EU Member States can continue to have different restrictions, sometimes even at regional level. However, this will make it continuously difficult for the people to know, which rules apply where. Therefore, it will need more concrete action from the European Commission and the EU Member States and the introduction of well-defined crisis management mechanisms to help the tourism sector in the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Conclusion

The free movement of European citizens is one of the EU's foundational pillars, and it needs to be ensured that it remains this way. However, the recently quickly rising numbers of COVID-19 infections underline that the current pandemic situation in Europe is increasingly out of control. This leads gradually to a re- introduction of restrictions in the movement of people. Furthermore, the measures to confine the spread of SARS-CoV-2 are

still uncoordinated between the EU Member States, as health and pandemic related issues are in the responsibility of each Member State or even at the level of regions in federal systems like in Germany. None of the restrictions are harmonised at EU level and only to an extent at regional level in countries like Germany.

However, tourists, tour operators and all the actors involved in the tourism and travel industry need a common European approach to deal with this crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic and the related lockdown in the EU have a detrimental impact in particular on the tourism sector. The EU Member State's tourism destinations and the tourism sector in general cannot recover as long as measures are not coordinated between the Member States. The further development of the tourism sector in the EU is still highly uncertain, due to the currently rapidly increasing numbers of COVID-19 infections all over the EU Member States. The EU tourism sector's development in the winter season 2020/2021 and the entire 2021 will be highly dependent on the possible containment of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

While taking into account the latest epidemiological developments, the Commission, the Member States, but also stakeholder organisations in the tourism industry, transport operators and services providers will have to continuously adjust and update the approaches and measures. In this respect, with the currently exponentially increasing number of COVID-19 infections in nearly all EU Member States, the tourism industry and ETC's joint call to restore travel in the EU and to reduce and remove quarantines in order to re-establishing the free movement of people in order to end the discriminations remains rather unrealistic. The current pandemic situation suggests that rather a new lockdown needs to be avoided and infection numbers need to be significantly reduced before the quarantine and travel restrictions can be relaxed and the tourism sector will have a chance to recover. Considering

this worsening of the spread of COVID-19 infections and the subsequent new travel warnings, tourism in Europe is in danger to completely collapse in most major European touristic destinations.

Since there are several EU Member States highly dependent on the tourism sector, a EU-level coordination of travel restrictions, hygiene and health protocols is still urgently needed.

However, even the finally agreed Council recommendation will not change the crisis for the tourism sector. The Council recommendation is not a legally binding instrument and it remains in the Member States discretion to implement the content of the recommendation. The patchwork of national decisions on restrictions of touristic travels and the related uncertainty in the tourism sector can be expected to continue even after the implementation of the Council's recommendation. Accordingly, the survival of many players in the tourism sector will mainly dependent on the containment of the pandemic and the development of a secure vaccine or cure to bring the COVID-19 pandemic under control. Therefore, the outlook for the EU's tourism sector remains bleak, also in 2021.

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