

Brussels, 24 March 2020

Mr. Thierry Breton

EU Commissioner of Internal Market

AND

Ms. Adina Vălean

EU Commissioner for Transport

CC:

Mr. Janez Lenarčič, EU Commissioner for Crisis Management

Ms. Ylva Johansson, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs

Mr. Elisa Ferreira, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy

Mr. Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources

Subject: COVID-19: Tourism rescue action plan

Esteemed Commissioners,

One of the most **negatively** impacted sectors by the COVID-19 outbreak remains the **tourism and travel sector**, and the situation is worsening on a daily basis. As the sector faces evolving challenges, imminent reaction at EU level is of utmost importance. Furthermore, the unprecedented international **border closures and other travel restrictions** are creating a huge operational challenge for tour operators, as well as for their contractors (i.e. accommodation and restauration services, coach transport services) and airlines, which need to repatriate thousands of tourists in a very short time.

In this regard, we welcome the recent measures taken by the Commission, and especially those related very closely to the tourism **and travel** sector as the “Imperative Guidelines on EU passenger rights” and those adopted by the Council, as the joint arrangement for repatriation of EU citizens, under the priority announced on “Citizens stranded in Third countries” **and the waiver granted for 80/20 rule for months at least.**

Nevertheless, we believe that the tourism sector needs a **more targeted, concrete and coordinated response at EU level**, in order to tackle the damages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thousands of people need to be expatriated to their homeland, thousands of businesses are unable to respond to the crisis and thousands of employees in the sector are facing the risk of losing their jobs, due to these extreme circumstances. Therefore, we need a **tourism rescue action plan**, with concrete short and medium term measures, in order to answer the needs of the businesses, employees and consumers in the sector.

As Tourism Task Force Members of the Transport and Tourism Committee in the European Parliament, we call on you:

- to establish **crisis-management mechanism for effective cooperation** in the tourism sector at EU level, including concrete measures and a clear action plan in short and medium term (as already mentioned in a letter of the TTF Steering Group sent on 6th March);
- **to ensure that national and European assistance is timely and adequate by assessing the damage and the needs of the travel and tourism sector** including of its employees in cooperation with Member States, the UNWTO, OECD, and stakeholders at EU and national level;
- to ensure that **national compensation schemes** are put in place for as long as necessary, in timely and proportionate manner, aiming to tackle the damages of the COVID-19 virus, without unduly distorting competition in the EU internal market and in full compliance with your communication on the "Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak"; In this regard we urge you to provide for a clear guidance, effective coordination and assistance to all Member States;
- to take into consideration the travel and tourism sector when it comes to all kinds of financial support under the existing financial instruments and the new Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative, in order to **provide efficient support to the affected businesses in this sector and to support and assist Member States in preventing and tackling unemployment in the tourism sector**;
- to provide for **special assistance and direct financial aid instruments** for regions and areas depending mainly on the income from tourism;
- **to swiftly provide a clearer guidance for Member States on how to jointly arrange the repatriation of EU citizens** by ensuring coordination and assistance among Member States to help bring back all EU nationals from destinations abroad and not only their own nationals as well as facilitate transit of other EU citizens and residents that are returning home;
- **to make use of the Union's Civil protection mechanism**;
- **to ensure the full cooperation of local, regional and national authorities in the third countries of repatriation** in order to avoid dangerous situations for the EU citizens such as the one experienced in a third country last week, when local authorities blocked two EU planes from landing;

Moreover, we would like to draw your attention to the various unilateral measures taken by the businesses, in close cooperation with the municipalities, **offering their accommodations, where the hospitals suffer lack of sufficient capacities**. In this regards, we urge you to **issue guidelines based on good practices taken by the tourism sector in case of pandemic crisis and ensure a proper financial support**.

As Members of the Tourism Task Force Steering Group, we call on you to undertake concrete measures in order to save the tourism sector, which is more than ever under imminent pressure and risk of complete collapse.



Sincerely Yours,

**Tourism Task Force (TTF) Members
of the Transport and Tourism Committee in the European Parliament**

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