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Common: The EU policies and countermeasures in the field of transport to confine the COVID-19 pandemic's further spread

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【概要 : Summary】

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Europe, the EU Member States introduced individual as well as common lockdown measures to confine the further spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. All EU Member States commonly closed the EU's external border for international travel. However, most of them also closed individually their national borders within the Schengen Area, thereby restricting cross-border travels within Europe.

With the reduction of the number of COVID-19 cases in many EU Member States in May 2020, the European Commission proposed guidelines on how to coordinate a relaxation of the lockdown measures regarding the transport sector. While the COVID-19 pandemic further evolves after the internal borders within the Schengen Area were reopened by the end of June 2020, there is a common understanding that similar strict lockdown measures like in the early stage of the pandemic are no option anymore, due to the severe impact on the EU's economy.

In the EU's transport sector, the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be tackled with specific countermeasures, while following the principle of free movement of people within the EU. Countermeasures against the further spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus will have to be proportionate and the restrictions of the movement of people need to be kept as low as possible, while providing the

maximum possible protection to the public's health.

The European Commission's guidelines for reactivating the transport sector include recommendations for each mode of transport under COVID-19 pandemic conditions. Regarding aviation, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has published recommendations for airports and airlines to minimise the further spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. In public transport, measures need to be introduced to protect passengers' health in order to avoid a new shift towards individual transport.

Besides the European Commission's guidelines, also individual EU Member States and the UK continuously introduce individual countermeasures in the transport sector to avoid the further spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. However, the current pandemic situation in Europe is increasingly dynamic, with significant rises in the number of COVID-19 infections in several EU Member States. While it is too early to define this as a second wave, it could still lead to stricter measures to confine the movement of people within the EU.

【記事 : Article】

1. The EU's initial measures against the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic reached Europe by the end of January 2020. On 28 January 2020, the EU's Croatian

presidency decided to activate the EU's integrated political crisis response mechanism (IPCR) for the coordination of the political response on a cross-sectoral crises, like a pandemic. By the end of February 2020, a significant increase of COVID-19 cases was registered in Northern Italy and many other EU Member States started reporting cases of people infected. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID-19 a global pandemic. While each EU Member State took individual decisions on when and what activities to should be locked down, as of 18 March 2020, around 250 million people in Europe were in a confinement situation in Italy, France, Spain and others. Germany instead opted for strict social distancing measures. However, they had the nearly the same effect like as a general lockdown as land borders to other Member States and schools were closed, and public gatherings of more than two people were banned. On 18 March 2020, the EU transport ministers, together with the European Commission, agreed to work closely together to minimise traffic disruptions, especially for essential freight movements.

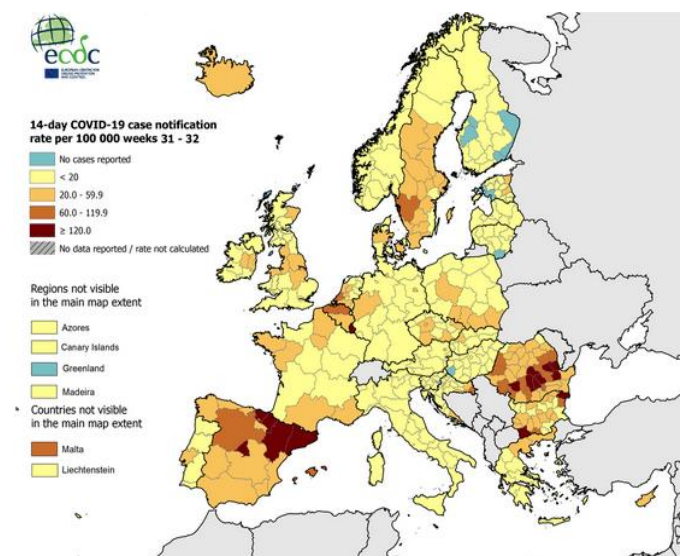
Since mid April 2020, depending on the individual development of the COVID-19 pandemic in the EU Member States, the lockdown measures were eased. In Germany, after mid April 2020, gradually, and not always at the same time, due to the country's federal system, the German states and the federal level eased restrictions and warnings, including on holiday travel to European countries. In early May 2020, in Germany, the control of lifting the lockdown was handed to the 16 federal states.

Also in Italy, after the imposition of a strict and lengthy lockdown on 7 March 2020, initially only in Northern Italy but then nationwide, some restrictions were relaxed in early May. On 3 June 2020, Italy unilaterally reopened its borders and ended regional travel restrictions.

In France, after the strict lockdown was imposed on 17 March 2020, restrictions began to ease on 11 May 2020. The Spanish government declared a state of

emergency on 14 March 2020, and its population of more than 46 million people went into a general confinement. Spain lifted gradually its border controls on 21 June 2020.

The return to a so-called "new normality" includes vigilance on new clusters of COVID-19 cases and continued sanitary measures like wearing masks in public to prevent a further increase in the number of cases. However, the further lifting of confinements to travel or events like public gatherings was only temporary. The recent substantial increase in the number of COVID-19 cases at regional and local level in several EU Member States including Spain, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and Luxemburg could lead to new restrictions of the free movement of people.



Map 1: 14-day COVID-19 case notification rate per 100,000 persons, weeks 31-32

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/cases-2019-ncov-eueea>

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is an agency of the European Union and works together with all EU/EEA countries in response to public health threats and emerging diseases. It regularly publishes the 14-day notification rate of new COVID-19 cases.

These rates are calculated based on data collected from various sources. It has to be noted that testing policies and the number of tests performed

per 100,000 persons, vary significantly across the EU/EEA. More extensive testing will inevitably lead to more cases being detected. The latest rise in the numbers of reported infections in July and August 2020 throughout the EU after travel restrictions were lifted has led to new travel warnings, mainly regarding Spain, but also regarding regions in Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Romania and Sweden.

2. Measures to support the transport sector in the pandemic

The EU Member States and all Schengen Associated Countries, including Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, introduced travel restrictions in March 2020, which lasted until the end of June 2020 at intra-European level.

On 18 March 2020, the Commission adopted guidelines on passenger rights in its Commission Notice Interpretative Guidelines on EU passenger rights regulations in the context of the developing situation with Covid-19 (C (2020) 1830 final) to helping airlines by suspending slot requirements. The waiver suspends temporarily the airport slot requirements until 24 October 2020 to help air carriers cope with the sharp drop in demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic related lockdown.

Furthermore, the European Commission published a Communication on the implementation of the Green Lanes in freight transport (C (2020) 1897 final) on 23 March 2020 in order to improve the border management to protect health and ensure the transport of goods and essential services within the EU.

On 29 April 2020, the EU Transport ministers discussed the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for transport and the measures taken so far. They agreed on the need for a EU coordinated approach in the exit strategy. At the same day, on 29 April 2020, the European Commission adopted a package of measures to provide relief to the transport sector by solving practical problems related to the lockdown measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The

aim was to removing administrative burdens, and increase flexibility to support the entire transport sector in its effort to cope with the impacts of travel restrictions in the aviation, rail, maritime transport, inland navigation and road sectors. The proposals intend to facilitate individuals and national administrations to complete certain formalities required under EU law, such as renewing licences in the transport sector. Also certain periodic checks in road, rail, inland waterways transport and maritime security are postponed temporarily. The Council of the European Union adopted these measures on 20 May 2020. Furthermore, the EU and Member States had to consider measures to secure the avoidance of a further increase in the number of COVID-19 cases while returning to the pre-pandemic free movement of people within the EU.

On 11 June 2020, the Commission recommended to lift internal border controls by 15 June 2020 between Schengen Member States and Schengen Associated States. At the same time, the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU from third countries was considered to be progressively lifted, depending on the COVID-19 pandemic's development.

3. Measures in the transport sector against a COVID-19 spread by the movement of people

3.1. The re-establishment of passenger transport connections in the EU

On 13 May 2020, the European Commission presented a package of guidelines and recommendations to help Member States gradually lift travel restrictions and allow the transport sector and tourism to recover, while respecting health precautions.

The Commission guidelines intend to give recommendations to enable the free movement of people within the EU and across EU Member States' borders, while introducing all the safety and precautionary measures to stabilize a low rate of new COVID-19 infections. The guidelines recommend measures for each individual mode of transport and

call for coordination among Member States in light of the gradual re-establishment of connections between them. The guidelines also include indications on the use of personal protective equipment such as facemasks and adequate protocols regarding the keeping of distance, hand sanitising and protocol in case passengers present coronavirus symptoms, among others.

Restoring the freedom of movement for citizens in the EU and lifting internal border controls is also a prerequisite to restore tourism in the EU.

3.2. General crosscutting recommendations for all modes of transport

In its “Communication from the Commission Guidelines on the progressive restoration of transport services and connectivity - COVID-19 2020/C 169/02 (C(2020) 3139 final) the Commission presented measures for transport operations and measures to protect public health. According to the Commission’s communication, EU Member States should take actions in a coordinated and cooperative way and base their decisions regarding the lifting of COVID-19-related travel restrictions on the Commission guidelines of 13 May 2020.

Regarding the progressive re-start and increase of passenger transport across the EU for all modes of transport during the exit from COVID-19 restrictions, some general and common principles can facilitate the mutual acceptance of implemented measures within the EU, but also with non-EU countries. Some general principles and crosscutting measures should be applied for transport hubs and vehicles for all modes of transport, while specific adjustments should be taken regarding mode-specific circumstances, needs and feasibility.

At the beginning of the relaxation of restrictions, crosscutting measures include in particular the reduction of the number of passengers in the vehicles of certain transport modes in order to ensure the physical distancing. The voluntary use

of contact tracing apps should be considered as an additional layer of risk mitigation. Frequent cleaning and disinfection of hubs and vehicles, the systematic installation of hand-sanitising stations and increased frequency of waste collection is a prerequisite for increasing passenger transport in all modes of transport. Also strengthening ventilation, air filtering, besides the wearing of masks by passengers, especially where distancing measures cannot be fully observed, are indispensable countermeasures that should be taken for all modes of transport at all times. Tickets and information should be provided electronically and automatically. Electronic pre-sales of tickets should be strongly promoted and prioritised, as well as advanced check-in, reservation and registration procedures in order to avoid the creation of crowds of people. Check-in, loading and unloading of luggage should be organised so that passengers can keep the necessary 1.5 to 2 metres distance.

Accessible information on implemented safe behaviour procedures, as well as required protective equipment for passengers, should be displayed at hubs and in vehicles, and made available in advance of any travel. Furthermore, stakeholder organisations, operators and service providers should develop and implement adequate measures that address the specific circumstances in the different transport modes. At the same time measures should be continuously reviewed and, where necessary, adapted in order to ensure their effectiveness in protecting the health of transport workers and passengers.

3.3. Transport mode specific countermeasures

3.3.1. Aviation

Airlines and airports need to follow enhanced cleaning and disinfection procedures and guidance to ensure the best possible protection against the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, in particular in the confined space on-board the aircraft. In

collaboration with the Commission, the ECDC and EASA have developed protocols for the measures the airports, airlines and operators should take to ensure a safe return to normal operations.

On 30 June 2020, EASA published its second issue of the “COVID-19 aviation health safety protocol. Operational guidelines for the management of air passengers and aviation personnel in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.” The technical operational guidelines intend to facilitate a coordinated approach of national aviation authorities, airlines, airports and other aviation stakeholders in setting up measures to protect public health. The protocol includes measures limiting contamination risks along the travel process. The guidelines address the entire journey from the passenger’s perspective, at the departure airport, on board of the aircraft and at arrival.

Adequate management of passenger flows includes the information on early arrival time at the airport, the priority of electronic/self-check-in and ensuring distancing and minimising contacts at baggage drop-offs, as well as security and border control point, among others.

The quality of air on-board of aircraft is one of the most important mitigating factors against spread of coronavirus. Most aircraft have high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters installed, which sterilise the air. Further measures include the strengthening of ventilation, hospital grade air filtering and vertical airflow, the avoidance of concentration of passengers, limiting interaction on board, exploring the most appropriate allocation of seats based on technical constraints, and prioritising electronic documents and means of payment. It also includes the reduction of movement in the cabin with less cabin baggage and fewer interactions between passengers and the crew. Similar recommendations have been issued by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in its Take-off guidance. Meanwhile, Airlines for Europe (A4E), the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA), the European Regions Airline

Association (ERA) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) have signed a cooperation agreement with EASA to promote the harmonised and coordinated implementation of the EASA/ECDC protocols.

3.3.2. Rail transport

Under pandemic conditions, especially measures for international rail services need to be coordinated among EU Member States and operators. Given the high number of passengers transported daily and the number of stations served in rail transport, compliance with the general rules for protecting public health, in particular adequate distancing, is of high importance. Since the effectiveness of measures also depends on the diligence and sense of responsibility of each passenger, random controls should ensure a good level of compliance. Since railways have continued to function throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, there is already a number of measures in place that can be retained and adapted where necessary also in the following stages of the pandemic. Distancing obligations should be applied on trains where needed. In order to enable distancing, also frequency and capacity of trains should be increased if necessary. Furthermore, rail operators should implement mandatory seat reservations on long-distance and regional trains, with identification of name/origin and destination of passengers. Alternatively, and especially for short-distance trains, passengers should be required to leave seats empty between them, except for passengers from the same household. Rail operators should make use of on-board passenger counting systems especially available for commuter and suburban trains to manage capacity. Passenger flow management should be implemented at stations. Where adequate levels of public health cannot be ensured, the closing of certain stops or stations should be considered. Off-peak hour travel should also be encouraged to avoid crowding. In order to avoid that passengers have to touch door handles or buttons, doors should be opened at each stop either

automatically or remotely by the driver.

3.3.3. Waterborne transport

In waterborne passenger transport countermeasures against a COVID-19 spread by the movement of people should be tailored to the type of vessel and character and length of the voyage. There may be a need to increase the number of vessels and voyages, especially where transport by ferries is essential for reasons of connectivity. Measures for maritime transport workers are detailed in the Guidelines on protection of health for persons on board ships. (Communication from the Commission Guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ships) 2020/C 119/01, C/2020/3100). Workers, including those on board ships and in ports, should have access to personal protective equipment and adequate medical care at all times. Direct interactions between persons on board should be reduced as far as possible to avoid the risk of transmission.

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)'s task is to facilitate sharing of best practices and information. Considering the international nature of shipping, cooperation with non-EU countries and international organisations, including the International Maritime Organization (IMO), will be important to facilitate global cooperation and the establishment of reciprocity between COVID-19 related measures and practices. EU Member States, operators and all other entities involved in waterborne transport (ports, ferry terminals, relevant national authorities) should ensure that distancing requirements can be observed on vessels, including by reducing the number of allowed passengers. The limit access to (dis) embarkation quays to passengers with tickets and the assignment of seats to passengers is important and ports should consider dedicated lanes to separate entry and exit of passengers. Regarding cruise ships, ship operators need to put in place strict procedures to reduce the risk of transmission on board and to

provide adequate medical care in case of infections. The gradual restoration of cruise services should be coordinated at EU and international level, taking into account the public health situation in the countries concerned.

3.3.4. Road transport

Regarding road transport, high levels of hygiene in all parts of terminals, rest areas along the motorways, covered parking facilities as well as in fuelling and charging stations should be ensured. This includes regular cleaning and disinfections to limit the risk of contagion for road users. Passenger flow management should be implemented at stations. The closing of certain stops or stations should be considered where adequate levels of public health cannot be ensured.

Regarding bus and coach transport, appropriate measures, distinguishing regional and long distance services are necessary. Especially for international bus/coach services, approaches should be coordinated among EU Member States and operators in order to be effective. Safe operating practices should be introduced, including rear door boarding and the use of windows for ventilation as much as possible instead of air conditioning. In addition, seating should be optimised to the extent feasible with families sitting together, while persons not travelling together should be separated. In mini-buses passengers should not be allowed to sit next to the driver unless physical separation is not possible. Operators of regular bus services will have to be enabled to progressively re-build the network, depending on national restrictions. EU Member States should put in place simplified and rapid procedures to allow operators to swiftly adapt their services, without compromising the health and safety of transport workers. If possible, staff contacts with passengers' luggage should also be limited and passengers should handle the loading and unloading of their own luggage.

3.3.5. Urban mobility

Urban mobility is already being re-thought in several EU Member States. Urban areas, regions and cities are adapting to the new situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and have taken steps to make active mobility like walking and cycling a safe and more attractive mobility option. They have reduced speed limits of vehicles and increased active mobility areas by extending pavements and bicycle paths. They are also developing innovative technologies to manage passenger flows in order to avoid crowding. Requiring safe minimum distancing, stickers or floor markings are used to guide passengers in vehicles to keep a safe distance.

In public transport, passenger flows at stations and transport hubs are optimised to avoid crowding and peak hours, and to minimise contacts, through the use of innovative technologies and mobile applications. Also a greater flexibility in work hours needs to be allowed.

The contacts between drivers and passengers in urban trains and buses should also be minimised. In order to avoid that passengers have to touch door handles or buttons, doors should be opened at each stop either automatically or remotely by the driver. It is essential to communicate clearly all the measures taken, to facilitate their smooth implementation, reassure citizens and maintain their confidence in public transport. The resulting extra costs of these measures could be incorporated into public service contracts.

Sharing of best practices, ideas and innovations for safe mobility in urban and sub-urban areas during the COVID-19 pandemic continues through dedicated platforms and networks, and it is key to further develop such cooperation and knowledge sharing. The Commission will also gather Member States, local authorities and stakeholders active in the field of urban mobility in order to analyse the lessons learnt and identify the opportunities for future, more sustainable mobility in the EU, in line with the European Green Deal.

Regarding the transport by car/van on demand and with taxi services, these services should continue

operating with specific hygiene and risk mitigating measures. Specific protection measures for drivers and limitations to only one passenger or several people living in the same household needs to be continued. Passengers should not be allowed to sit next to the driver unless physical separation is possible. The taxi companies should provide drivers with masks and disinfectants and vehicle interiors should be disinfected as frequently as possible. Taxi and PHV drivers should avoid physical contact with passengers and electronic payment should always be prioritised.

4. Individual countermeasures in some EU Member States and the UK

Besides the European Commission's guidelines, the EU Member States and associated countries in the EEA plus the United Kingdom have issued their own countermeasures, which might go beyond the Commission's suggestions for the operation of transport services under COVID-19 pandemic conditions. In most EU Member States, the wearing of facemasks is the means of choice in the entire transport system, regardless the transport mode, to protect passengers from the further spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Facemasks are obligatory in planes, trains, and public transport in almost all EU Member States. Furthermore, in some countries like in Belgium, at Brussels' airport, thermal cameras are used to measure the temperature of all passengers. Entry could be refused if the temperature exceeds 38 degrees. Also in Spain the temperature of passengers is checked before entering the country by ferry or plane and a form needs to be filled in with health related questions and address when entering the country.

Due to the current increase in the number of COVID-19 cases, facemasks are now compulsory also in public places, like in Spain or in France. In Greece, when travelling in a private car or a taxi a maximum of 3 adult passengers per vehicle is allowed, in addition to the driver. Any children in the vehicle do not count towards this limit. When

travelling via ferry in Greece, passengers need to complete a health questionnaire and hand it to the ferry operator before boarding. Temperature checks may also be carried out before boarding. In the UK, a form must be filled out with contact details and information about previous destinations when entering the country. In the UK, there also exists a requirement for 14-day quarantine when coming from some EU Member States with relatively high numbers of COVID-19 cases like France and Spain. Within the UK, each part of the country decides on its own measures to combat the pandemic. Also Germany has declared Spain again as a risk area for travels and people entering from Spain with the exception for Canary Islands and from some regions in Croatia, Belgium, Bulgaria and Rumania will have to undergo an obligatory PCR testing and immediately enter a 14-day quarantine in case of a positive test result.

5. Conclusion

The latest measures taken by some EU Member States and the UK underline that the current pandemic situation in Europe is increasingly dynamic, which could gradually lead to the introduction of stricter measures that could again confine the free movement of people within the EU.

The Commission and Member States, but also stakeholder organisations, transport operators and services providers will continuously adjust and update the approaches and measures. They will have to take into account the latest epidemiological developments, the feedback on the effectiveness of existing measures, and the needs of EU citizens and the economy.

While focusing on restoring transport services and the sustainable and smart recovery of the EU transport sector, it will be necessary to adjust and update the approaches and measures to the latest epidemiological developments.

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